After Rawls?

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I
Rawls and after

It is not easy to write a paper on Rawls on the occasion of his birth's centenary. Memories and personal impressions are mixed with the theoretical impact that Rawls' work has had on the scientific community and on me in particular, for that matter. Moreover, we cannot and must not neglect the issue of the legacy of Rawls' work more than fifty years after the publication of A Theory of Justice. In fact, it would seem absurd to me to give up presenting a hypothesis -of course in the form of an attempt- on what will happen to the Rawlsian paradigm in the light of recent developments in philosophy and politics. As we know, Rawls in political philosophy (and not only) has caused a real revolution. At the heart of this radical change is the centrality of the normative point of view in political theory, a centrality for which politics has ethics as its first and essential point of reference. As a result of the revolution mentioned above, a discipline, namely political philosophy, which seemed to be at this point in its death throes, has become -especially through the work of Rawls- central in the academic field and in public discourse. After the publication of A Theory of Justice (1971), it opened what has been rightly called "The Rawls' Era". And, in this period, no one who dealt with political philosophy -as a critic of Rawls of the caliber of Robert Nozick wrote- could proceed in a serious and recognized way without starting from the

paradigm of the Rawlsian theory of justice. The years spent on this horizon have been years of fertile discussion. Not surprisingly, critics targeted the normative basis of the Rawlsian approach. In particular, it seemed to many that the third part of his *Theory* - especially the one that presented the model of a congruence between the right and the good - was, on the one hand, utopian in a bad sense (that is, not reflected in reality) and dangerously contrary to that pluralism that the liberal Rawls could not but consider fundamental.

In fact, at least in the early years of Rawls' Era, doubts about pluralism took precedence over the question of utopianism. From this point of view, the thesis that "A" (note, not "The") theory of justice could have the effect of making everyone's worldviews coincide with the theory's principles of justice in question seemed at least far-fetched. As we know, Rawls went to great lengths to respond to criticisms hinging on the issue of pluralism. The publication of *Political Liberalism* (1993–96) made us realize that there was at least one possibility to read the Theory in a way compatible with liberal pluralism. The fact that this option was the one preferred by Rawls himself had of course a certain importance. As well as the conditions and axioms that had to be adopted to accept the thesis – central to *Political Liberalism* - based on the overlapping consensus. The interlocking of everyone's worldviews (the "good") with some shared fixed points on essential issues of justice (the "just") could take place if and only if the idea of a relative neutrality of justice was accepted. In other words, in order to allow for the model proposed in *Political Liberalism,* it had to be assumed that conflicts over the good were insuperable while those over the just were composable within a liberal-democratic regime. The latter was taken as default and as the ultimate foundation of the system's legitimacy. For many of us, perhaps with some hesitation and some differences, such a solution was congenial. This allowed us to continue to think in a Rawlsian horizon.

Throughout this process, the second dilemma posed in the period after Rawls was at first partially removed. I refer here to the problem of utopianism or, as it would be better to say, of the supposed lack of realism implicit in the Rawlsian paradigm. This criticism, at first quite latent, has, however, spread and strengthened (if one can say so) in recent years. The reasons for this are various, both of historical-factual origin and of a theoretical nature. On the one hand, the liberal-democratic

system -which constituted for Rawls the default and the central axiom for the supposed consensus on "the right"- was clearly in crisis. Brexit, Trump, gilets jaunes, populisms and different regimes that from Eastern Europe to China and Turkey were seriously questioning the primacy of liberal-democracy, also forced doubts about the central axis of the Rawlsian consensus. On the other side, that of theory, in the wake of a paper by Bernard Williams, there began to be talk of an excessive "moralism" in the Rawlsian approach. The criticism in question was then moved in terms of a contrast with a rather generic "realism".

Discussion concerning the deficit of realism in the Rawlsian approach has thus become standard in the recent period, as we shall see below, and has usually hinged on a critique of normativity. In my view, however, more than the argument itself what matters is the spirit behind it. At least that's what I will argue in the sequel. A new spirit, within what can be called the "postmodern climate", presents itself as highly skeptical of the relationship between individual commitment and collective outcomes that is so intrinsic to the idea of normativity as well as to Rawls' work and man. Even more, the spirit that impregnates the postmodern climate and the still vague metaphysical nebula that succeeds it proves hostile to the rational mediation between reality and knowledge. This last point is relevant not only for the general critique of the Enlightenment and rationalism that is presupposed, but also for the mentality and personal ethics of those who propose his version of political theory. Anyone who has known Rawls is aware of his belief that there is a specific mission of the scholar. A mission that would then consist roughly in a personal commitment to a theory that contributes to improving people's lives beginning with the worst off. The "cynical reason" (Timothy Morton's term) that pervades both postmodernism and this new metaphysics insists on the practical impossibility of a civil faith so conceived. It is also of considerable interest that such theoretical skepticism finds a strong match in political reality. Few now trust in the possibility that progressive engagement, whether individual or collective, and that it can generate meaningful results within a liberal-democratic regime. The Rawlsian type of awareness, and the moral commitment that corresponds to it, then becomes for many a merely utopian and fundamentally sterile exercise.

