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§ Reflections on Racism

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We are here, it goes without saying, because we want to combat racism, xenophobia, chauvinism, and everything relating to them. We do this in the name of a basic stand: we recognize the equal value of all human beings qua human beings and we affirm the duty of the collectivity to grant them all the same effective possibilities to develop their faculties. Far from being able to remain comfortably ensconced on some alleged self-evident set of “human rights” or a transcendental necessity of the “rights of man,” this affirmation engenders paradoxes of the first magnitude, and notably an antinomy I have already emphasized a thousand times, which we may define in abstract terms as the antinomy between universalism as regards human beings and universalism as regards human beings’ “cultures” (their imaginary institutions of society). I shall return to this point at the end of my presentation.

This combat, however, like all the other ones, has in our epoch often been deflected and twisted round in the most incredibly cynical ways. To take just one example, the Russian State proclaims that it is against racism and chauvinism, whereas in fact anti-Semitism, underhandedly encouraged by the powers that be, is alive and kicking in Russia and dozens of nations and ethnic groups still remain by force within the great prison of peoples.¹ There is still talk—and rightly so—about the extermination of the American Indians. I have never seen anyone pose the question, “How has one language, which five centuries ago was spoken only from Moscow to Nizhni-Novgorod, been able to reach the shores of the Pacific? Has this occurred with the enthusiastic applause of Tatars, Buriats, Samo-yeds, Tunguses, and various other peoples?”

Here, we have an initial reason for us to be, on the level of reflection, particularly rigorous and exacting. A second and equally important reason is that here, as in all questions bearing on a general social-historical category—the Nation, Power, the State, Religion, the Family, and so on—it is almost inevitable that one will slip up somewhere along the way. For every thesis that one might put forth, it is disconcertingly easy to find counterexamples—the pet vice of authors in these domains is to lack the reflex that prevails in all other disciplines: Is not what I am saying possibly contradicted by a counterexample? Every few months, one reads about theories on these themes, supported by grandiose scaffolding, and one is surprised to find oneself once again having to exclaim in astonishment: Has the author, then, never heard anyone talk about Switzerland or China? Byzantium or the Christian monarchies on the Iberian peninsula? Athens or New England? Eskimos or the !Kung? After four, or twenty-five, centuries of self-critical thought, one continues to witness the flourishing of complacent generalizations that have been made on the basis of some idea or other that simply has come across the author's mind.

To conclude these preliminary remarks, let me add one thing: what I have to say will often be in the interrogative and almost as often disagreeable.



An anecdote, perhaps amusing, leads me to one of the centers of the question. As you saw in the announcement for this colloquium, my first name is Cornelius—in old French, and for my friends, *Corneille*. I was baptized in the Orthodox Christian religion, and in order for me to be baptized, there had to be a holy eponym. Indeed, there was an *aghios Kornēlios*, the Greek transliteration of the Latin Cornelius—from the *gens Cornelia*, which had lent its name to hundreds of thousands of inhabitants of the Empire—the *Kornēlios* in question having been sanctified as a result of a story recounted in *Acts* (10–11), which I shall summarize. This Cornelius, centurion of an Italic cohort, lived in Caesarea, gave much alms to the people, and feared God, to whom he prayed unceasingly. After being visited by an angel, he invited to his house Simon, surnamed Peter. The latter, en route, also had a vision, the meaning of which was that there no longer was any common and any unclean food. After arriving in Caesarea, Peter dined at Cornelius's—dining at the house of a *goy* is, according to the Law, an abomination—and as he spoke there, the Holy

Ghost fell on all those who were listening to his words. This greatly surprised Peter's Jewish companions, since the Holy Ghost had also poured on the uncircumcised, who had begun to speak in tongues and to magnify God. Later, upon his return to Jerusalem, Peter had to answer the bitter reproaches of his other circumcised companions. After he explained himself, however, they held their peace, saying that God had granted repentance unto life for the "nations" as well.

