

Borders, boundaries and bodies: The rise of overpopulation warriors

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ABSTRACT

In traditional societies, there was a permanent and more or less functional relationship between the body, morality and political authority. The moral boundaries of the body were useful in defining the political borders of the state. This article examines these notions in a variety of political and sociological perspectives on power and authority. Although the relationship between body and politics continues today, there are major developments in the nature of human conflict, medical technology and the means of military violence that have brought about important changes in the conduct of war, where, for example, "camp rape" is used as a method of destroying whole societies. The article concludes by examining a new version of Malthusian demographic theory to consider the impact of new medical and military technology on the ancient connection between bodies, ethics and law. These global changes to the relationship between technology and the body, especially military technology, creates new possibilities of catastrophe, which have been explored most recently in the work of Paul Virilio on speed in modern societies.

Introduction: Liquid violence

We can regard "borders" as a political concept employed for demarcations between powers that claim sovereign authority over a particular territory. "Boundaries," by contrast, indicate cultural and moral divisions between communities that are distinguished by their ethnic, linguistic and religious legacies. "Bodies" are both organic entities that are a critical component in the definition of the self, and metaphorical terms for defining collectivities and organizations such as corporations, or the Church as the body of Christ. The intersections of borders, boundaries and bodies are sites of social exchange and political conflict. A state typically has sovereign power over populations and the bodies of its citizens, and inevitably seeks to maximize its power

by a policy of eugenics, however implicit and obscure. School gymnastics, which can be regarded as politically innocuous, express an administrative concern for the development of able-bodied citizens who are capable of fighting wars and defending the state's borders, but the athletic body also defends moral boundaries. Governments that encourage young couples to reproduce by creating a favorable tax regime for families are practicing a eugenics policy. Hence, the human body is central to political struggles.

In the great age of nation-states, approximately 1648 to 1992, these intersections involved conflicts over sovereignty between states that sought mutual recognition of the legitimacy of their claims to territory. Wars were typically "state-building wars" to consolidate power, and were fought between large regular armies supported out of state taxation. Building modern citizenship on the basis of universal taxation and military service was a major aspect of state formation, and in return for such public contributions, modern citizen rights evolved as contributory rights rather than a mere benefice. Modern wars or "new wars" tend to be irregular, unending, low-intensity conflicts that are "state-disintegrating wars" (Münkler, 2005:8). The body occupies a very different place between these old and new wars. In old wars, state armies sought to destroy as many troops from the opposing state(s) as possible. Destruction of civilian populations was not a core activity of "bourgeois wars" between nation-states. In new wars, insofar as there is a core objective, conflict is directed at women, children and the elderly to maximize terror, and systematic rape becomes part of the economy of war (Welser, 1993). Because there is an eroticization of violence as a consequence of media attention that turns street kids momentarily into terrorist celebrities, the penetration of the bodies of women becomes part of the symbolic terror of male conflict. With terrorism, the legal borders of states are no longer central to the conflict which spills out not only across borders, but also across moral boundaries. Maiming becomes an important instrument of violence and there is no clear distinction between organized crime and disorganized war. The globalization of such conflicts, the miniaturization of weaponry and the interaction between war, bodies and perception are changing the nature of these three intersections: borders, boundaries and bodies (Virilio, 1989).

Zygmunt Bauman (2000) coined the expression "liquid modernity" to describe modern society. I propose to use the concept of "liquid wars" to describe new forms of violence, where conflict spins endlessly across boundaries and borders. The liquidity of violence describes a new form of embodiment in war. Violence by and against children is indicative of some of these changes, but another component is the use of biological-technology and the threat of biological war to intimidate civilian populations. In Japan, the Aum Shinrikyo sect demonstrated the capacity of terrorist groups to inflict considerable damage upon civilian life in modern cities, when in May 1995 it released vials of sarin gas on the Tokyo subway, thereby killing many commuters and injuring thousands of other travellers (Juergensmeyer, 2000). Such incidents, along with the London underground bombings, show the futility of attempts to protect major urban

utilities, and also demonstrate how the vulnerability and quiddity of the human body becomes an essential aspect of such liquid warfare.

