CREATING INSECURITY – INTRODUCTION

Wolfgang Sützl

+ 'What is the basis of security? What secures security? Its absence. Insecurity secures the necessity for security. The threat to security is [...] security itself. We have nothing to secure but security itself.' (Wark 2005)

These questions and statements might summarise what marks the point of departure for this book. If security secures itself, and if this is all that security does, than a book on security has to ask itself whether it is possible to make worthwhile and meaningful statements about security at all. If all security does is securing, is it possible to say anything about it that is not circular? Does security not demand wordless submission, and is the only alternative to this the indiscriminate terrorist act? If both the affirmation and the negation of security secure security, what is the point of publishing a book on it?

One way of answering this question is to view security as a specific manifestation of violence. The violence of security may be obvious, but merits explanation because it is still unusual. After all, more often than not security is so closely linked to 'peace' that they seem to be the same thing. Often security is implicitly or explicitly understood as a precondition for peace. Without security, no peace. However, security's business of securing itself is never complete. As a concept without an outer boundary, it never encounters a place where it has completed its mission. It shares this with the state of emergency, but does not have the latter's temporary character. Security never ends, it is an expanding loop; and

with security never fully securing itself, there cannot be peace.

On the other hand, is the purpose of security not to prevent war and violence? Is this not the promise of security that has led to its acceptance ever since the emergence of the modern European state? Indeed. It is crucial to see, however, that security does not represent a neutral intersection between peace on the one hand and war/violence on the other. The concept of security works well without peace, but security must secure access to violence – specifically, to a type of violence *not* endorsed by the legal system – in order to perform its securing function. A meaningful critique of security must therefore start by taking to heart the history and the difficulties of a critique of violence in general.

Security can be meaningfully examined – rather than just submitted to or challenged violently – when its specific manifestations are considered in relation to different levels of violence. Following the three-level model of violence of Johan Galtung (1990), one can identify the violence of security on the levels of direct, structural and cultural violence. The level of direct violence is the level of the gun, of war, the police, and any direct action targeted at diminishing life. Every security system, no matter how user-friendly, can be traced back to a gun at some point, to a pair of handcuffs, a baton, a prison, a murder, a threat. But direct violence has its 'weakness': it can be seen, identified, questioned, constrained. This happens, for example, in international law, where resort to violence is tied to specific conditions. It happens in ethics, where violence can be subjected to a normative argument.

However, violence that is actual violence goes beyond these constraints. Precisely because it does not tolerate outer limitations, is violence really violent, since it always enters a realm where there is no foundation but only what Carl Schmitt called a 'pure' decision? Is violence really violent, because violence always also enters a terrain where it has no purpose outside of itself? Jacques Derrida (1990) refers to this as the 'mystical foundation of authority' in his discussion of Walter Benjamin's 'Critique of Violence' and Carl Schmitt's decisionist legal theory.

The question here is whether a critique of violence, a norm that constrains, can actually be *before* violence; in other words, whether violence can (always) be bound by norms? International law has tried to affirm this question by banishing, or rather, constraining the legitimacy of the use of violence in politics, limiting it to two purposes (self-defence, and UN Security Council resolutions). As different as the ideological orientations of Benjamin and Schmitt were, they agree that such a thing is not possible, which is why Benjamin is all the more interested in whether the exercise of violence itself can be understood in normative criteria. We know today that the constraining effort of international law, in those areas where it is followed and not ignored in a Schmittian fashion, leads to a new form of violence, a new problematic: evident in phenomena such as *peace troops, peace enforcement, or humanitarian violence.*

Still, direct violence can be identified, named, discussed in terms of responsibility; we can make statements about it and try to continue its normative hedging. Even if we are not pacifists, we can get in the way of violence. Therefore, in order for direct violence to be real and actual, and *effective*, something else is required: other layers that shield direct violence from critique or constraints. In Galtung's thinking, there are two such layers.