In other words, the hope, perhaps utopian, that political philosophy as a normative project on the structure of the major institutions of society can prepare the

ground for institutional arrangements capable of improving the collective quality of life, appears to have waned. This allows, in my opinion, to conjugate the *esprit philosophique* of the moment -which includes the postmodern climate and what I have called new metaphysics- with the accusation of lack of realism to the Rawlsian paradigm.

In general terms, the analysis thus conceived has a genealogical flavor. The Rawlsian paradigm owes its birth and formidable impact to the conjunction of a political-cultural climate and a general philosophical approach. The political-cultural climate is that of the United States after Vietnam and the civil rights marches. A climate in which widespread protest, in the name of social justice, needed reconciliation with the basic structure of a liberal democratic society Which is then the one provided by A Theory of Justice. Behind this book, however, there is also the development that American philosophy had made, all in all making a connection between the liberal-democratic pragmatism of Dewey and the analytical approach in the manner of Carnap. This connection finds perhaps its highest moment in the Harvard school, with the work of Quine, Goodman and Putnam. Rawls also comes from here. Now, fifty years after the release of Rawls' masterpiece, the historical situation has profoundly changed. There is no longer the echo of a protest in the name of justice and there is no longer the hope that liberal-democracy can be "the" way to best address the main political and social problems. And, if we want, there is not even the option of taking the model of the United States as a virtuous example to follow. This widespread distrust has found a philosophical counter-altar - according to my interpretation - in the post-modern climate and in the spread of a new metaphysics in which a hidden eschatology tends to replace the rationality of tradition. The outcome that most concerns us is that of the conjunction between widespread distrust in contemporary political culture and a philosophy such as this that consists in the possible loss of the normative dimension. By this, generically I mean the crisis of the modern project inspired by idealism, a project that -from Kant to Rawls- trusts to be able to find a shared moral and substantial interest from which to derive a vision of a well-ordered society. If this kind of analysis is not fallacious, then the future of political theory after Rawls is at least problematic. And it should pass through a reformulation of the normative dimension.

On this basis, I address in the following pages the decisive question of "after Rawls", of the legacy of his work and (brutally said) of what will happen to the Rawlsian paradigm. In the following pages, after a short Note on culture and power, I devote a Section to the moralism-realism-opposition; a theme on which there is today an endless literature and that here covers only a partial aspect of the main thesis. I then discuss - in the course of a long detour - at least anomalous in the philosophical-political literature - a complex trend in contemporary philosophy constituted by the postmodern climate and by what I call the new metaphysics. This trend tends, together with the political crisis of liberal-democracy, to make the traditional conception of normativity impossible. This is followed, in Section 3, by an argument that both philosophical-political approaches discussed here, the moralistic and the realist, ultimately need some conception of normativity. But, it is said in Section 4, in light of contemporary criticism, such a conception has to be different from the top-down conception of the past. The last Section is finally devoted to some inconclusive conclusions about the future of political theory and the possibility of reformulating within it a conception of the normative bottom up. Last point, but only in order of list, concerns the question mark in the title of this paper: it has been inserted to emphasize the speculative and hypothetical nature of the interpretative hypothesis presented.

I. Culture, Power, Recognition and the Critique of Distributive Justice

Wanting to summarize a complex vision, it can be said that for many authors within the paradigm of cultural studies *recognition* precedes (de*jure*) *distribution,* as Axel Honneth (v. 1995) has argued in the perspective of a renewed critical theory. By implication, substantial criticisms of distributive justice and Rawls have been in the past often based on the idea of recognition. According to many, the opacity towards recognition – and therefore issues of status and culture – seems to constitute the main limit of the vision of distributive justice. The scope of critics who share an opinion like this is broad, and ranges from neo-Hegelian and communitarian visions that have shifted the focus from the abstract universalist axis to the specificity of customs and traditions, to the proponents of the so-known critical theory, to more radical visions such as the post-colonialist ones.