Bodies as moral metaphors

The human body is the most readily available tool by which to convey social meaning, especially through rituals and gestures, and, as a result, the body plays an important role in the expression of society as a whole. This idea was developed at some length by Mary Douglas in *Purity and Danger* (1966). The passage of external substances in and through the body expresses the idea of danger or pollution, because food crosses the moral boundary of the self, thereby representing a potential threat to our coherence. Because the body processes food, the ritual purity of edible substances is an important aspect of what society considers to be culturally or morally acceptable or not. These corporeal sites, such as the mouth, become important as zones of expressivity that are associated with violence and sexuality. They are dangerous because food may be contaminated. The body, as we know, plays an important part in the metaphors of membership and identity. Michel Foucault (1977), in *Discipline and Punish*, showed how the destruction of the bodies of regicides was an important statement of how the king's body was the body of society, and hence the physical integrity or boundary of the body becomes a political border of society. Dietary rules are, of course, important aspects of ritual purity in both Islam and Judaism. In modern societies these gastronomic cosmologies and ritualized notions of food have generally been transformed by secularization. We express our approval or disapproval of certain types of food in the language of hygiene and medicine, not salvation. However, the obsession with the body and food remains, and obsessions are reconstructed around diet, obesity, anorexia and organic foods. Since Sigmund Freud (1950:28) in *Totem and Taboo* recognized a close parallel between magic, prohibitions on behavior and obsessive-neurotic activities, our modern obsession with the anorexic body could be regarded as a modern cult in which corporeal integrity is guaranteed by the refusal of merely mundane nourishment.

The body thus has an immediate capacity to express sacred values, human sexuality and sovereign power. For example, the distinction between right-handed and left-handed people has been a basic form of social classification, in which the left hand indicates phenomena that are handicapped or evil (sinister). On the right-handed side are things that are handy and handsome. In Paradise, the virtuous will sit at the right hand of God (Turner, 1992). Traditional societies harnessed the body to express the sacred authority of the group or society, and hence there is a close relationship between the body, the sovereignty of a king, state power and the idea of the sacred. Paradoxically, Roman Catholic popes historically lived short lives, and typically measured their brevity against the twenty-five years of Saint Paul's leadership of the "primitive Church." Why did such saintly bodies survive for only short reigns? How could corporeal brevity be

reconciled with such exulted power? This question was raised by Peter Damian in 1064 in the form of a letter (*De Brevitate*) to Pope Alexander II (1061-1073) on the brevity of papal life. While Damian celebrated the authority of the Pope—calling him the king of kings and the prince of emperors (*rex regum et princeps imperatorum*)—he recalled that the death of the pope was a form of sacrifice for the salvation of all, and the brevity of their ecclesiastical lives was indicative of their separation from profane life (Paravicini-Bagliani, 2000). There is always a necessary relationship between the sovereign power of the state, power over the body and the control of life.

Ordnung and Ortung

For Giorgio Agamben (1998), in his *Homo Sacer*, the fundamental classification of classical society was not necessarily between the sacred and the profane, but between nature and culture, or more precisely between *physis* (nature) and *nomos* (order). Now sovereignty resides in *nomos*, or law, in the ordering (*Ordnung*) of the polis. Nature is characterized by its violence; the polis, by its order, and yet the paradox of sovereignty is that it involves a monopoly of violence. The Hobbesian sovereign overcomes the state of nature by incorporating that violence into its power to order men and things. This idea that the normative authority of sovereign power has to disguise its origins in violence became central to Jacques Derrida's analysis of the paradoxical features of power or force (*Gewalt*). This notion of the paradoxical relationship between law, state and authority ran throughout Derrida's philosophical works from *On Grammatology* (1976) to his later lectures on religion (Derrida and Vattimo, 1998). Derrida's thesis was that, insofar as the law is a command of the state and insofar as the state has a monopoly of force in a given territory, then the legitimacy of the law requires that the origins of law be disguised. Law pretends to have no history and no context; it is a form of pure authority (Beardsworth, 1996). However, because law has its historical origins in state violence, how can law be an ordering of violence without itself being pure violence?

The contemporary debate about the nature of the political, which has occupied modern political philosophy for some decades, has been engaged with the legacy of Carl Schmitt (1996). Writing in the context of erosion of authority in the liberal Weimar state, Schmitt defined sovereignty as an exception to the law, and as the capacity to declare that an emergency exists. The state has the power to bring about order in the face of an emergency by exercising its monopoly of violence. Schmitt was a student of Max Weber's political sociology, and we can say that Weber's sociology distinguished two forms of power—symbolic and physical (Weber, 1968). The Church is that institution that has symbolic power to order society and individual lives, operating through forms of ritual and discipline to control souls. The state is that institution that has a monopoly of violence in a given territory, operating through law and coercion to police bodies.

Because Weber adhered to a positive theory of law, he defined law as the command of the state. Are laws legitimate? When they are issued by the authority of the state, then they have legality, but Weber could not adequately answer the question. Schmitt, in the context of the Weimar crisis, raised some awkward questions for liberal parliamentary democracy, and rewrote the rule of law as rule by decree in his *Legality and Legitimacy* (2004) by allocating extraordinary powers to the office of the President, thereby paving the way for Hitler's "leadership-democracy" (*führer-demokratie*).