The first of these is identified as 'structural violence'. This is violence on the level of architecture and systems; it is the structural support system for direct violence. It goes beyond the purpose-oriented, singular nature of direct violence by adding the dimension of permanence and creating an automated process by building and maintaining institutions and industries, enacting laws, establishing standards, spawning bureaucracies, etc. In Deleuzian terms we could speak of 'machinery' when we refer to structural violence. Dispositives such as anti-terror legislation, IP regimes, restrictive communication structures, perhaps capitalism itself would be found on this level of violence. It is also the level of the 'technical constraint', for which the German language has the sinister word *Sachzwang* ('coercion by the object'). It is the level of the TINA ('there is no alternative') principle, where things are the way they are because that is the only way they

could possibly be. On this structural level, violence becomes objectified: the idea of personal or institutional responsibility seeps away before the smooth working of machinery. There is organised irresponsibility – systems and networks in which no one can be held accountable for outcomes. But like direct violence, structural violence has its own weak spot. It is still possible to see it for what it is, to see it as something wrong that should be overcome; it is still possible to think that 'another world is possible'. This is where a third level of violence comes into play; Galtung calls it 'cultural violence' (1990).

What cultural violence does is operate on the symbolic level to make structural and direct violence look normal or even desirable, i.e. to take away the symbolic foundations of a critique. Galtung speaks of cultural violence as 'those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence – exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science (logic, mathematics) – that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence' (1990: 291).

While security is present on both the direct and structural levels of violence, the particular forms of security appear most prominently, and with far-reaching consequences, on the cultural level. Security as a cynical subject, identifying anything that is not affirmative as a security risk that cannot but secure security, may be the most poignant and consequential manifestation of our rich heritage in cultural violence, affecting any kind of otherness. Here, security secures itself by eroding the possibility of a meaningful critique. It does so by performing calculations and deploying technologies that reduce the number of possible outcomes to a number that no longer constitutes a risk; ideally, that number is one. Security eliminates potential surprises and ensures that nothing really new will happen. This can be observed on all three layers of violence: artists and critics are arrested (cf. Tiziana Terranova's contribution in this book), their work structurally suppressed (e.g. by funding and institutional constraints), or rendered politically meaningless (e.g. by erosion of public space and generalised entertainment pressures).

But nowhere is security more present than on the cultural level: the emergence of a security aesthetic, the control of information and knowledge, the flattening of symbolic landscapes; in short, thwarting all potential tools of a critique is what security needs to achieve in this realm in order to fulfil its mission of securing itself. Yet the conflict between security on the one hand and art and culture on the other could hardly be more extreme: while the former needs to calculate and reduce the number of variables, the latter constantly increases that number by stating new things, creating symbols, affirming difference, signalling otherness, introducing surprises. This provides an obvious reason why art and culture have a hard time under security as the 'basic principle' of politics (Agamben 2001; and republished herein with a new translation). It explains why art and culture are particularly at risk and subject to the streamlining performed under security. Nevertheless, it is also the reason why art and culture are protected under many democratic constitutions, for it is the creation of difference and otherness that makes it possible to create those uncontrolled spaces from which political power might be held accountable. Those who wrote these constitutions knew that a democracy will cease to be a democracy unless it protects the possibility of expressing dissent against the powers thus criticised by protecting the freedom of art, science, the media, information, etc.

It is this particular potential of art and culture of providing the symbols, the grammar of a critique that can only be identified as a risk and targeted by the security apparatus. However, it is also this potential that the security apparatus can never completely eliminate unless it wants to eliminate its own *raison d'être*, insecurity. Just as it constantly re-invents the terrorist and becomes itself terrorist (Agamben 2001), the security-driven state must constantly re-invent the artist and is tempted to become itself artistic, developing an aesthetic of security.

If security is itself manifest as violence, who will protect us from security? This is the question that concerns Geoff Cox and Martin Knahl in their contribution to this book. Drawing on Benjamin's 1921 essay 'Critique of Violence', they

consider how the contradictory reality of security is expressed in the realm of software, understood not as a mere instrument, but as 'manifestation of ideology' creating its own exclusions. Software running over networks is fraught with insecurity, and a security industry has developed that promises to secure information systems against a long taxonomy of potential threats. In parallel to how Benjamin develops his critique of violence as a critique of the means of violence rather than its ends (and therefore directed against the mythical powers of extra-legal violence rather than immanent violence), the authors discuss software as 'pure means': here, a critique of violence becomes possible as 'pure softwar – as resistance to the mythic powers that regulate our systems'.

