

Guest Editor Introduction

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As I write, Europe is again at war. The bloodlands of Eastern Europe burn with nationalist hatreds, ethnic struggles, and economic and political intrigue. This was not supposed to happen. We were supposed to have moved beyond this, thanks to international organizations like NATO, the United Nations, and, of course, the European Union. If we follow Goethe's lead and take the beginning of nationalism to be the Battle of Valmy in September 1792, when a French army held back the assaults of a much superior Prussian army in the name of "*vive la nation*," Europe was supposed to have learned its lesson. This should have come true especially by 1992 and the Treaty of Maastricht. Just as Europe had led in the development of the nation state and a new concept of nationalism in the eighteenth century, so by the end of the twentieth it was supposed to have shown the way forward to a time of a new international order, when borders, language, and culture gave way to the free movement of goods, people, and capital, all in the name of an international rights-based order, a new world order, superior to what it replaced. Europe was supposed to lead us into a multicultural, multilevel polity in which all prospered and none were treated as inferior.

There were signs of trouble in 1999 when Europe could not prevent the war in Serbia, despite the aggressive actions of NATO and the support of the United States in suppressing an intra-European conflict. The citizens of Belgrade, Serbia were bombed, Milosevic was labeled a war criminal, and all seemed well. But apparently not. Russian aggressions in 2008 in Georgia and Crimea in 2014 signaled that the Kremlin was not willing to play the game of NATO expansion to the east. And then in Ukraine, under the justification of protecting Russian populations in the eastern border regions of Ukraine, the Russians invaded with a force that looked like a World War II heavy artillery and infantry campaign. Again,

Europe pulled the US into its conflicts, and again the feckless ruling class of America's uni-party succumbed to the temptation offered by visions of huge contracts to the military-industrial complex and an ever-increasing commitment to global business and sent billions to Ukraine where America has no compelling national interests. The Ukrainians and Russians fight in the name of their nations and of their cultural identities, all while giving lip service to the rules-based international post-1992 order. Hostilities and animosities reaching back to the 1940s feed the current Ukrainian nationalistic spirit and make up the basis for Russian justifications to take action against Ukrainian "fascists" in the West who are threatening Russian-speaking populations in the East. The European Union is again helpless to stop the fighting without the intervention of the United States, as the world continues to need Ukrainian grain and Russian oil, the profits from which sustain the war machines.

So borders do matter it seems, despite the claims that they should not. Real physical borders, not imaginary ideas and made-up fictional communities, but geographically demarcated lines that are policed and enforced.

The struggle is not limited to Europe, it is interesting to note. North America is in the midst of a crisis on its southern border as tens of thousands of undocumented migrants posing as refugees and enter the United States from over one hundred nations, much to the delight of politicians, who see potential voters, and to American business that sees lower-wage employees, no matter the effect on middle-class workers already citizens, or on public services, or the rule of law. Although there is no kinetic war, there is a culture war and a political fight between two opposing ideas. One reflects the new world order, something not limited to Europe in the minds of its advocates, something that would transform North and Central America into a place that resembles the EU more than the United States. The other wants policies that put their fellow countrymen first and see things in the context of American interests. We do not have our Treaty of Maastricht, but we have our two 911s. The second is well known, when after the 2001 attacks on America, George W. Bush formed an international coalition to avenge the attacks by invading Iraq and Afghanistan. The first took the form of a speech to Congress given by his father, George H.W. Bush, on September 11, 1990, when the elder Bush announced a "new world order," which civilized peoples throughout the world would pursue in the name of a cosmopolitanism of nations, one that would assure human flourishing and respect individual national cultures. That new world order would be enforced by American military power but also require, not for military reasons but for

political and economic reasons, the participation of other countries. Bush had formed an international coalition of overwhelming military might to confront the much inferior army of Saddam Hussein a few weeks before in August 1990. In his September 11 speech he made the reasons for that clear.

The concept of borders is, then, under a new and even radical reexamination. In the political order, as I have suggested, it means the end of the nation state as we have known it in the last two hundred years. It also applies to other areas affecting personal identity and empowerment: race, religion, and sexual identity. For that reason, the editors are pleased to present this issue on borders and values.