For Weber, power is absolute when symbolic and physical violence are combined, that is, when the power of state and Church combine, we have what can be called "caesaropapism." In his notion of "plebiscitary democracy," which he applied to the German case, Weber recognized that where a President is selected rather than elected, he has considerable power over the parliament, and his personality can acquire distinctively charismatic qualities. A "plebiscitarian ruler" has "essentially charismatic features" (Weber, 1968:1126), and in Germany the personal power of such a leader was enhanced, in Weber's view, by the passive acceptance of political power that had been preached by Lutheranism over the centuries. For Weber, these patriarchal tendencies were a legacy of the rulership of Bismarck (Mommsen, 1984:86), and with these charismatic powers, the actual body of the ruler gained in significance as a source of personal authority. Here, then, is a crucial difference between absolutism and the core doctrines of the liberal theory of the state, a theory that has its origins in John Locke and its historical moment in the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648. Liberty exists where state sovereignty and the Church, which has a monopoly over the keys of grace, are institutionally distinct. We can see the whole liberal struggle against absolute power as a struggle to ensure that religion is a matter of private conscience, that the Church has some autonomy, and that kings cannot claim divine right.

Giorgio Agamben follows this tradition of political thought in the analysis of the sovereign territory of the state that connects Weber and Schmitt, but he is also influenced by Michel Foucault's theory of "biopolitics" and his idea of "governmentality." Sociologists have recognized the importance of Foucault's concept of governmentality as a paradigm for understanding the micro-processes of administration and control within which self-regulation and social regulation are united. The concept of governmentality, which appears late in Foucault's writing, provides an integrating theme that addresses the sociopolitical practices or technologies by which the self is constructed through discipline. Governance or governmentality refers to the administrative structures of the state, the patterns of self-government of individuals and the regulatory principles of modern society. Governmentality has become the common foundation of all forms of modern political rationality; that is, the administrative systems of the state have been extended in order to maximize the state's productive control over the demographic processes of the population. This extension of administrative rationality was first concerned with demographic processes of birth, morbidity and death, and later with the psychological health of the population. The administrative state has made eugenics

an essential principle of modern government, although the very term “eugenics” is normally hidden from view, given its bad historical connotations with genocide.

Governmentality is the generic term for these micro-power relations whereby bodies are controlled by the state through local institutions and authorities. It was defined as “the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics, that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target populations” (Foucault, 1991:102). The importance of this definition is that historically the power of the state is less concerned with sovereignty over things (land and wealth) and more concerned with maximizing the productive power of administration over population, the body and reproduction. Furthermore, Foucault interpreted the exercise of administrative power in productive terms, that is, enhancing population potential through, for example, state support for the family. The state’s involvement in and regulation of reproductive technology is a further example of governmentality in which the desire of couples to reproduce is enhanced through the state’s support of new technologies. In these examples, the eugenic policies of the state are implicit or hidden within the benign interventions of the general practitioner, the social worker or the marriage counsellor. Birth and death become key events in the exercise of state power (Memmi, 2003).

To this discussion of sovereignty, we must add the analysis of space. One distinction between religion and politics, between sacred and sovereign, is the question of the territorialization of power. This question of space is nicely illustrated by the distinction between *Ordnung* and *Ortung*. In his account of sovereignty, Agamben (1998:19) says:

What is at issue in the sovereign exception is not so much the control and neutralization of an excess as the creation and definition of the very space in which the juridico-political order can have validity. In this sense, the sovereign exception is the fundamental localization (*Ortung*) which does not limit itself to distinguishing what is inside from what is outside but instead traces a threshold (the state of exception) between the two, on the basis of which outside and inside, the normal situation and chaos, enter into those complex topological relations that make the validity of the juridical order possible.

Vulnerable bodies and precarious boundaries

Religion exists because human beings are vulnerable and they face existential problems relating to birth, aging and death. Humans are vulnerable and are subject to wounding (*vulnus*). We might draw a distinction between pain and suffering in respect to human beings as wounded animals. Pain can be inflicted on human beings through a physical assault, by stabbing and other forms of violence. Suffering, by contrast, is a moral assault on humans by which they lose their dignity. Pain and suffering do not have to

go together. I may through an attack feel pain, but I do not necessarily suffer, or I might suffer through a loss of dignity, but I feel no pain. Suffering is a moral or spiritual wounding, by which I lose my self-regard, my integrity and my human dignity. We might argue, furthermore, that animals cannot suffer or, indeed, that they cannot be tortured. Only humans can suffer through the destruction of their self-regard—and ultimately the destruction of the self. Torture presupposes the capacity for self-reflection and memory, qualities which animal life does not possess.

