

Insecurity of the European community of values

J. Peter Burgess
International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO)
peter@prio.no

Among the multiple ways in which the European Union seeks to constitute itself as a quasi-sovereign political body, endowed with the legitimacy necessary to execute monetary policy, enact law, and deploy a unified foreign policy, is through a reference to a discourse of value: the EU is construed as a community of values, whose necessity, cohesion and self-evidence is implicit. A wide range of the principles and practices of the EU make reference, either directly or subadjacently—to a set of fundamental values, whose origin and homogeneity is seldom put into question. One quite natural consequence of this reference to values is a certain kind of securitization of values. If the European Union faces a security challenge, it is related, in one way or another, to its security as a community of values. Yet what does it mean for a community of values to be insecure, to be the object of security. This paper argues, that while values themselves, and the communities that hold them as their foundation, are indestructible, it is their forms of institutionalization which come under threat. By the very nature of the relation between institutions and values, this insecurity is structurally unavoidable.

EU as a normative project

The arguments of this paper are related to, but do not address directly the work of a small group of authors interested in articulating and exploring the notion of “Normative Power Europe” {Manners, 2002 #1154; Manners, 2003 #1153; Rosencrance, 1998 #1155; Smith, 2003 #1156}. This line of thought grows out of an older argument by Hedley Bull {Bull, 1977 #118}, about the European Union’s “civilian power” in international affairs, itself derived from Francois Duchêne’s conception of the EU as a civilian power {Duchêne, 1972 #1152}.

In its most useful form, this fledgling literature forms a set of principles about the nature of power and influence, about how international organizations and sovereign and quasi-sovereign entities exert influence on the international scene. It is about how political will is translated into impact. In its less coherent incarnations it is an attempt to conceptualize a *particular* kind of power—European

power—to show that the historical, cultural, geographical *particularity* is the basis for a certain kind of power in the world, European power.

The particularity of European power in this literature is based on it being inseparable from a certain cultural-moral content. It is a power that empowers a certain set of values, European values, giving them validity, strength, influence, and giving those who adopt them access to a certain civilizational substance. This type of argumentation comes uncomfortably close to the notion of a kind of European *mission civilisatrice*—the EU’s role in the world is to spread European civilization.

In one sense this is inevitable: All power has an ethical underside, all power promotes implicitly a set of values, if only clandestinely. There is no act of foreign policy which does not simultaneously put forth in the world a value or set of values, as an alternative—a forced alternative—to what is. If the point were not to change the world, to make it more compatible with the interests of values of the state or state-like entity that is acting, it would not be foreign policy, would not be power. All power is normative. It belongs to the essence of a state to exert its own *alternative* values in the world, its own form of ethical being in the world. If it were not a value-alternative to other states, it would not be a state.

On the other hand, however, it is precisely the fact of this universality of values in power, which leaves the normative power theory quite naked. (Leaving aside the anthropological problems associated with notion of a European civilizational mission). Yes, Europe is a normative power, but it is not by virtue of Europe. It is by virtue of power. Suggesting the alternative, that Europe has no normative thrust, no influence, no impact, is to say that simply is not a state-like entity.¹

European values in the European self-constitution

What are the values that constitute the European community of values? In the pages of the *Draft Treaty for a European Constitution* we can isolate at least six types of linkages between values, supposed to be European, and the institutional activities carried out in their name: identity, general purpose, unity, membership, rights, and security.

¹ Helene Sjurgen argues against the “normative power” thesis on the basis of its lack of objective or qualifiable criteria. {Sjurgen, 2004 #1160}

Values as identity

Hot on the heels of the “Establishment of the Union” in Article I-1 of the *Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe*, is the pronouncement its values in Article I-12:

The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of person belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail {, 2005 #1157}.

The Preamble to the draft Constitution, a page earlier, describes similar values as a source of “inspiration” for the European project:

Drawing inspiration from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe, from which have developed the universal values of the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law.