Oana Cogeanu-Haraga provides a fascinating history of how concepts of race developed and how those notions of value were constructed and validated over time. The complexity of the process is shown by her notion of the somatic norm image. She illustrates this concept by insisting that groups employ it in at least three different ways. First, they develop an idealized notion of beauty and value which they apply to their group. Second, they develop a conception of other groups in opposition to them in body as well as in values and culture. And third, they represent the other as outsider who interacts with them and even may be appreciated as an exotic stranger. Those notions of racial difference apply not only to the body but also to the character, culture, and soul of the group members. Over time a whole system of values, meaning, and comparative worth is developed.

Those historic patterns of racial consciousness have changed more recently, however, as new advances in biology and anthropology have made the traditional concept of race appear antique. Cogeanu-Haraga raises the question of whether or not we are able to move beyond that to a more fluid conception of self-identity that is not based on race.

On one hand, identity politics that emphasize race have never been more popular. We are told by their advocates that we cannot understand the experience of members of a certain race and are therefore not competent to comment on issues affecting them. So real is this identity as a member of a certain race that it can be the basis for political categorization, for legal solicitude, and for economic rewards to right historical wrongs against the racial group. On the other hand, a growing realization that race is a culturally determined category, not a biological one, seems to be widely accepted not only among anthropologists and biologists but among the ordinary persons observing the vast array of human genetic evolution. How can race be both made up, sometimes even

for nefarious purposes, and at the same time embraced by so many political actors as a valuable source of identity that trumps other identities such as the nation, religion, or place? Is the facile Marxist answer that it is all about power really persuasive? So when a dominant racial group uses the concept of race, it is illegitimate because it is only a way of oppressing the powerless; but when members of those groups use the term, it is not only valid, but dispositive, ending all need for critical thinking and argument. Race is so elastic and malleable in the hands of its advocates that people who appear to be members of one race can claim to be members of another victim class, and we are supposed to accept their self-characterization without challenge, as was the case with Professor Jessica A. Krug at George Washington University in Washington DC, who had claimed for years she was an African American and Afro-Latina despite her white skin. In 2020 she was exposed as a fraud.

In speaking about borders and values, we cannot ignore one of the most critical issues in our world today: human rights. The modern conception of human rights, developed in earnest after the second world war, presupposes an Enlightenment view of absolute value and universal significance. Even the title of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights makes this claim. Coming out of the agony of the second world war, where whole groups of people were denied legal protections because they were “stateless persons,” excluded by the power structures of those nations where they lived from legal protection, much the way the unborn are in legal regimes providing women with the right to abortion. Rights that do not depend on what the government says had to be posited as belonging to every person by reason of her humanity and not because of any grant of the state.

William Saunders, in his article, “Human Rights and Borders,” points out the history of this movement, which culminated in the 1948 UN document. From his unique perspective as a longtime advocate for dispossessed peoples and a campaigner for human rights, he realizes the reality that rights that are not enforced are of little effect. We are presented with this paradox: the whole regime of universal human rights depends on their enforcement by governments. We can make all the claims about universal values that we wish, but unless they are enforced, they will be of little value to the aggrieved parties. The Universal Declaration is not a treaty, and so it needed enforceable agreements between countries. The UN quickly issued two such treaties: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.

The categories in the two treaties overlap when it comes to some rights such as those affecting the family or education. The UN understood that the rights in the Declaration – civil/political and economic/social – constituted a whole, a unity.

Saunders goes on to point out two contemporary problems that the entire human rights establishment faces. The first is the proliferation of rights. If one compares the United States Constitution to the United Nations Universal Declaration, one sees already a much more complete listing of human rights. Take, for example, the matter of religious freedom. The US Bill of Rights says only that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” The word “religion” is sparse when compared to the UN Declaration that uses the broad phrase in Article 18 “thought, conscience, and religion.”

The second problem is the politicization of human rights, something that threatens their usefulness and their legitimacy. He concludes with the hopeful sign that the United States Commission on Unalienable Rights issued a report in 2020 making recommendations on what role human rights should play in US foreign policy.

