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Beginnig of the lecture: "THE DEMONS OF AN OPEN SOCIETY"

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*Si vis pacem, para iustitiam* – averred ancient wisdom; and unlike knowledge, wisdom does not age. Absence of justice is still barring the road to peace today as it did two millenia ago. This has not changed. What has changed is that - unlike through most of human history, when the ideal and the postulates of justice and the practice of injustice against which it rebelled were locked in a space limited by the natural ability of human perception and action and therefore territorially confined, local - 'justice' is now a planetary issue, grounded in planetary comparisons – and this for two reasons, and no longer tied to immediate human experience.

On a planet criss-crossed by 'information highways' human misery of distant places and remote ways of life is displayed by electronic images as vividly, harrowingly and humiliatingly as the distress of the humans close to home is during the daily strolls through the town streets. And on a planet open to free circulation of capitals and commodities, whatever happens in one place has a bearing on how people of all other places live. No well-being of one place is innocent of the misery of another.

As recently pointed out by Jacques Attali in *La voie humaine*, half of the world trade and more than a half of global investment benefit just 22 countries accomodating a mere 14 per cent of the world population, whereas 49 poorest countries inhabited by 11 per cent of the world population receive between themselves but a half of one percent share of the global product – just about the same as the summary income of the three wealthiest men of the planet. Tanzania earns 2.2 billion dollars a year which it divides among 25 million inhabitants. The Goldman Sachs Bank earns 2.6 billion dollars, which is then divided between 161 stockholders. We in Europe and the US spend each year 17 billion dollars on animal food, while according to experts 19 billion 1 dollars is missing to save the world population of hunger. There are no breakwaters in sight able to stem the global tide of income polarization. In Milan Kundera's succinct summary, the 'unity of mankind' as brought about by globalization means that 'there is nowhere one can escape to'.

Globalization has done its job, and all societies are now fully and truly open, materially and intellectually, so that any injury of deprivation and indolence anywhere comes complete with the insult of injustice: of the feeling of a wrong having been done, a wrong to be repaired, but first of all avenged...

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i Milan Kundera, *L'art du roman*, Paris 1986.