Values as aim

Values do not only linger and luxuriate, they are also objectives. The following paragraph of Article I specifies among the “objectives” of the Union,

...to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples.
[...]
...In its relations with the wider world, the Union shall uphold and promote its values and interests.

Values as intergovernmental unity

It goes almost without saying that the workings of the European Council are to be guided by the promotion of shared values (but it must be said) in Articles I-40 and I-41.

Member States shall ensure, through the convergence of their actions, that the Union is able to assert its interests and values on the international scene.
[...]
the Council may entrust the execution of a task, within the Union framework, to a group of Member States in order to protect the Union’s values and serve its interests.

Values as gatekeeper

The European values also shibboleth as gatekeeper for entry into the European Union. Title IX describes the conditions for membership in the EU:

The Union shall be open to all European States which respect the values referred to in Article I-2, and are committed to promoting them together.

It also specifies the grounds upon which *exclusion* may take place.

... the Council may adopt a European decision determining that there is a clear risk of a serious breach by a Member State of the values referred to in Article I-2.

Values as basis for rights

Perhaps most naturally, the European values are closely associated with its charter of rights. The annex containing the entirety of the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the Union* describes at length the prescribed European rights, based on a common set of values:

The peoples of Europe, in creating an ever closer union among them, are resolved to share a peaceful future based on common values.

[...]

Conscious of its spiritual and moral heritage, the Union is founded on the indivisible, universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity, ; it is based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law, It places the individual at the heart of its activities, but establishing the citizenship of he Union and by creating and area of freedom, security and justice.

[...]

The Union contributes to the preservation and to the development of these common values while respecting the diversity of the cultures and traditions of the peoples of Europe as well as the national identities of the Member states and the organization of their public authorities at national, regional and local levels.

Values and security

Finally, the notion of values is associated, in the draft Constitution, with the enterprise of European security, formulated as foreign policy. In the first lines of Title V on the EU's External Action.

The Union shall define and pursue common policies and actions, and shall work for a high degree of cooperation in all fields of international relations, in order to [among other things] safeguard its values, fundamental interests, security, independence and integrity.

The safeguarding of values are nearly line 1 of the determination External Action, the fundamental priority of foreign policy.

The notion of the assertion of the values of the European was already declared as the aim of EU foreign policy, for example in the Treaty of the European Union, Title V, Article II:

The Union shall define and implement a common foreign and security policy covering all areas of foreign and security policy, the objectives of which shall be [among other things] to safeguard the common values, fundamental interests, independence and integrity of the Union in conformity with the principles of the United Nations Charter {, 1992 #808}.

The same idea is expressed again in 2003 European Security Strategy, “A More Secure Europe in a Better World”, which describes the strategic objectives necessary to “defend its security and to promote its values” {, 2003 #1159}.

The return of values to IR?

The discourse of values is on the ascendant in the field of international relations theory. In the last decade a large number of new works have contributed to debate about the norms and codes that can be and should be involved in international politics.²

The traditional absence of ethical reflection in the field is understandable since it is consistent with the predominant orientation of the field: political—and thus ethical—realism. A basic tenet of political realism is that politics supplants ethics. To assume the realist standpoint in the analysis of international relations is to adopt the posture that the political dynamics of security national interests on the international playing field contains no moral dimensions. It is neither moral nor immoral. Instead, it is a-moral {Campbell, 1999 #96; Hutchings, 1992 #183; Donnelly, 1992 #199; McElroy, 1992 #197}. Based upon a Weberian-inspired understanding of interest in international politics, the realist and neorealist branches of IR theory have built upon the more or less coherent conclusion that differences between opposed international entities are to be resolved based upon questions of power understood as a strategic, military and technological dimension and connected to the security of a given nation state. Indeed international politics is considered an adept device for translating the perilous metaphysics of values—be they religious, cultural, ethnic, etc.—into the universal language of military power. In other words, the essential differences between states may derive from metaphysical value differences, but they are negotiated on the secular field of international politics.