Both pain and suffering are, however, typically induced through violence to the body—through its degradation and decomposition (Scarry, 1985). Torture has become an all-too-familiar method of inflicting suffering through the degradation of the self brought about by a forceful and humiliating intrusion into the body. Changes of status and identity are routinely transformed by changes to the body—cutting hair off, removing clothing, branding or by forcing prisoners to perform unnatural sexual acts, for example, with animals. Punishment of the surface of the body through torture is an important process in the social rejection of human beings. The outer surface of the body is particularly important in the rituals that change status. In many cultures tattooing has been a significant ritual of inclusion and exclusion. There is therefore an important metaphorical relationship between human skin and political boundaries, because piercing and tattooing signify membership through rituals of social closure. In many societies, circumcision is an essential stage in the process of inclusion into adult male society—and typically inclusion into a religious group.

The concept of vulnerability is derived from the Latin *vulnus* or “wound.” It is instructive that “vulnerability” should have such an obviously corporeal origin. In the seventeenth century, vulnerability had both a passive and active significance, namely to be wounded and to wound. In medieval religious practice, veneration of the Passion was associated with meditation on the Seven Wounds of Christ. These wounds were evidence of the humanity and suffering of Christ, and these human attributes came to emphasize his vulnerability. These meditational themes of Christ’s suffering evolved eventually into the cult of the Sacred Heart.

To vulnerate is thus to wound, but in its modern usage it has come to signify the human capacity to be open to wounds. Vulnerability has become, in one sense, more abstract: it refers to the capacity to be exposed to psychological or moral damage. It refers increasingly to our ability to suffer (morally and spiritually) rather than to a physical capacity for pain from our exposure or openness to the world. It is the disintegration of the self through indignities to the body that demonstrate our inability to maintain and protect ourselves independently. This openness to wounding is part of what Arnold Gehlen (1980) has called our “world openness” (*Weltoffenheit*), namely, that we do not live in a biologically determined or species-specific environment. The very survival of humankind requires self-discipline, training and self-correction. In order to manage this world openness, human beings have to create a cultural world to replace or supplement their instinctual legacy. Ontological incompleteness provides

an anthropological explanation for the human origins of religious institutions, in fact, of all institutions. Because we are vulnerable, we need to build a “sacred canopy” (Berger, 1969) to protect ourselves from our ontological insecurity.

Thus, the interconnection between divinity, body and fertility was historically ancient, but when God as the Creator began to acquire the status of a Person, He began to be conceptualized as a Father, specifically a Father to those tribes and communities that remained loyal in terms of a contract or covenant. There is therefore an important mythical role for a Father who is the patriarch of nations. In the Old Testament “Jacob” and “Israel” are used interchangeably. There is in the Old Testament an important division between the idea of creation in Genesis and the narrative account of the covenant between God as Father and the nation. This differentiation is important in understanding the division between God as the Creator of Nature and God as the Father of a nation, between an impersonal force and a personal God, between natural history and salvation history. Because Yahweh was a jealous God, there was a sacred covenant between God and the tribes of Israel, which excluded those who worshipped idols and false gods. Those who were faithful to the God of Israel marked their bodies as a sign of their communal membership.

In Christianity, a universalistic orientation that recognized the world and the Other was contained in Paul’s letters to the Galatians and Romans, which rejected circumcision as a condition of salvation. This debate about circumcision in the New Testament perfectly illustrates the relationship between the skin of the body and the boundary of the moral community. Membership of the Christian community was determined by the sharing of the body of Christ, not by the purity of circumcision, although baptism remained a symbolic marker of the washing away of sins from the body. Saint Paul rejected circumcision as a condition of membership of the Christian Church, arguing metaphorically that only the circumcision of the heart could guarantee salvation from the flesh. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul rejected the “circumcision party” of troublemakers, wishing vindictively that the knife might slip and mutilate (*apokopsontai*) them, leaving them without genitals (Gager, 2000). Rejecting circumcision and accepting the cross were essential components of a necessary division between the Jews, who were loyal to the old covenant, and the Christians, who were loyal to the new one. Because the evangelical Church of post-circumcision spirituality must cross boundaries and borders to bring redemption to a fallen world, it must risk the possibility of imposing its dominion on other peoples who occupy this world. As a Holy Empire, it must risk the possibility of a holy war against those who reject its message (Rose, 1993:149).

