



## Key Concepts of the Humanities and Social Sciences

An interdisciplinary lecture series of the  
Institute of Advanced Study in the Humanities  
and the Social Sciences | IASH  
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**Wednesday, 25 May 2011, 16.15 to 17.45**  
Unitobler, U of Bern, Lerchenweg 36  
Room F021

### Open colloquium with A. Cavarero

**Thursday, 26 May, 9.30 to 13.00**  
Limited places, please enrol by 4 May with  
Manuela Rossini, [rossini@iash.unibe.ch](mailto:rossini@iash.unibe.ch)

# „Horrorism“: Violence and Vulnerability in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Prof. Dr. Adriana Cavarero, Università degli Studi di Verona

The lecture focuses on the topic of violence in order to problematize its conceptual frameworks from the point of view of the vulnerable. There is an essential link between Violence and Vulnerability: in bodily and material terms, the wound (Latin: *vulnus*) results from a violent and traumatic laceration of skin and tissues. Humans are not only mortal; they are vulnerable. Unilateral violence on defenseless people turns this vulnerability in the object of an ontological injury that displays the very core of contemporary horror. By defining the Auschwitz universe as an experiment in the destruction of the human, Hannah Arendt claims that its specific violence consists in transforming unique beings into a mass of superfluous beings, whose "murder is as impersonal as the squashing of a gnat." Together with Primo Levi and others, she teaches us how to recognize the work of horror in order to frame the unprecedented forms of violence that the era displays. As a matter of fact, a global theory of violence nowadays is demanded to reconceptualise its lexicon inasmuch as the current human practices of massacre turn defenseless and vulnerable people, civilians butchered at random, into exemplary and ordinary targets of destruction. Cavarero's coinage of the category of 'Horrorism' aims precisely at interrogating the *Zeitgeist* from their point of view.

**Adriana Cavarero** teaches political theory at the University of Verona (Italy), and she has been Visiting Professor at New York University, Harvard University and the University of California at Berkeley. Among her book publications are: *In Spite of Plato* (1995), *Relating Narratives* (2000), *Stately Bodies* (2001), *For One than One Voice* (2005) and *Horrorism. Naming Contemporary Violence* (2009). Her field of research includes classical, modern and contemporary thought (Plato, Hobbes, Arendt, Butler), with a special focus on political philosophy and feminist theory. Her works aim at rethinking the human through the categories of 'embodied uniqueness', 'relationality' and 'vulnerability'.

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