In this paper, I do not directly address postcolonialism. However, in part I do it indirectly, discussing postmodernism. As matter of fact, post-colonial critics of distributive justice often draw inspiration from authors such as Foucault and Derrida. To these references is often added the revival of Gramscian themes concerning the themes of cultural hegemony (Said 1979) and subalternity (Arnold 1984). These authors propose a radical critique not only and not specifically of Rawsl but of the universalist model of Western justice, guilty of underestimating the epistemic violence of Western modernity (Chatterjee 2004). The substance of the critical arguments vaguely definable post-modern consists, therefore, in the denial of objectivity, on which the paradigm of distributive justice is based, in the name of difference and effectiveness. Often and willingly, so, behind two forms of criticism mix with each other, and the post-modern skepticism of the so-called French Thought is combined with the strong realism in the manner of Carl Schmitt, as can be seen well in Agamben, or a dramatization of an eschatological mold like that of Walter Benjamin (*Critique of Violence,*1921). Similar premises apply to radical feminism (on which see chapter y) in the manner of Spivak (1998) and more recently intersectionality literature. In these cases, the gender difference is not considered sensical within the theories of justice.

The relationship between justice and culture, universalism of rights and the difference between social and cultural contexts is also discussed by the Indian philosopher Neera Chandhoke (2010), even if, in this case, the criticism of the model of distributive justice is less radical than that proposed by the so-called post-colonials. The author's objective seems to be to reconcile the universal character of justice with the traditional and cultural specificity of the institutional contexts to which the principles of justice are actually applied. According to the author, in societies such as the Indian one – a plural *society* – the disagreement between citizens also affects those governing norms that should mediate between the different conceptions of justice. It is therefore necessary to be able to re-discuss and reinterpret the constitutional norms that generate profound disagreement, such as the interpretation of secularism or the tension between the universal conception of gender justice and the protection of minorities. However, what is particularly interesting is that the recourse to deliberation is not inspired by Western models but is derived from within the Indian tradition, through the recovery of the Gandhian philosophical vision based on *satyagraha* (a word

composed in Sanskrit where *satya* stands for truth and *agraha* means firmness). Through *satyagraha*, Chandhoke proposes a model of incessant search for truth that is a procedural model rather than:: a real end: according to the author the search for truth is more important than the outcome of the deliberative process that will still offer partial versions of the truth. In this sense, religion and other comprehensive views of the good are not excluded from the procedure but constitute "the *moral context within which we can make intellegible choice*s".

A similar compromise between traditional specificity and universalism is proposed by the African scholar Wingo (2003). According to the author, contemporary African societies lie at the center between two forces: (i) traditional ways of life and indigenous political cultures, (ii) the legacy of colonial regimes, and from a *foreign/colonial* version of democracy. This has produced two different types of *fundamentalist stand*: a total return to the pre-colonial and tribal past or an a-critical acceptance of externally imposed democratic models. However, according to Wingo a model of "well-ordered society" must be built on deeply rooted African traditions. These can be well represented by indigenous political forms and by tribal organizations (fellowship *associations*). These associations are intended as a crucial place of transition for members of African societies from a traditional ethnic-tribal affiliation to that of citizens.

As can be seen from these contributions, therefore, the question of cultural difference constitutes a problem in itself for the paradigm of distributive justice. The primacy of the basic structure in Rawls' approach to distributive justice already makes it clear that a theory of justice is not invariant with respect to the contexts to which it must be applied. But here the objection is deeper and concerns the intercultural translatability of the criteria of justice itself. If you read texts by authoritative Islamic authors such as Qutb (2000), you will notice that concepts such as those of freedom and equality – central to the perspective of justice – take on a different meaning and directly linked to the reading of sacred texts. The commensurability of the Islamic vision, thus conceived, with the criteria of justice is problematic, even if there are attempts in this direction. The same consideration can be made with regard to the Confucian tradition in China, and generally throughout the cultural universe that can be labeled as post-colonial, starting with India.

If we then read Hassan Hanafi, an authoritative contemporary Egyptian thinker (recently deceased), we see how the concept of justice has – in his eyes – both a practical and a-theoretical connotation. Islam is, in its cultural tradition, the effective correspondent of the modern Western concept of justice. The implicit vision of justice in Islam is, in this perspective, essentially solidarist. Property has a purely social meaning, being at the beginning everything we own the property of God, so that private property has a limited ontological and legal status. Precisely for this reason, property makes sense – in Islam as seen by Hanafi – if and only if it performs its social function. The latter has both an allocative and distributive meaning. From the first point of view, it is not easy to justify the private ownership of the means of production. And from the second point of view, ownership is conditional with respect to equity. For Hanafi, in a sense Islamic solidarity implies moral rather than legal socialism. Of course, something like this does not happen in the real world, where oil revenues and the work of banks (and generally the private sector of the economy) create social injustice. This ethical-religious socialism is – for Hanafi – the other side of a well-known truth, that Islam is an essentially political religion. Perhaps it goes without saying that this vision implies a structural conflict not only with capitalism, but also with the idea of distributive justice and more generally with the lifestyles typical of the West.