Diet and governmentality

Because the dominant political concerns and anxieties of society tend to be translated into disrupted and disturbed images of the body, we can talk about the “somatic society”

(Turner, 1992). The “danse macabre” gave gruesome expression to the devastation of the medieval social order that had been brought about by the ravages of the Black Death, and in modern society the scourge of cancer and AIDS have often been imagined in military metaphors of invading armies (Turner, 2004). Social disturbances are grasped in the metaphors by which we understand mental and physical health. Body metaphors have been important in moral debate about these social disruptions. Our sense of social order is spoken of in terms of the balance or imbalance of the body. In the eighteenth century, when doctors turned to mathematics to produce a Newtonian map of the body, the medical metaphor of hydraulic pumps was used to express human digestion and blood circulation. The therapeutic bleeding of patients by knife or leech was intended to assist these hydraulic mechanisms and to relieve morbid pressures on the patient’s mind. Severe disturbances in society and the body politic were often imagined as poor social digestion. These popular assumptions about social unrest producing disorder in the gut were reproduced in the basic idea of the need for a government of the body. Dietary management of the body was translated into fiscal constraint, reduction in government expenditures and downsizing of public functions. In the discourse of modern management, a lean and mean corporation requires a healthy management team, who can exercise economical control over what would otherwise be a flabby corporation. In neo-liberal economic ideology, central government is always in danger of becoming an excess—a sort of political obesity. The modern idea of government is taken from these diverse meanings of diet that signifies a political regime, a regimentation of society and a government of the body. Regulating bodies, disciplining souls and governing communities were merged in political theories of social contract and state.

The body also provides an important nexus between the state and the individual, and so the body has become in modern times a site of continuing political conflicts. This connection can be illustrated by the life of Mahatma Gandhi, who used control of the body as a political weapon against British imperial rule in the struggle for Indian independence. His preoccupation with sex, diet and health reform illustrates the connections between the body politic and the individual organism and its rational management (Alter, 2000). Gandhi was receptive to a number of Western health “fads,” such as vegetarianism and nature cure, and he was dogmatically opposed to allopathic medicine, because it provided sometimes violent and intrusive cures of the symptoms of specific diseases rather than offering a holistic approach to the patient. Gandhi conceptualized colonial rule in terms of the subjection of bodies, and hence political liberation required a transformation of the passive body of the Indian subject. The treatment of the disease in the body politic required first the healing of the subordinated, colonial body, and secondly the transformation of village agriculture. One technique of the body that was central to Gandhi’s politics was therefore the religious practice of celibacy (*brahmacharya*) in Hinduism. Gandhi’s experiments with diet, clothing and abstinence were in many respects consistent with traditional Hindu theories of government in which the role of the righteous king was to restore the moral balance of society, in part by the ritual regulation of his own body.

Gandhi used his body as a means of struggle in anti-colonial wars, as an instrument of protest; as a result, he became a central figure in the history of post-colonialism. In this sense, Gandhi neatly illustrates the governmentality thesis in Foucault's theory of power. But the analysis of state sovereignty and governmentality in both Foucault and Agamben is in many respects irrelevant to the struggles that are illustrated by new forms of violence associated with failed states that have been conceptualized as "small wars" or "new wars." In the "small wars" that emerge from failed states, there is an entirely new field of violence within which the body functions.

New wars: Erotic violence

In the recent sociology of warfare, there has been an important debate about the distinction between old and new wars that provides a valuable insight into micro-religious conflicts, ethnic-cleansing and genocide (Kaldor, 2001; Münkler, 2005). In particular, the concept of new wars is helpful in thinking about the increased vulnerability of women and children in civil conflicts. Old wars are said to be characteristic of the international system that was created by the Treaty of Westphalia, involving military conflict between armies that were recruited and trained by nation-states. In the conventional inter-state wars of the past that involved large set battles and military maneuvers, sexual violence against women on enemy territory was dysfunctional in terms of strategic, rational military objectives, because such forays into civil society interfered with the primary objective of war, which was the decisive defeat of an opposing army by direct military engagement. Harassing civilian populations constrained military mobility on the battlefield and delayed engagement with an opposing enemy. With these conventional inter-state wars, the development of international law to protect civilians was perfectly compatible with these military objectives.

In new wars, this military logic evaporates, and systematic rape of women ("camp rape") and violence towards civilians in general become functional activities in undermining civil authorities and destroying civil society. If marriage builds communities, rape destroys them. In wars between states, the majority of casualties are military personnel; in new wars, the casualties are almost entirely civilian. New wars have involved the sexualization of violence. The other characteristic of such wars is the growing use of children as cheap combat troops. These wars are in part the product of failed states and the reduced cost of military equipment, such as the widespread use of mines and the Kalashnikov rifle. New wars have occurred in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Burma, East Timor, Rwanda and the Sudan.