Software is also the focus of Florian Cramer's contribution, 'Buffer Overflows'. His point of departure is the confluence of 'poem, prayer and computational algorithm' in a 17th century anonymous piece of German poetry, and in Steve Reich's composition *It's gonna rain* (1965). Both are described as examples of performances 'flooding' a (metaphysical) communication channel: they create a 'poetic virus spreading not a love, but a peace message, in the hope that through its multiplications and viral mutations, the prayer may be heard both by God and spread as a peace spell among mankind'. Parallels can be found in today's digital networks, where buffer overflows are the most frequent security hole. Additionally, just like the cited 17th century poem, various 20th century art movements can be read as attempts to 'stretch the limits of poetry in its original sense of "poeisis", creation'. Computer art creating insecurity creates symbolic performances: jodi's work *OSS* (1998) is cited as a case in point. *OSS* floods the web 'with myriads of small moving windows. However, the site does no real harm to a computer and creates the impression of an Internet virus only in the imagination of the spectator' – it creates insecurity by peaceful means. Also by peaceful means, carlos katastrofsky's forthcoming *vir.us.exe* project (2009) is a windows program that once downloaded by the user and executed will simply delete itself. In a short introduction by Luís Silva, he explains that the virus is not threatening in itself, but is perceived to be all the same. This is how the feelings of insecurity are perpetuated.

The work of the 'Global Security Alliance', presented by Konrad Becker in this book, exaggerates the mythical power referred to by Benjamin in order to expose the very heart of the security industry. The GSA's catalogue of services includes 'cultural peacekeeping', a term that may be an appropriate description of the mission of security in the field of culture: *pacifying* the cultural landscape, ensuring nothing surprising can ever happen. This is done by creating an aesthetic that is a mix of protection and comfort on the one hand, and strength and power on the other hand, through a strong presence on the symbolic level. One significant component of this symbolic level is information; here, security agencies are engaged in 'strategic communication', aligning the 'content' of communication to the desired result, eliminating the spaces where difference could occur. Information peacekeeping produces its own prose, of which the GSA contribution in this book is a fine example. Indeed, security rhetoric marks a decisive dividing line between two languages (or rather, non-languages) generated by security: this is the dividing line between the silence of effective, secret operations, and the noise of a meaningless, de-politicised language in the public realm – or perhaps what once might have been the public realm, for without symbols and a language that are capable of stating difference, there is no public realm.

The political poetics of security/insecurity is at the centre of Wolfgang Sützl's contribution. Starting with a critical appreciation of Carl Schmitt and Giorgio Agamben, and their theories of the 'state of exception', he develops a critique of language under security by drawing on Martin Heidegger's philosophies of technology and language, guided by their interpretation by Gianni Vattimo. Security is understood as what Schmitt in his 'Political Theology' calls a *Grenzbegriff*, a concept of the 'outermost sphere' (1990: 11), that stands both within and without the legal order, ultimately based on the exception, not the norm, and therefore difficult to question from a normative – legal or ethical – point of view. Security is, in the last instance, something that can never be fully accounted for, based on what in German is called an *Abgrund* (abyss) rather than a *Grund* (foundation). Yet the applicability of Schmitt's decisionist model

reaches its limitations for security as soon as technology comes into play. The *Abgrund* of security is no longer the single, sovereign decision for the state of exception, but the continual technological automatism that governs security systems. Security technology gives permanence to the exception. One way to understand this, Sützl suggests, is to take up Heidegger's theory of technology as the culmination of metaphysics. The problem of overcoming metaphysics – the required point 'outside' or 'beyond' metaphysics – reappears when we think we can solve the problem of technology by more, more powerful, more autonomous technology, by a constant updating of what remains essentially unchanged. One way out of this predicament is to look at what technology does to language. In the 1950s Heidegger observed the rise of a technical language, a language reduced to information, leaving traditional (or common) language desolate. This language divide anticipates the linguistic divide of security into a (telling) silence at the core of politics, and meaningless noise at its periphery. According to Sützl, creating 'insecurity', opening spaces of difference and otherness, is therefore an effort of a political poetics.

Attesting to the informational language of security, glorious ninth (Kate Southworth and Patrick Simons) present a series of 'incalculable' events, actions and encounters in the form of six short 'lists'. All calculable elements of the artwork are suspended, and the instructions provide a material form to comment on the relationship between security and art – through a range of protocols associated with state control and its impossibilities.