This story evidently has multiple significations. It is the first time in the New Testament that the equality of "nations" before God, and the non-necessity of passing through Judaism to become Christian, was affirmed. What is of even more importance, for me, is the contraposition of these propositions. Peter's companions "were astonished" (*exēstēsan*, says the original Greek of the *Acts*: *ex-istamai*, *ek-sister*, to go out of oneself) that the Holy Ghost would really want to pour upon all "nations." Why? Because, obviously, until then the Holy Ghost had dealt only with Jews—and at best with this particular sect of Jews who believed in Jesus of Nazareth. It also, however, refers us back, by negative implication, to key characteristics of Hebraic culture—here I am beginning to become disagreeable—which for others do not go without saying, this being the least that can be said. Not agreeing to eat with the *goyim*, when one knows the place the common meal holds in the socialization and the history of humanity? So then one rereads the Old Testament attentively, notably the books relating to the conquest of the Promised Land, and one sees that the notion of "chosen people" is not simply theological but eminently practical as well. The literal expressions of the Old Testament are, moreover, very beautiful, if one may say so. (Unfortunately, I am able to read it only in the Greek Septuagint version, from the period soon after Alexander's conquest. I know there are problems, but I do not think that they affect what I am going to say.) One sees there that all people inhabiting the "perimeter" of the Promised Land were "smote with the edge of the sword" (*dia stomatos romphaias*), and this without discrimination as to sex or age; that no attempt at "converting" them was made; that their temples were destroyed, their sacred forests cut down, all under direct orders from Yahweh. As if that were not enough, prohibitions abound concerning adoption of their customs (*bdelygma*, abomination; *miasma*, defilement) and concerning sexual relations with them (*porneia*, prostitution, a word that returns obsessively in the first books of the Old Testament). Simple honesty obliges one to say that the Old Testament is the first written racist

document in history that we possess. Hebraic racism is the first one of which we have written traces—which certainly does not mean that it is first in absolute terms. Everything would lead us to suppose rather the contrary. Simply, and happily, if I dare say so, the Chosen People are a people like the others.²

I find it necessary to recall this, if only because the idea that racism, or simply hatred of the other, is a specific invention of the West is one of the asinities currently enjoying broad circulation. Without being able to dwell on the various aspects of the historical changes involved or on their enormous complexity, let me note simply the following:

A. That among the peoples with a monotheistic religion, the Hebrews nevertheless enjoy the following ambiguous distinction: once Palestine was conquered (three thousand years ago—I know nothing about today) and the previous inhabitants were “normalized” in one fashion or another, the Hebrews left the world alone. They were the Chosen People; their belief was too good for the others; no effort at systematic conversion was made (but there was *no rejection* of conversion either).³

B. The two other monotheistic religions, inspired by the Old Testament and the historical “successors” to Hebraism, were unfortunately not so aristocratic: their God was good for everybody; if the others did not want Him, they were to have Him shoved down their throats by force or they would be exterminated. It would be useless to belabor this point about the history of Christianity—or rather impossible: on the contrary, not only would it be useful but it is urgent to recommence this work, for since the end of the nineteenth century and the great “critics,” everything seems to have been forgotten, and rosy versions of the spread of Christianity are being propagated. It is forgotten that when, via Constantine, the Christians seized the Roman Empire they were a minority; that they became a majority only through persecution, extortion, the massive destruction of temples, statues, religious sites, and ancient manuscripts, and finally through legal provisions (Theodosius the Great) forbidding non-Christians from inhabiting the Empire. This ardor on the part of true Christians to defend the true God by means of iron, fire, and blood is constantly present in the history of Eastern as well as Western Christianity (heretics, Saxons, crusades, Jews, the Indians of America, the objects of the charity of the Holy Inquisition, etc.). Likewise, in the face of the ambient flattery the true history of the near-incredible spread of Islam would have to be re-established. It was certainly not the charm of the Prophet’s words that

Islamized (and most of the time Arabized) populations extending from the Ebro to Sarawak and from Zanzibar to Tashkent. The superiority of Islam over Christianity, from the standpoint of the conquered, was that under the former one could survive by accepting exploitation and the deprivation of most of one's rights without converting, whereas in Christian lands the allodox, *even when Christian*, were in general not to be tolerated (see the religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries).

C. Contrary to what some have found themselves able to say (as a result of one of those aftershocks that have occurred in response to the "rebirth" of monotheism), *it is not polytheism as such* that assures equal respect for the other. It is true that in Greece, or in Rome, there was almost perfect tolerance for the religion or the "race" of others; but that concerns Greece and Rome—not polytheism as such. To take only one example, Hinduism is not only intrinsically and internally "racist" (castes) but has fed as many bloody massacres in the course of its history as any monotheistic religion, and continues to do so today.