² A large variety of English language works have appeared in the last six years. {Hutchings, 1992 #183; McElroy, 1992 #197; Crawford, 2002 #200; Smith, 2001 #201; Seckinelgin, 2001 #202; Oppenheim, 2001 #203; Appadurai, 2001 #204; Bleiker, 2001 #205; Gasper, 2001 #206; Sutch, 2001 #207; Thomas, 2001 #208; Smith, 2000 #209; Barkan, 2000 #210; Finkelkraut, 2000 #211; Shaw, 1999 #213; Jabri, 1999 #214; Cochran, 1999 #215; Harbour, 1999 #216; Hutchings, 1999 #217; Robinson, 1999 #218; Segesvary, 1999 #219; Barry, 1998 #220; Gregg, 1998 #221; Lefever, 1998 #222; Doyle, 1997 #223; Graham, 1997 #224; Meyer???, 2002 #263}. For a critical review of recent literature see Walker {, 1994 #185}

Value ethics: exogenous or endogenous?

Already some ten years ago, R.B.J Walker reflected upon the growing canon of literature on ‘ethics and international relations’, affirming its importance while at the same time making a crucial observation about its constitution. ‘I am concerned primarily’, he noted, ‘with the extent to which so much of the literature is informed by the highly problematic assumption that ‘ethics and international relations’ is the name of intersection, a junction between two separate areas of disciplinary inquiry’ {Walker, 1993 #176}. ‘Ethics and international relations’ is indeed a meeting place, but one where two completely heterogeneous fields of thought come together and interact in a way which does not disturb or problematize either one. ‘Value’ remains a codified set of principles and norms to be applied to any given object. ‘International relations’ remains a crystallized set of assumptions and methods about the makeup of the relation between two or several states. Neither is any sense in a situation of mutation or development based upon interaction with the other. The various narratives of the one are simply applied to the narratives of the other, only to withdraw to their stable and entirely incongruous domains.

Walker responds ingeniously by questioning and re-construing both the concept of international relations as something distinct from ethical value. Instead he develops an analysis considering the degree to which claims of ethics are compatible with claims of international relations, ‘the spatio-temporal articulation of political identity and community’ {Walker, 1993 #176@: 51}. In order to do so he proposes three innovative readings of international relations as embodiments of ethics. The first reading concerns the parallel trajectories of the ethics and international relations as they emerge from similar parallel states of modernity. According to this reading, the dichotomy announced in Weber’s version of modernity between instrumental rationality and value-based rationality is problematic and troublesome, though certainly not unwarranted. The second reading of the connection between ethics and international relations, criticizes the identification of political sovereignty and thereby political community with conventional territoriality. The questions of ethical relations are, according to this model, inevitably framed in terms of the differentiation of political space. In his final reading, Walker questions the classical conception of international relations as a negotiation of the opposition between state and anarchy advanced in the 1970’s by Hedley Bull {Bull, 1977 #118}. An international relation in this optic is one form or another of ‘exclusion’ of the anarchical and ‘inclusion’ of the sovereign. This two-dimensional schema resists any simple ethical configuration.

In each of these three models, Walker locates a ground for the incongruity of ethical value and international relations on the side of international relations. The following analysis supplements Walkers project of re-launching international relations as an ethical practice, by focusing on the political nature of ethics. In particular it will focus on ethics a political practice involved with security. An analysis of the ethical subject of security will begin with the already classical definitions of security, community and political agency, but will depart from.

The concept of security

In order to unpack the relationship between values and security, let us begin by re-visiting the foundational concept of international relations: security. A certain concept of security plays a role in every aspect of life. Security is thus a fundamental notion in human affairs. Accordingly it can be analyzed across a myriad of discourses, from psychology to biology, to economics, to physics, and on. Within the field of international relations the concept has had a slow but persistent development. Until the publication of Buzan's *People, States and Fear* in 1983 the concept was relatively underdeveloped. In his survey of extant literature, he points out that, at the time, most of the work on security came from the field of empirical strategic studies for which 'security' is the core concept. Discussions are by and large limited to measuring the limits and stability of national security {Buzan, 1991 #112@: 3}. Since 'security' is the tacit foundation of security studies, it is rarely problematized. More general studies on security institutions and their role in international relations hardly scratch the surface of this central concept.