The question of 'boundaries' of the security system also marks the point of departure of Brian Holmes' article, 'Security Aesthetic = Systems Panic'. What happens when the boundary between inside and outside no longer exists, when threats can arise from within a system? 'Deep paranoia':

'The problem of the system's edges suddenly multiplies: the boundary to be secured is now the entire volume of the system, its width, its breadth, its depth, and most damnedly of all, its human potential for change in the future. The

resulting proliferation of eyes, ears, cameras, snooping devices, data banks, cross-checks and spiralling analytical anxiety in the face of every conceivable contingency is what defines the present security panic.'

Holmes draws on art critic Jack Burnham's thesis of 1968 describing the demise of the traditional art object, and the rise of an 'aesthetic system' in its place, where *Homo faber* turns into *Homo arbiter formae* – man the decider of forms – in order to ask what a democratic aesthetic would look like under security. He concludes that the aesthetic system must be constituted as a 'fully operational reality' capable of determining the systemic boundary of security by determining another. A democratic aesthetic system against security panic will require an art of 'elaborate fakes, doppelgängers, double agents, fictional entities that strive to produce outbreaks of truth at their points of contact with the hidden system'.

The hidden system in security, its secrecy and silence, is not its only reality; security is also spectacular and noisy. The border fortifications securing Europe and North America against immigrants are a case in point, and they are locations of extreme violence. Security as *Grenzbegriff* ('borderline' or 'limit' concept) takes on a literal meaning here: it marks a line that must not be crossed unless one wants to risk one's life. But the ambivalence of security remains irresolvable: it also marks a line that one *must cross* unless one wants to risk one's life. This utmost form of violence is experienced by the many who are 'others', and who wish to cross the borders of Europe or other wealthy, secured places. Daniela Ingruber's contribution follows P., a boy from Somalia, on his way to Europe. That way leads into a camp for minor refugees in Ceuta, where P.'s identity, his story, his body, are identified as 'other' and therefore barred, excluded. Security, Ingruber argues, excludes; negating the other's identity, 'security assassinates without looking at its victims'. According to Ingruber, art is the only possible response to the mania of security, with camera playing a special role: it can be used for surveillance as much as for film, it marks a juncture as well as a disjuncture. With reference to Nina Kusturica's documentary *Little Alien* (2009), the contrasting uses of the camera for surveillance and for telling

a refugee's story are discussed. The technical images of security fences and night vision technologies are contrasted with the camera accompanying a refuge on his journey, narrating his story. While the security camera is voyeuristic, the narrative camera 'returns something to [the protagonists] that security has taken away: the being itself, humanity'. By bringing back imagination in the bleak landscape of security, Ingruber concludes, film actually has a healing power.

Faceless, a film by Manu Luksch (2007), attempts something similar, placing emphasis on how security, and CCTV surveillance in particular, affects people's life potentials by manipulating time. Made entirely from surveillance camera footage, the film narrates the story of a subject that exists in the film only as captured by CCTV systems. Mukul Patel's contribution is based on this film, and highlights the concept of time inherent in security: 'real time'. In real time 'the dominion of the present is guaranteed by the annihilation of the past and the future'. Surveillance cameras reduce people to data without a past or a future. *Faceless* tries to tell a story where no stories are told: by sending its subject on a journey to the precarious territory on the edge of the permanent present.

Security not only creates its own non-time, it creates non-places, so-called 'black sites'. These are locations where suspected terrorists are interrogated and/or tortured as part of the CIA's Extraordinary Rendition programme 'outside of the eye of international human rights law'. The Institute for Applied Autonomy's *Terminal Air* (2007) project creates insecurity by proving a map of the real-time movement of aircraft connecting these locations that officially do not exist. The project also brands the anonymous companies through which the programme is run, taking away their anonymity. Anonymity is a characteristic of 'clandestine operations'. The Extraordinary Rendition programme, though, reflects a recent transformation of US military doctrine, now 'less concerned with national security or global balances of power than with legal culpability and public relations'. The result is the 'political theatre' of the Bush administration around this programme, a show of secrecy, a winking of a politician's eye, the ambivalence of the 'black site'.