These new wars typically occur in post-colonial territories and they are expressed in terms of ethnic differentiation. Conflicting groups deploy or invent ethnic and religious traditions to explain and justify current conflicts, and the belligerents need ideological simplification of the conflict to justify violence. Hence, violence plays a

large part in community formation. Religious conflicts are often seen to be exacerbated by the negative social impact of civil wars and ethnic violence that are, in turn, the products of new wars. These characteristics have been summarized under three headings by Münkler. First, in a somewhat clumsy terminology, there is the “de-statization” or the privatization of warfare, because these wars are not necessarily fought between states. Second, there is an asymmetry between combatants in which small bands of guerrillas might be matched against the military force of the United States, but, as 9/11 demonstrated, this asymmetry can give terrorists a strategic leverage. Third, there is an autonomization of warfare as conflict moves away from states to localized conflicts that can have global consequences. Bombing a Christian church in Sulawesi may help to destabilize southeast Asia; attacking a monastery in southeast Thailand may cause regional conflicts over responsibility for protecting borders. The cost of modern tactical weapons has declined, and modern armaments are light, small and relatively cheap. It is consequently difficult to use regular armies to control small groups employing suicide bombers and child warriors.

Whereas the male body is the target of old wars, the rape and killing of the female body is central to new wars. Rape signifies to local communities that their men have been defeated—they cannot protect their own women. Violence against women appears to be most prevalent in societies which have had strict sexual and moral codes, and hence mass rape signifies the collapse of the existing regime. The rape of women in Bangladesh by Pakistani soldiers in the war of 1971, of Hazara women around Mazar-I Sharif by Taliban forces, of Algerian women by armed groups associated with the Islamic Salvation Front, of Bosnian women by Serbian Chetniks or of East Timorian women by Indonesian men is evidence of “the extensive sexualization of violence that is observable in nearly all the new wars. ... War here becomes one big torture machine whose purpose is to produce pain and suffering but to enforce a political will” (Münkler, 2005:86). One can add that such sexualized violence not only destroys its victims in terms of their symbolic value as human beings within a functioning community, but also further dehumanizes the perpetrators, because they can no longer recognize or admit a shared vulnerability.

Consumerism, celebrity and representations of masculinity have also come to influence new wars. Whereas traditional warlordism rested on an agrarian economy, new wars use:

the culture industry settings of rap and reggae and corresponding promises of consumption and status to draw in and motivate future fighters. In some warlord configurations, sunglasses and Kalashnikovs have become iconic signs of a readiness to engage in brutal unpredictable violence (Münkler, 2005:16).

Young men who are drawn into these conflicts as a result of famine and starvation, on the one hand, and the promise of sexual spoils and drugs, on the other, have been

called “overpopulation warriors.” They are the product of structural unemployment, overpopulation and exclusion from the peace economy (Diessenbacher, 1998). Their alienation from civil society is translated into random and largely senseless violence against civilian victims. Hacking off the limbs of victims, rape of women and random brutality against civilian populations are typical characteristics of new wars.

The posthuman society

In traditional societies, the relationship between resources (especially the food supply) and life expectancy was, more or less, regulated by a Malthusian logic. Classical economics was associated with the demographic theories of Thomas Malthus (1766-1834) who, in his *Essay on the Principle of Population as it Affects the Future Improvement of Society* (1798), argued that, given the sexual drive, the need for food and the declining yield of the soil, the increase in population would inevitably supersede the supply of food. Population increase could either be controlled by positive means, such as famine, disease and war, or by preventive means, such as vice (under which Malthus included, for example, masturbation), chastity, and late marriage. Political and economic strategies to improve the living conditions of the working class cannot be sustained in the long term, because they will increase the population, thereby reducing living standards by reducing the food supply. History does not appear to have supported this Malthusian pessimism. For example, in Britain, the invention of contraception in the 1820s, the colonial expansion of the food supply and technical improvements in agricultural production controlled reproduction and expanded the supply of resources. With improvements in nutrition, food supply and distribution, water supply, sanitation and housing, the death rate declined, but the increase in population was supported by improvements in agriculture. However, the possibility of extending the expectation of life in the rich societies of the North has clear Malthusian implications for the world as a whole, and because there is a very close relationship between poverty and injustice, we should take this Malthusian question seriously if we are to understand the relationship between rights and poverty.

In conventional gerontology, the question about “living forever” might in practical terms mean living a full life or achieving the average expectation of life. More recently, there has, however, been considerable speculation as to whether medical science could reverse the aging process. With new developments in bio-gerontology, the capacity of regenerative medicine to expand the limits of life becomes a plausible aspect of medicine. Various writers on biology and life expectancy are predicting a significant increase in life expectancy through stem-cell research, cloning and nanotechnology, along with the enhancement of the interconnections between brains and computerization (Fukuyama, 2002). There is a new social philosophy associated with “transhumanism” that promises life everlasting.