The idea that to me seems central is that racism participates in something much more universal than one usually in fact wants to admit. Racism is an offspring, or a particularly acute and exacerbated avatar—I would even be tempted to say a monstrous specification—of what, empirically, is an almost universal trait of human societies. What is at issue is an apparent incapacity to constitute oneself as oneself without excluding the other, and this is coupled with an apparent inability to exclude others without devaluing and, ultimately, hating them.

As is always the case when it comes to the institution of society, the theme necessarily is two-sided: there is the instituting social imaginary, the imaginary significations and the institutions this imaginary creates; and, on the other hand, there is the psychism of singular human beings, and what this psychism imposes on the institution of society in the way of constraints and is itself subjected to by the institution of society.

I shall not dwell very long on the case of the institution of society, as I have often spoken of it elsewhere.⁴ Society—*each* society—institutes itself in creating its own world. This does not signify only "representations," "values," and so on. At the basis of all these, there is a *mode* of representing, a categorization of the world, an aesthetics and a logic, as well as a *mode* of valuation—and without doubt, too, a mode, each time particular to the

society under consideration, of *being affected*. In this creation of the world, the existence of *other* human beings, and of *other* societies, one way or another always finds a place. One must distinguish between, on the one hand, the constitution of others who are mythical, whether wholly so or in part (the white Saviors for the Aztecs, the Ethiopians for the Homeric Greeks), who can be “superior” or “inferior,” even monstrous, and, on the other hand, the constitution of real others, of societies really encountered. I will present a very rudimentary schema for thinking the second case. In an initial mythical (or, what boils down to the same thing, “logically first”) time, there are no others. These others are then *encountered* (the mythical or “logically first” time is that of the self-positing of society). As concerns us here, three possibilities, trivially speaking, open up: the institutions of these others (and therefore, these others themselves!) can be considered superior (to “ours”), inferior, or “equivalent.” Let us note straight off that the first case would entail both a logical contradiction and a real suicide. It is impossible to consider “foreign” institutions to be superior *as to the very institution* of a society (not as to the existence of such and such an individual): this institution would have to yield its place to the other one. If French law enjoined the courts: “In all cases, apply German law,” it would abolish itself as French law. It is possible for this or that institution, in the secondary sense of the term, to be considered worthy of adoption, and actually to be adopted, but the wholesale adoption of the core institutions of another society without any basic reservations would imply the dissolution, as such, of the borrower-society.

The encounter between different societies therefore leaves only two possibilities: the others are inferior, or the others are equal to us. Experience proves, as one says, that the first path is followed almost always, the second almost never. There is an apparent “reason” for this. To say that the others are “equal to us” could not signify equal in an undifferentiated way, for that would imply, for example, that it is the same [*égal*] whether I eat pork or not, whether I cut off the hands of thieves or not, and so on. Everything would then become indifferent and would be disinvested. That the others are “equal to us” therefore has to mean that the others are simply *others*; in other words, that not only languages, or folklore, or table manners but also institutions taken globally, as a whole and in detail, are *incomparable*. This—which in one sense, but only in one sense, is the truth—cannot appear “naturally” in history, and it should not be difficult to understand why. Such “incomparability” would amount, for the sub-

jects of the culture under consideration, to toleration among the others of what for them is abomination; despite the easy time today's defenders of the "rights of man" or "human rights" give themselves, this attitude gives rise to theoretically insoluble questions in the case of conflicts between cultures, as the examples already cited demonstrate and as I shall endeavor to show again at the end of these reflections.

This idea that the others are quite simply others, which in words is so simple and so true, is a historical creation that goes against the inclinations of the "spontaneous" tendencies of the institution of society. The others have almost always been instituted as inferior. This is not something fated or a logical necessity; it is simply the extreme probability, the "natural inclination," of human institutions. The simplest mode in which subjects value their institutions evidently comes in the form of the affirmation (which need not be explicit) that these institutions are the only "true" ones, and that *therefore* the gods, beliefs, customs, etc., of the others are false. In this sense, the inferiority of the others is only the flip side of the affirmation of the *proper truth* of the institutions of the society-Ego (in the sense in which one speaks of Ego in describing kinship systems), "proper truth" taken as excluding everything else, rendering all the rest as positive error and, in the most lovely cases, diabolically pernicious (the case of monotheisms and Marxisms-Leninisms is obvious, but not unique).