Norbert Koppensteiner also addresses the question of space under security in his contribution, and not just as a geometrical or geographical concept. Drawing on Gilles Deleuze's and Félix Guattari's philosophy of nomadism, and their concept of the state 'striating smooth space', he refers to the nomad as 'chiffre, as exemplary form which encompasses both the notions of resistance against homogenisation and the affirmative plurality of becomings'. Rosi Braidotti's concept of 'transpositions' implies both movement and difference, and is used as methodology in Koppensteiner's essay:

'Transpositions carry out a perpetual form of movement in which, as Braidotti (2006: 5) puts it, the 'positivity of difference' becomes a specific theme of its own. Deployed as a method in academic writing, trans-positions imply a perpetual, nomadic movement through concepts. In a series of differentiations and approximations, local points of reference (trans-*positions*) can be established while the guiding question is kept open as impetus. The movement so continues without ever finally settling on any one of those reference points (*trans*-positions).'

Nomadic politics, Koppensteiner argues, creates insecurity by working against the politics of the engineering of predictable, sedentary, and stable subjects under security. The incalculable nature of the nomad in transposition generates difference as space, gender, or expression, a difference impossible to pin down. Nomadic movements, therefore, have no map – which is precisely why it is difficult for them to be identified by security – but also impossible to base a global resistance project on them.

A case in point of the clash of smooth and striated space might be the use of mobile phones – a technology that has invited artistic and politically subversive uses as much as aroused surveillance desires. Naeem Mohaiemen's cellphone images of security scenes in Asia, and Bureau of Inverse Technology's *Antiterror Line* (a work by Natalie Jeremijenko and Kate Rich, from 2002) both 'invert' this technology, creating niches of empowerment within a politico-technological

landscape increasingly normalised by security. The BIT accompanying statement advises members of the public to report individuals or activity that may be directly or indirectly associated with anti-terrorist activity, to raise the question: 'If the idea takes root that civil liberties should not be permitted to stand in the way of terrororism, at what point do security measures start to corrode the very society they are designed to protect?' In a similar way, Mohaiemen's 'accidental' images are presented in contrast to those of the mainstream press in an image war. He maintains that we need a 'space for mistakes, rudeness, bacteria, and things that just don't fit'.

The conflicting requirements of visibility and secrecy faced by the security apparatus lead to interesting contortions, as McKenzie Wark shows in his essay 'The Occulted State'. In it, he explores the heritage of the Situationists in developing a current critique of the violence of security. Guy Debord's theory of the spectacle and Gianfranco Sanguinetti's writing on terrorism serve as a guiding thread for an analysis of the current spectacle of security. Rather than the diffuse spectacle of the 20th century, Wark argues, the 21st century security spectacle is a 'disintegrated spectacle': 'The state of the disintegrating spectacle reveals itself as concerned mostly with its own sovereignty and the defence of property. It no longer makes any promises.'

In 'Failure to comply: bioart, security and the market', Tiziana Terranova follows Michel Foucault in demonstrating the interconnections between security and the market, highlighting the new position of critical artistic work under biopolitics. Security is described as 'that operation by which the problem of order... is subjected to a strictly economic calculus'. Under neoliberalism, it operates with economic means, developing 'more or less probable effects described according to the overall logic of cost. [Security] does not think that it can eradicate the activities in question completely, but it can set up such measures as to make them expensive and hence keep them within limits'.

The neoliberal market and security serve each other, while what is at stake is

life, and politics becomes biopolitics in a post-democratic scenario. Drawing on Anna Munster's writing on the legal proceedings against Steve Kurtz (Critical Art Ensemble), Terranova applies Foucault's theory of biopolitics to the limits and potentials of bioart. The CAE, she argues, refused to create bioart that fosters social cohesion and provide an antidote to the disintegrating effects of competition. Instead, 'CAE bioart failed to comply to the rules of good conduct and thus attracted a surplus of punishment from the judiciary apparatus'.

Failing to comply to the demands of the politics of security may be the common denominator of the positions brought together in this book. Failing to comply means stating something meaningful about security. Given the nature of security as a concept without an outer border, anything meaningful that can be stated about security will be inevitably be critical. It will create, on the level of culture, that which security can only identify as insecurity. It will create potentials for different outcomes, i.e. democracy.

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