Buzan's book is a milestone in the sense that it opens the concept of security to a more penetrating analysis of the nature, structure, and extension of the concept. It was also the first in a long line of increasingly sophisticated literature on the nature of security, generally taking its point of departure on the over strict interpretation of security as 'military' security. The productive problematization of the concept of security has become a field unto itself. Yet the most innovative contributions to understanding the concept of security has come, on the hand, from the constructivist 'Copenhagen School' of security analysis, itself building upon and enveloping Buzan's earlier work {Buzan, 1998 #50; Wæver, 1993 #142; Wæver, 1996 #38} and, on the other hand, the post-structuralist critique of traditional security thought {Der Derian, 1992 #90; Der Derian, 1989 #91; Der Derian, 1987 #93; Der Derian, 2001 #95; Campbell, 1999 #96; Campbell, 1998 #97; Campbell, 1993 #98; Campbell, 1993 #99; Campbell, 1998 #102; Connolly, 1991 #139; Walker, 1993 #176; Weber, 1995 #177}.

The fundamental originality of the Copenhagen School is double: first, and in general, it has developed and systematized the notion of security as a system of reference, based in part by the semiotic theory of Greimas. According to this approach, the meaning of security lies in the use of its concept, in the *act* of securitization, whereby, ‘the exact *definition a criteria* of securitization is constituted by the intersubjective establishment of an existential threat with a saliency sufficient to have substantial political effects’ {Buzan, 1998 #50@: 25}. This methodology of analyzing security discourse as a extended strategies of securitization redefines the concept security as a pragmatic *function*, as the transitive *act*, of ‘securitization’. Indeed in the latter years it has become more strongly construed as a ‘speech act’ carried out by a ‘security actor’ {, 1998 #50@: 40} inspired by Austin’s speech act theory.

The semiotic structure of securitization differentiates between ‘referent objects’, ‘securitizing actors’ and ‘functional actors’. A ‘referent object’ of securitization is something that is considered to be existentially threatened. In the vast majority of cases the security referent is the state, though Wæver et al. recognize that this is not necessarily the case: The makeup of the semiotic system of analysis opens for a much broader set of referent objects than is covered by conventional security analysis. A ‘securitizing actor’ is the actor who actually performs the speech act of securitization, by declaring the referent object ‘existentially threatened’ {, 1998 #50@: 36}. A ‘functional actor’ is a participant in carrying out the pragmatic consequences of securitization.

The most important theoretical innovation of the securitization approach of the Copenhagen School is its differentiation between subject and object of security. The subject of securitization carries out an act ascribing security valence to the referent object. Security is never objectively given. According to the suppositions of constructivism there is no implicit, objective or given relation between the *subject*—the security actor—and the *object* of securitization. Rather this relation is constructed *intersubjectively* through social relations and processes {, 1998 #50@: 30-31}.

Wæver et al. underscore that the constitution of the ‘securitizing actor’ is problematic. By isolating or ‘identifying’ any given actor as the unique securitizing actor runs the risk of rendering invisible the social or institutional setting from which that actor ‘securitizes’: ‘How to identify the securitizing actor is in the last instance less a question of who performs the the speech than of what logic shapes

the action. It is an action according to individual logic or organizational logic, and is the individual or the organization generally held responsible by other actors? Focusing on the organizational logic of the speech act is probably the best way to identify who or what is the securitizing actor' {, 1998 #50@: 40}.