Why speak of extreme probability and of a natural inclination? Because there can be no genuine *foundation* for the institution (no "rational" or "real" foundation). Its sole foundation being belief in it and, more specifically, its claim to render the world and life coherent (sensible), the institution finds itself in mortal danger as soon as proof is produced that other ways of rendering life and the world coherent and sensible exist. Here, our question overlaps with that of religion in the most general sense, which I have discussed elsewhere.⁵

Extreme probability, yes; but not necessity or fatality: the contrary, though highly improbable (as democracy is also highly improbable in history), is nevertheless possible. The index of this probability is the relative and modest but nonetheless real transformation in this regard that certain modern societies have undergone and the combat that has been conducted in these societies against *misoxeny* (and that is certainly far from over, even within each one of us).

All that concerns the *exclusion of external alterity* in general. The question of racism, however, is much more specific: Why does that which

could have remained a mere affirmation of the "inferiority" of others become discrimination, contempt, and confinement, so as to exacerbate ultimately into rage, hatred, and murderous folly? Despite all the attempts made from various quarters, I do not think that we can find a general "explanation" for this fact; I do not think that there is a response to this question other than a *historical* one in the strong sense. The exclusion of the other has not always and everywhere—far from it—taken the form of racism. Anti-Semitism and its history in Christian countries is well enough known for us to be able to say that no "general law" can explain the spatial and temporal localizations of the explosions of this delirium. Another, perhaps even more telling example comes from the Ottoman Empire. Once its period of conquest was over, this empire always conducted a policy of assimilation, then of exploitation and of *capitis diminutio*, of the unassimilated vanquished; without this massive assimilation, there would not be a Turkish nation today. Then suddenly, on two occasions—1895–96, then 1915–16—the Armenians (always subject, it is true, to much more cruel repression than the other nationalities of the empire) became the object of two monstrous massacres, whereas the empire's other alien peoples—notably the Greeks, who were still quite numerous in Asia Minor in 1915–16 and whose State was practically at war with Turkey—were not persecuted.



As we know, from the moment a racist fixation occurs, the "others" are not only excluded and inferior; they become, as individuals and as a collectivity, the point of support for a second-order imaginary crystallization whereby they are endowed with a series of attributes and, behind these attributes, an evil and perverse essence justifying in advance everything one might propose to subject them to. Concerning the imaginary, notably in its anti-Jewish form in Europe, the literature is immense, and I have nothing to add to it,⁶ except to say that in my view it appears more than superficial to present this imaginary—baptized, moreover, "ideology"—as something wholly fabricated by classes or by political groups for the purpose of assuring or achieving their position of dominance. In Europe, a diffuse and "rampant" anti-Jewish sentiment no doubt has been circulating at all times since at least the eleventh century. Sometimes it has been reanimated and revived at moments when the social body felt, with a stronger intensity than usual, the need to find an evil "internal-external"

object—the “enemy within” is so convenient—a scapegoat allegedly already marked on its own as being a scapegoat. These revivals of sentiment, however, do not obey laws or rules; it is impossible, for example, to relate the profound economic crises England has undergone over the past one hundred and fifty years to any explosion of anti-Semitism, whereas since the early 1970s such explosions, but now directed against blacks, are beginning to take place.

Here, let us open a parenthesis. What commonsense opinion as well as the most remarkable authors—I am thinking, for example, of Hannah Arendt—seem to find intolerable in racism is the fact that someone is hated for something for which that someone is not responsible, that person’s “birth” or “race.” This is certainly abominable, but the preceding remarks show that this view is erroneous, or inadequate, as it does not grasp the essence and the specificity of racism. Faced with the set of phenomena of which racism is the keenest point, a combination of vertigo and a horror of horror leads even the best of minds to vacillate. To maintain that someone is guilty because that person belongs to a collectivity to which she has not “chosen” to belong is not the defining characteristic of racism. Every robust nationalism, or in any case at least all chauvinism, always considers the others (certain others, and in any case the “hereditary enemies”) to be guilty of being what they are, of belonging to a collectivity to which they have not chosen to belong. Ilya Ehrenburg formulated this sentiment with the brutal clarity that is characteristic of the grand Stalinist era: “The only good Germans are dead Germans” (= to be born German is already to deserve death). The same thing goes for religious persecutions or wars with a religious component. Among all the conquerors who massacred the infidels to the glory of the God of the day, I see not a single one who asked those massacred if they had “voluntarily” chosen their faith.