While there has been much scientific speculation about the psychological and moral consequences of these changes, there has been little understanding of the political economy of these medical possibilities. It is obvious, however, that the social changes will be rapid and radical. Although it is mere speculation, one can assume that the social outcomes of a new pattern of aging would include the following scenarios: growing world economic inequality between the rejuvenated and enhanced North and the naturally aging South would further inflame frustration and resentment of deprived social groups against wealthy, white and elderly populations of the developed world; labor markets would be incapable of coping with increasing number of “survivors,” generating a corresponding set of crises in housing, mortgage and insurance markets; the inability of the food and water supply to keep up with population expansion would require increasing use of genetically modified food and recycled water, increasing the dependency of the developing world on the rich, geriatric North; intergenerational conflicts over resources would exacerbate economic crises around reproduction, pensions, jobs and housing; and finally morbidity would rise as the prevalence of chronic illness and geriatric diseases increased. The burden of dependency would have significant, negative consequences for health care systems and economic growth. A pharmaceutical product can be profitable when applied to a chronic condition which it does not cure, but where it helps the patient to survive in a relationship of complete dependency on the new drug. The aim of commercial pharmacy is not to cure disease but to assist survival. There are powerful economic reasons to promote longevity, providing it is longevity with increasing morbidity.

The prospect of indefinite life would thus raise an acute Malthusian crisis. These global changes imply an interesting transition from early to late modernity. In the early stages of capitalism, the role of medical science was to improve health care to make the working class healthy and fit in order to have an efficient labor force. Late capitalism does not need a large labor force at full employment and working full time, because technology has made labor more efficient. In the new biotechnological environment, disease is no longer a negative force in the economy but, on the contrary, an aspect of the factors of production. These medical revolutions are likely to underpin the social and economic crises that cause new wars—a demographic surplus of young men whose only hope of food and status is through the barrel of a gun. New biotechnologies and their applications become conditions for new wars, and hence we might legitimately call these conflicts “neo-Malthusian wars,” because there is, in macro terms, an important connection between technology, aging populations, overpopulation, scarcity and warfare, especially at the margins of the international system where political sovereignty is being eroded and failed states proliferate.

In the failed states of the Third World, we find a “shadow globalization” involving a black economy that flourishes on slavery, drug dealing and warlords. Famine and epidemics are the companions of new wars in which the principal casualties are women and children. While famine, overpopulation and insecurity characterize the fate of

called “overpopulation warriors.” They are the product of structural unemployment, overpopulation and exclusion from the peace economy (Diessenbacher, 1998). Their alienation from civil society is translated into random and largely senseless violence against civilian victims. Hacking off the limbs of victims, rape of women and random brutality against civilian populations are typical characteristics of new wars.

The posthuman society

In traditional societies, the relationship between resources (especially the food supply) and life expectancy was, more or less, regulated by a Malthusian logic. Classical economics was associated with the demographic theories of Thomas Malthus (1766-1834) who, in his *Essay on the Principle of Population as it Affects the Future Improvement of Society* (1798), argued that, given the sexual drive, the need for food and the declining yield of the soil, the increase in population would inevitably supersede the supply of food. Population increase could either be controlled by positive means, such as famine, disease and war, or by preventive means, such as vice (under which Malthus included, for example, masturbation), chastity, and late marriage. Political and economic strategies to improve the living conditions of the working class cannot be sustained in the long term, because they will increase the population, thereby reducing living standards by reducing the food supply. History does not appear to have supported this Malthusian pessimism. For example, in Britain, the invention of contraception in the 1820s, the colonial expansion of the food supply and technical improvements in agricultural production controlled reproduction and expanded the supply of resources. With improvements in nutrition, food supply and distribution, water supply, sanitation and housing, the death rate declined, but the increase in population was supported by improvements in agriculture. However, the possibility of extending the expectation of life in the rich societies of the North has clear Malthusian implications for the world as a whole, and because there is a very close relationship between poverty and injustice, we should take this Malthusian question seriously if we are to understand the relationship between rights and poverty.

In conventional gerontology, the question about “living forever” might in practical terms mean living a full life or achieving the average expectation of life. More recently, there has, however, been considerable speculation as to whether medical science could reverse the aging process. With new developments in bio-gerontology, the capacity of regenerative medicine to expand the limits of life becomes a plausible aspect of medicine. Various writers on biology and life expectancy are predicting a significant increase in life expectancy through stem-cell research, cloning and nanotechnology, along with the enhancement of the interconnections between brains and computerization (Fukuyama, 2002). There is a new social philosophy associated with “transhumanism” that promises life everlasting.