The main axis for identifying the *subject* of security is fundamentally intersubjective. It is based on the movement of meaning and perception between the individual and the social setting. But the *identity* of the securitizing subject, securitizing actor, the author speech act lies in the 'organizational logic' of the speech act. I firmly believe that Wæver et al. have correctly identified the *locus* of the ethical subject of security in the logic of the speech act. Yet in what follows I wish to pursue the hypothesis that this level of constructivist approach is ultimately too narrow, precisely because this 'organizational logic', like the subject itself, is not neutral, not objectively given. Rather it is itself organized and structured by the uneven relations of power implicit in the categories of individual, group, state and society. By taken the individual embedded in itself organizational logic as a given, we miss the ethical nature of the subject.

To reiterate the assumption with which I started this paper: the ethical is not some endogenous property of the subject. On the contrary it contributes to constituting the subject. Therefore the speech act theory of securitization needs to be supplemented by attention to an analysis of the *subject* of security. The *actor* of security is not the same as the *subject* of security. What does their difference mean?

What is a community?

In its transition from High Latin to Medieval vernacular the term *communis* retains an ambivalence between its first and secondary meanings: that is, as a quality or state, shared by members of a human group, and as a body of individuals. In the primary meaning it is "a quality appertaining to or being held by all in common, joint or common ownership, tenure liability, etc." Alternatively, it is a "common character, quality in common, commonness, identity" In the second meaning it is "the body of those having common or equal rights or rank as distinguished from the privileged classes, the body of commons or commonality" or, lastly the political body itself, "a body of people organized into a political municipal or social unity". {, 1971 #1@: 702}

This definition of *community* presupposes: a discourse, be it academic or popular and a political position relative to that discourse. What is the discourse of community? The division of labor of academic fields, particularly in modernity, has given rise to a number of differing, sometimes overlapping discourses of community. We might name *social, cultural, political, technological, and economic*, in addition to the object of this paper, community of *values*. The differences between discourses of community rests upon their differing systems of reference and valorization, and their differing logics of inclusion and exclusion. Variations in discourse thus give way to a politics of community. Academic debates within these fields turn not only around the content of supposed communities but around the borders that articulate them.

From a phenomenological point of view, the rise in the concept of community responds to a generalized sense of crisis in the social sphere, that is to a sense of loss of community.³ The timeliness of the concept of community is related to its crisis. Communities multiply and overlap, producing criss-crossing identities and loyalties. Neither the predicates that determine communities are stable nor the body-political that represents them to both community members and non-members. This sense of crisis is associated with the rise of a certain kind of “multiculturalism” and the notion of multi-layered awareness known as glocalisation. Because of migration and refugee movements, cultural identity becomes more intermingled, making community boundaries more porous. Global awareness has given force to local legitimacy and cultural sovereignty. The local is legitimated against a wider supra-local horizon.

In terms of the semantic or symbolic structure a community is not only a social praxis, it is a system of meaning. {Anderson, 1991 #302; Cohen, 1985 #3}. Both access to community and access to understanding a community are determined by codes of conduct and semantics of the community’s actions.

What is a community of values?

A community of values is a community whose belonging is determined by a shared set of values. This plays out differently relative to the two axes of community mentioned earlier: community as a set of predicates and community as a body. A community is as set of predicates. The predicates of a

³ Hobsbawm: “Never was the word ‘community’ used ore indiscriminately and emptily than int he decades wehn communities int he sociological sense became hard to find in real life” {Hobsbawm, 1994 #4@: 428}.

community of values are *values*. The catalogue of shared values becomes distinct in relation to other communities which do not possess the same values, or which possess a different composition of values. Thus values are relative to the Other, to the non-community member, to the immigrant, to the other religion, the other culture, etc. No community of values is based on one value alone. Predicates are always multiple. The interplay of values forms the unique character of the community as body: the composition of the community has a value in itself on par with the constitutive values.

A community of values is also a thing in itself, actively implicated and involved in the formation and mutation of values. The community itself has a certain value, both to members and non-members of the community. The community is inherently conservative, regardless of the actual values involved in its constitution. An community, including a community of value, tends toward its own self-preservation.

By *value* we understand an abstract notion whose concrete realization is estimated, by common consensus, relative difference, or absolute authority, as being of significant worth.