Here again, logic forces us to say something disagreeable. The only true specificity of racism (in relation to the diverse varieties of hatred of others), the sole one that is decisive, as the logicians say, is this: *true racism does not permit others to recant* (either persecute them, or suspect them, even when they have recanted, in the case of Marranos). The disagreeable thing is that we have to acknowledge that we would find racism less abominable were it content to obtain forced conversions (as in Christianity, Islam, etc.). Racism, however, does not want the conversion of the others—it wants their death. At the origin of Islam’s expansion, there were a few hundred

thousand Arabs; at the origin of the Turkish Empire, there were a few thousand Ottomans. The rest are the product of the conversions of conquered populations (forced or induced conversions, it matters little). *For racism, however, the other is inconvertible.* Immediately, one sees that the racist imaginary must almost of necessity lean on constant or allegedly constant physical (therefore irreversible) traits. An instrumentally rational French or German nationalist with “enlightened” self-interests (that is to say, someone freed from the imaginary outgrowth of racism) could not but feel enchanted if Germans or the French demanded, by the hundreds of thousands, to be naturalized in the adjoining country. Sometimes the enemies’ glorious dead are posthumously naturalized. Soon after my arrival in France—in 1946, I believe—a large article in *Le Monde* celebrated “Bach, Latin Genius.” (Less refined, the Russians removed factories from their zone to Russia and, in place of inventing a Russian ancestry for Kant, they had him be born and die in Kaliningrad.) Hitler, however, had no desire to appropriate Marx, Einstein, or Freud as Germanic geniuses, and the most assimilated Jews were sent to Auschwitz along with the others.



Rejection of the other as other: this is not a necessary, but an extremely likely, component of the institution of society. It is “natural” in the sense in which a society’s heteronomy is “natural.” Overcoming it requires a creation that goes against one’s inclinations—therefore, a creation that is unlikely.

We can find the counterpart to—I am in no way saying “cause of”—this rejection on the level of the psychism of the singular human being. I shall be brief. One side of the hatred of the other as other is immediately understandable; it is, one can say, simply the flip side of self-love, of one’s cathexis of or investment in one’s self. Little matter the fallacy it contains, the syllogism of the subject faced with the other is also always as follows: if I affirm the value of *A*, I also have to affirm the nonvalue of non-*A*. The fallacy obviously consists in this, that the value of *A* presents itself as exclusive of any other: *A* (what I am) is valid—and what is valid is *A*. What is, at best, inclusion or belonging (*A* belongs to the class of objects having a value) fallaciously becomes an equivalence or representativeness: *A* is the very type of that which is valid. The fallacy certainly appears in a different light, let us not forget, in extreme situations—when one is in pain, faced with death—but that is not our subject.

Such pseudoreasoning (which is universally widespread) would leave room only for different forms of devaluation or rejection, to which we have already alluded. Another side of hatred of the other, however, is more interesting and, I believe, not evoked as often: hatred of the other as the other side of an unconscious self-hatred.⁷

Let us take up the question again from the other end. Can the existence of the other as such place *me* in danger? (We are obviously talking here of the unconscious world, where the elementary fact that the "I," the Ego, exists, in an infinity of ways, only along with the other and with others, is glaringly absent—as is also the case in contemporary theories of "individualism.") It can, under one condition: that, in the deepest recesses of one's egocentric fortress, a voice softly but tirelessly repeats "our walls are made of plastic, our acropolis of papier-mâché." And what could make audible and credible these words which are opposed to all the mechanisms that have permitted the human being *to be something* (a French Christian peasant, an Arab Moslem poet, what have you)? Certainly not an "intellectual doubt," which hardly has any existence and, in any case, no force of its own in the deep-seated layers here in question, but instead a factor situated in the immediate vicinity of the origins of the psyche, in what remains of the psychical monad and of its relentless refusal of reality, now become refusal, rejection, and detestation of the individual into which the psychical monad has had to be transformed and which it continues, phantom-like, to haunt. This is what makes the visible, "diurnal," constructed, speaking side of the subject always be the object of a double and contradictory cathexis: positive inasmuch as the subject is a self-substitute for the psychical monad, negative inasmuch as it is the visible and real trace of its breakup.