Dr. Victor M. Nemchinov reminds us in his essay, “Spatial, Temporal, Somatic and Spiritual Boundaries,” that boundaries are not only physical, but include the complex interaction of many elements. He offers a virtual reflection of expanding personal selfhood. He traces the intricate ways in which the person moves from the intimacy and closeness of his mother’s womb to a world fraught with fluid boundaries and ever-expanding challenges to his sense of self. The complexity of how we negotiate boundaries and borders in our lives comes into play as we try to imagine how the intimate moments of spatial experience interact with our broader experiences of the world and even with our understanding of our basic values.

A similarly complex analysis of the interaction of values and borders is given a more concrete historical sense by Dr. Yves Solis in his analysis of Mexican history and values, “Mexico and Paradox of Boundaries.” He points out that while so much attention is given today to the northern border of Mexico with the United States, the issue of borders, even when thinking just of political borders, is broader and more complex. While many Mexicans speak out against what they perceive to be the mistreatment of Mexican émigrés in the United States, the same people seem unaware of the harsh treatment that immigrants from Central American countries south of Mexico receive at the hands of the Mexican government. Solis’s concern about borders is much more extensive than that, however.

Mexico, he believes, is a prime example of how interculturality and xenophobia shape self-understanding. He draws insights from Jos Vasconcelos's early twentieth century work, *The Cosmic Race*, and shows how the concept of *Mestizaje* is relevant today.

A crucial question that must be addressed in any analysis of borders and values is: who polices the borders? No matter how borders are set, they must be guarded. The ideas, truth claims, and perceptions that underlie them must be reinforced. Prof. John Hirsh in his essay, "Love, Justice, and Catholic Social Teaching in Pope Benedict XVI's *Deus Caritas Est*," looks at the criticisms leveled against Pope Benedict's 2005 encyclical. Those criticisms came from liberation theology advocates. Ever since the arrival of the Catholic social teachings industry, there has been an insistence on the part of some that the church be more pastoral and less dogmatic or doctrinal. This is, at its root, an example of the age-old conflict between *theoria* and *praxis*, given a moral turn by appeals to the poor and needy. It comes from the very legitimate perception that the church at the turn of the twentieth century saw popes going out of their way to address social issues in an effort to reach out pastorally to the people affected by the economic and social changes brought about by industrialization and new forms of mechanized labor. Pope Leo XIII's famous 1891 encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, laid the groundwork for over a century of what is known now simply as Catholic social teaching. Several popes wrote commemorations of that encyclical, such as Pius XI's *Quadragesimo anno* and John Paul II's *Centesimus annus*. In order to mitigate the conflict between theory and practice, the church insisted on referring to Catholic social teachings as if they were a consistent part of Catholic theology. More precisely, they are recommended responses, moral and ethical to be sure, but not the results of dogmatic theology. They are hortatory rather than dogmatic, as they try to raise ethical questions about contemporary issues. They do not start with unchanging truths about theology, but with contemporary problems, and work their way back to biblical teachings about the poor or about charity or justice.

Although liberation theology was criticized strongly by John Paul II and Benedict XVI, it still lives on, especially in postcolonial society. It is marred by a simplistic understanding that divides the world into the haves and have-nots. It reminds us that we must follow "the preferential option for the poor" and side with the poor, often good advice, but something that people should be left to come to on their own rather than be hectored into. One particularly vocal critic of Pope Benedict XVI is the once excommunicated priest, Fr. Tissa Balaservia from Sri Lanka.

Prof. Hirsh, whose thirty-year involvement with social service has centered on work with underprivileged children in Washington DC that brings Georgetown University students to the children to tutor them, astutely points out that Pope Benedict insists that the specialness of Catholic, and of course all Christian social work, is that it is generated by charity. Charity is not just a sympathetic feeling for another person, but one of the theological virtues. Justice, by contrast, is not a theological virtue, but one of the four cardinal virtues to which all persons, believers or not, are called. Christians are called to more when they embrace the evangelical virtue of charity. They do not love others because those persons deserve it is a matter of fairness. Love and mercy are not the results of justice. They love as God loves and as Christ loves in his supererogatory self-giving. The implications for this, Hirsh again rightly points out, are that when churches ally themselves too closely with political parties or political policies, they risk losing the distinctive Christian dimensions of service to the poor and needy. Christians are called to serve a suffering world but not to be of the world, not to love the world. Insistence on justice before mercy puts us squarely in the world of political discourse and inevitable conflict. The boundaries of the church dissolve, and Christ's disciples are merely social workers wearing crucifixes.