Without endorsing a *politically* relative view of value, it must be admitted that no value has absolute worth. Something is *a* value from the moment it has more worth than something. Whether the source of this worth is implicit or not does not change the relative nature of its value-ness. The *source* of values of communities is inevitably occult. This fact contributes to preserving its relativity, by assuring that any absolute reference, historical or otherwise.

These basic ideas and definitions open on to the first paradox of the community of values: Values are both universal from point of view of the community and particular and situational from the point of view of moral communities. As abstract concepts, values, are only meaningful to the degree they are considered universally valid. If a value is not everywhere and always a value for the members of the community then it is not a value at all.

The community as a whole is defined by its values as against other entities, other groups, individuals and communities, which do not possess its values. In this sense the universal nature of the given values depends upon their particularity, on the opposition to the situations where they are not valid. Supposed universality makes visible *internal* divergence or particularity. The value principles upon whose consensus the community is formed does not guarantee their concrete universality, their

universality in effect. Indeed the very presence of the universal principle is a reminder that the reality to which it refers is not yet universal.

The community of values is always disjointed with respect to its own boundaries. Moreover it is both lesser than and greater than its boundaries. Any community of values is characterized by internal heterogeneity, strife, disagreement, political friction, etc. On the other hand, a community of values always exceeds the political boundaries of which it is constitutive. Any community of values constitutes itself by relating to others. It there by lies partially beyond its own conceived borders. In other words, the existence of the community of values depends upon the negative relation to its other.

Based on its supposed universality the community of values aims at the other as an object of action. It must relate to the other individual, the other community, the other moral ideal, even though it is foreign to him/her. It is the essence of a community of values to fail to be a community of values. A community of values is the movement of non-correspondence between the conceptual, that is, the level of ideas, and the empirical.

A community of values is therefore one which is constantly self-interrogating, constantly forming a new idea of itself based on the ever changing empirical landscape of that which it seeks to encompass. The movement is dialectical, swinging from the articulation of moral or norms to the identification of the empirical reality of existing, valid values.

In what sense can a community of values be insecure?

Security is the condition of being secure, of being protected from or not exposed to danger, “freedom from doubt [...] from care, anxiety or apprehension; a feeling of safety or freedom from or absence of danger” {, 1971 #1}. Security is thus a negative category, a state of *absence* on two different level. It is both the objective *absence* of (or “freedom from”) threat and the absence of *anxiety* or *apprehension* of threat. As noted earlier, security, in contrast to *safety*, refers to a sphere of potentials. It relates to a field of presumed, though actually unspecified danger. This virtual association of security link it with its other aspect. The relationship to an unspecified field of dangers

is inseparable from the *experience* of this danger. Thus a kind of phenomenology of security comes into play. Security is a lived phenomenon, an experiential concept.

By chance or necessity, Deutsch's classical definition of "security community" is a response to both these axes of the general definition of security: the presence of unspecified danger and the experience of the presence of that danger:

A security community is a group of people, which has become "integrated". By integration we mean the attainment, within a territory, of a "sense of security" and of institutions and practices strong and widespread enough to assure...dependable expectations of "peaceful change" among its population. By sense of community we mean a belief...that common social problems must and can be resolved by processes of 'peaceful change'" {Deutsch, 1957 #5@: 5}.

In Deutsch's political theory security community is an integration *process* of community. It is a dialectical movement between the experience of security that enables the creation of institutions, that, in turn, reinforce security. Security community is thus simultaneously a self-understanding, a perception of one's own community in relation to certain dangers, specified or unspecified, and the ability to adapt institutionally to the changing security environment. Community in this classical model is a process of change, the evolving relation between the identity of the security community and its institutional response to its environment. In these terms community has an organic nature: it modifies itself through by virtue of the modification of its self-understanding, its understanding of threats to it.