While there has been much scientific speculation about the psychological and moral consequences of these changes, there has been little understanding of the political economy of these medical possibilities. It is obvious, however, that the social changes will be rapid and radical. Although it is mere speculation, one can assume that the social outcomes of a new pattern of aging would include the following scenarios: growing world economic inequality between the rejuvenated and enhanced North and the naturally aging South would further inflame frustration and resentment of deprived social groups against wealthy, white and elderly populations of the developed world; labor markets would be incapable of coping with increasing number of “survivors,” generating a corresponding set of crises in housing, mortgage and insurance markets; the inability of the food and water supply to keep up with population expansion would require increasing use of genetically modified food and recycled water, increasing the dependency of the developing world on the rich, geriatric North; intergenerational conflicts over resources would exacerbate economic crises around reproduction, pensions, jobs and housing; and finally morbidity would rise as the prevalence of chronic illness and geriatric diseases increased. The burden of dependency would have significant, negative consequences for health care systems and economic growth. A pharmaceutical product can be profitable when applied to a chronic condition which it does not cure, but where it helps the patient to survive in a relationship of complete dependency on the new drug. The aim of commercial pharmacy is not to cure disease but to assist survival. There are powerful economic reasons to promote longevity, providing it is longevity with increasing morbidity.

The prospect of indefinite life would thus raise an acute Malthusian crisis. These global changes imply an interesting transition from early to late modernity. In the early stages of capitalism, the role of medical science was to improve health care to make the working class healthy and fit in order to have an efficient labor force. Late capitalism does not need a large labor force at full employment and working full time, because technology has made labor more efficient. In the new biotechnological environment, disease is no longer a negative force in the economy but, on the contrary, an aspect of the factors of production. These medical revolutions are likely to underpin the social and economic crises that cause new wars—a demographic surplus of young men whose only hope of food and status is through the barrel of a gun. New biotechnologies and their applications become conditions for new wars, and hence we might legitimately call these conflicts “neo-Malthusian wars,” because there is, in macro terms, an important connection between technology, aging populations, overpopulation, scarcity and warfare, especially at the margins of the international system where political sovereignty is being eroded and failed states proliferate.

In the failed states of the Third World, we find a “shadow globalization” involving a black economy that flourishes on slavery, drug dealing and warlords. Famine and epidemics are the companions of new wars in which the principal casualties are women and children. While famine, overpopulation and insecurity characterize the fate of

modern Africa and many parts of Asia and South America, the prospect that new biotechnology can extend the life of people in the developed world is becoming a significant aspect of policy analysis. In the northern hemisphere, the bodies of the rich are being prepared for a never-ending life; in the southern hemisphere, the bodies of the poor are being prepared for never-ending war.

Conclusion: Neo-Malthusian wars and the global accident

In pre-modern societies, there was, as it were, a religious garment of the body in which the embodied self was housed within a moral fabric of shared rituals. While this sacred canopy around the body was often subject to contestation—for example, Damian's letter concerning the brevity of papal lives—these rituals constituted a shared vocabulary that guided individual behavior. It was for these reasons that the anatomy lesson posed problems for a traditional cosmology in which men of medical science were enjoined not to open up to a medical gaze what God had made secret as an internal space within the human body. Because the human body was a microcosm of the macrocosm, it should not be physically deconstructed by medical technology. However, in the modern world, the "second revolution in medical science" has created a new info-genetic body and the genome map represents a new ensemble of metaphors by which to understand life and disease. Illness is no longer the result of the immoral or sinful acts of the willful individual, but of misinformation within the body as a system of communication.

The new medical opportunities flowing from stem-cell research in particular offer new opportunities for preserving the bodies of the rich, and a medical utopia beckons with the promise of eternal life, challenging the claims of the monotheistic religions to promise us a life eternal in a spiritual paradise. The financial arrangements for this medical utopia, however, create a global genetico-medical division between the genetically enhanced and the genetically poor. These economic and medical divisions in the world system can only offer more fuel to the growing incivility of the modern world. In particular, the emergence of the overpopulation warrior is one palpable sign of this disorder in the body politic. Such warriors can attain a much desired celebrity status as fighters who are able to disrupt major political powers. The unravelling of civil society and the unravelling of the body are symbolic of these challenges to authority.

Perhaps among modern intellectuals only Paul Virilio has fully captured the implications of such new technologies for politics, the body and warfare. Virilio has realized that speed in modern technologies forces us to think of a new order of representation and he argues that, in what he calls the third revolution, the body has been invaded by technology in the form of transplantations—not of breast implants, but of technologies that enhance memory storage. Whereas the old technologies improved our capacity for travelling across territories, such as the railway and the steamship, these new technologies enter into the body through miniaturization. This process

involves a veritable colonization of the body (Armitage, 2000:49). However, the essence of his argument is that for each technology there is a particular accident waiting to happen. The train crash presupposes the railway system; an air crash has to await the flying machine. The daunting problem of our age is this: what is the corporeal accident of the third revolution of techno-bodies? At least one possibility has been explored in science fiction by such films as *Robocop*—the modern answer to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. However, unlike these local accidents of an earlier age, the accident of the future will be global, and thus generalized to everybody. These technological developments are transforming the nature of the human body, and in turn these corporeal changes imply transformations of political borders and moral boundaries.

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