In this way, self-hatred—far from being the characteristic typical of the Jewish people, as is said—is a component of every human being, and, like all else, the object of an uninterrupted psychical elaboration. I think that it is this hatred of the self, usually intolerable under its overt form for obvious reasons, that nourishes the most driven forms of the hatred of the other and is discharged in its cruelest and most archaic manifestations.

From this standpoint, it can be said that the extreme expressions of the hatred of the other—and racism is, sociologically speaking, its most extreme expression for the reason already given concerning *inconvertibility*—constitute monstrous psychical displacements by means of which the subject becomes able to *save the affect in changing its object*. This is why,

above all, the subject does not want to rediscover *herself* in the object (she does not want the Jew to be converted or to know German philosophy better than herself), whereas the primary form of rejection, the devaluation of the other, is generally satisfied with “recognition” by the other, which constitutes the other’s defeat or conversion.



Overcoming of the first psychical form of the hatred of the other appears not to require, in the end, much more than what is already involved in living within society: the existence of carpenters does not challenge the value of plumbers, and the existence of the Japanese should not challenge the value of the Chinese. Overcoming of the second form would involve, no doubt, much more profound psychical and social elaborations. It requires—as, moreover, does democracy, in the sense of autonomy—an acceptance of our “real” and total mortality, of our second death coming after the death of our imaginary totality, of our omnipotence, of our inclusion of the whole universe within ourselves.

To remain there, however, would be to remain in the euphoric schizophrenia of the intellectual boy scouts of the past few decades, who preach both the rights of man *and* the idea that there is a radical difference among cultures that forbids us from making any value judgments about other cultures. How could one then judge (and, should the occasion arise, oppose) Nazi or Stalinist culture, the regimes of Pinochet, Mengistu, and Khomeini? Are these not different, incomparable, equally interesting historical “structures”?

Human rights discourse has, in reality, relied on the tacit traditional hypotheses of liberalism and Marxism: the steamroller of “progress” was to lead all peoples to the same culture (in fact, to our own—which was of enormous political convenience for the pseudophilosophies of history). The questions I raised above would then be resolved automatically—at most after one or two “unhappy accidents” (world wars, for example).

It is principally the contrary that has taken place. Most of the time, the “others” have somehow or other assimilated certain instruments of Western culture, part of what pertains to the ensemblistic-identitary sphere it has created—but in no way the imaginary significations of liberty, equality, law, unending interrogation. The planetary victory of the West is a victory of machine guns, jeeps, and television, not of habeas corpus, popular sovereignty, and citizen responsibility.

Thus, what was previously a mere “theoretical” problem—which certainly spilled oceans of blood in history and which I have alluded to above by asking, How could a culture grant existence to *other* cultures that are incomparable to it and for which what for them is food is for it defilement?—is becoming one of the *major practical political* problems of our era and is reaching the point of paroxysm in the apparent antinomy that exists within our own culture. We claim that we are one culture among others *and that* this culture is unique, inasmuch as it recognizes the alterity of others (which never had been done before, and which other cultures do not do in return) *and* inasmuch as it has posited social imaginary significations, and rules following therefrom, that have *universal value*: to take the easiest example, human rights. And what do you do with cultures that explicitly reject the “rights of man” (see Khomeini’s Iran)—not to mention those, the overwhelming majority, that in reality daily trample these rights underfoot while subscribing to hypocritical and cynical declarations?

I end with one simple example. People used to talk at length a few years ago—less so now, and I know not why—about the excision and infibulation of young girls, which is practiced as a general rule in a host of African Moslem countries (the affected populations, it seems to me, are much broader than is generally admitted). “All that occurs over there,” in Africa—in *der Turkei*, as the bourgeois philistines of *Faust* say. You become indignant, you protest—but you can do nothing. Then one day, here in Paris, you discover that your house servant (worker, collaborator, colleague), whom you hold in high esteem, is preparing for the ceremony of his little daughter’s excision-infibulation. If you say nothing, you mock the “rights of man” (this little girl’s right to habeas corpus). If you try to change the father’s ideas, you engage in a process of deculturation—you violate the principle of the incomparability of cultures.

The combat against racism is always essential. It must not serve as a pretext for abdicating the defense of values that have been created “at home,” “among us,” ones that we think are valid *for everyone*, that have nothing to do with race or skin color, and to which we want, yes, *reasonably to convert* all humanity.