To what extent does the classical model of *security community* relate to the concept of *community of values* developed above? On one level, a security community and a community of values are essentially different: on another they are similar. Their difference relates to the threat to which they are opposed. A *security community*, according to the classical definition, is one whose common basis is the threat from which it offers freedom. The threat is generalized according to any number of categories, provided that the threat is an existential one, that is, that its achievement potentially leads to the dissolution of the community. A *community of values* is of a different order, though its *security* is based on a structure analogous to that of the security community in general. It is related to the existential threat of dissolution. The common basis of a community of values is a set of values. The perception of threat to moral values is the basis for the creation and evolution of institutions that secure such

values. These institutions are the prime force for changing the self-understanding of threat to the values of the community.

The common basis of the community of values is a set of values. What would the destruction of such a community mean? If security is to be understood as the presence of unspecified threat and the experience of that threat, what would the result of the collapse of the security of the security community mean? What does the threat to which security refers actually threaten? What would the execution of such a threat actually mean? Two strange and disconcerting answers impose themselves.

First, the logic of security does not contain a logic of destruction, only a disposition for the unspecified *potential* for destruction. It is the *threat* of danger and not danger itself which constitutes the essence of security. Threat, in the security community, has no real referent, only a virtual or potential one. Or, to put it another, the threat at the basis of a security community is self-referential. Threat refers only to threat. There is no external or transcendental danger, at least not relative to the security community, which would be the outcome of the collapse of the security community. {Agamben, 1993 #11; Badiou, 1998 #29}.

Secondly, what would the collapse of a community of values actually mean? The key to understanding the life of moral values in time is the insight that values cannot be pulverized. No objective violence, no degree of absence of concrete incorporation of values can serve to annihilate them. If we understand moral values to be purely principled, timeless, placeless concepts then it goes without saying that no empirical change, creation or destruction can threaten them. One might imagine that those individuals who share the moral values which constitute the common basis for the community of values are dispersed, killed, or otherwise eradicated, but the values themselves are never exposed to threat.

Thus the reactionary battle cry of popular politics: "We must militarize in order to protect our values!" rings empty. Values themselves are never under threat, can never be eradicated. If the community of values is threatened, this threat surrounds only the cohesion of those who share the moral values in question. Neither the subsistence of the shared values nor their sharing is empirically in doubt, only the cohesion of those who hold them. That cohesion is extra-moral. It does not belong to the community as such, but precedes it and remains external to it. Consequentially, the

only community which can actually be utterly and outright dispersed is one in which there is no common basis, in which there are no common predicates or properties.

What, then, is the security of the community of values? Against what must the community of values be secured? To make a community of values secure would not imply eliminating the *objective* threat to the moral values. The insecurity of a community of values would correspond to the menace of disruption of the self-constituting dialect between value and reality. The only menace to the community is values, is the loss of the process of its self-constitution, the play of community: idea-reality, value-institution. To eliminate insecurity would be to eliminate the possibility of freezing the internal dynamic of community.

The menace to the community of values is thus not the destruction of its moral values. It is rather the interruption of the link between the abstract values and the institutions large and small that first concretize them, then contribute to the dynamic of their evolution. The threat is logically double: either calcification of the relation between ideal and concretization at the heart of the community, or its uncoupling. The ability to act as a community of values, and the ability for the members of a community of values to act individually, depends on their ability to take cognizance of the values they are enacting. The community of values is a community that knows itself as such, reacts to the scope and limits of its own application. The community of values is thus not the static existence of the set of values that makes up its foundation, it is rather the process of questioning of the application of its own principles.

The community of values is thus by necessity insecure. If it were not insecure, it would cease to be “moral”. The threat to the community concerns the openness to moral questioning, to moral ambiguity. The community of values is not a collective attachment to a normative checklist. It is a formation confronting the ethos of threat implicit in any question of values.

What is the relationship between a community of values and its security? What does it mean to say that a community is insecure? The consequence of these reflections is that a community of values is *necessarily* insecure. The “value” of the community of values lies precisely in its insecurity. If it were

not insecure it would cease to be “value”. The value of the community of values lies in its very insecurity.

References