II. Realism/Moralism

The realist critique of the Rawlsian received view is usually proposed in the wake of a well-known distinction made by Bernard Williams. This distinction sees on one side the (political) moralism of the received view and on the other side (political) realism. Terms like moralism and realism are necessarily vague and moreover they are very general, so that within them one can distinguish different versions of both moralism and realism, even if –as we will see– while moralism corresponds to a rather precise identity, realism is more a collection of different objections to moralism than an independent paradigm.

Anyway, it is not impossible to draw a basic distinction between these terms. The approach -what Williams calls moralistic- is that of Rawls and the paradigm of theories of justice. It can include, in addition to Rawls, distinguished contemporary

scholars such as Dworkin, Nagel, Scanlon, Joshua Cohen, and so on. In principle, moralist authors are also liberal, such as Rawls. But the moralist approach is broader and within it one can also consider libertarians such as Nozick and Marxists such as G.A. Cohen. It can be said that moralism so understood draws its origins from an unbroken tradition that goes back to Aristotle. The approach of the moralists is straightforwardly normative, if only in the sense that it insists on the prescriptive aspects of a theory, partly neglecting the descriptive aspects. In other words, it insists more on what should be done than on the historical and factual situation in which one finds themself. It thus presupposes a certain natural harmony between reason and reality, between subject and history. Ethics usually provides the basis on which normative judgments are made. And politics is like a river flowing in the bed of ethics (the metaphor is Nozick's). Although there are various ways in which the derivation of the normativity of the political from ethics can occur, there is no doubt that the political philosophy of the received moralistic view starts from the concepts of good and right more or less in the way Rawls formulated and distinguished them.

In recent years, the critique of normativity has become the common basis of realist approaches. In contrast to the ethical normativity of moralists, realists insist on the fact that politics has its own indispensable autonomy. In the realist horizon, politics cannot and must not derive from supposed ethical truths – realists reject what Geuss (2008) called "ethics first view" – but rather from some events that permanently characterize the reality of politics, among which the most typical is power. This is why by realist we usually mean those authors who share a view that the main purpose of politics is (or should be) the attainment and maintenance of power. One cannot think –according to the realist critique– that political theory is simply a tool to provide political prescriptions derived from pre-political ideals of a moral nature (the so-called "enactment model"). Or, that moral ideals constitute a priori constraints on what politics can do (Rossi and Sleat). Something like this is, for realists, impossible if only because as a rule conflict prevails over consensus and even on concepts such as good and right disagreement reigns supreme. Also in this case, the tradition behind the realists is strong and ancient, from Machiavelli and Hobbes –not to mention Thucydides– to contemporary political realists in the area of International Relations.

In essence, realists criticize that very desire to "escape from politics" (the term escape is used by W. Galston, "Realism in Political Theory," 386) which would constitute in their eyes the most obvious characteristic of moralism. Moralists, in this view, would systematically confuse politics with applied ethics. Among other things, in this way they would end up betraying the very liberalism that Rawls and many of his moralist followers hold so dear. In fact, applying ethics with the instruments of politics implies coercion on issues that are basically as controversial as moral issues usually are. And any good liberal should know that where there is disagreement - and in ethics there often is - imposing morality in a coercive manner runs counter to that autonomy of individuals that constitutes an undisputed foundation of liberalism itself.

As noted above, realists are roughly in agreement in their critique of moralism, more or less along the lines of Williams, Geuss, Galston, and others. However, they do not constitute a unitary paradigm, since -although they agree on the autonomy of politics from ethics and often on the centrality of conflict in the area of the political- they start from different theoretical points of view. There are thus different paths that move in the direction of realism. There is the one -to which we will return- based on the centrality of legitimacy, dear to Bernard Williams, the Nietzschean one, strongly distant from Rawls, of agonism in the manner of B. Honig and C. Mouffe, the one vaguely historicist to J. Dunn and Q. Skinner, the one of critical activism in the manner of C. Mills, the liberal institutionalist one in the manner of Walrdon and the republican institutionalist version of R. Bellamy. To these are added -especially in recent years- several political scientists of different orientation, sometimes in the US of Madisonian matrix. All have in common their dissatisfaction with the ideal guidance à la Rawls, according to which the ideal theory decides the standards according to which any reliable attempt at reform should be practiced. This would distort political theory and make it lose sight of its main object, which is related to the autonomy of politics. As John Gray has argued, the real target of Rawls' moralists would not be politics, at most constitutional law[1]. In essence, all realists are united by the criticism that the sin of moralists is to exclude the specifics of politics from the heart of political theory.

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[1]   Quoted in Elkin, 358-9, n.2

Many realist authors criticize moralism in the name of the primacy of ideal theory as formulated by Rawls. Rawls famously distinguished –in A Theory of Justice (pp. 8-9)- between an ideal theory and a non-ideal theory. In Rawls' words, "the ideal part assumes strict compliance and works out the principles that characterize a well-ordered society under favorable circumstances." (idem 245). His thesis implies the primacy of ideal theory over non-ideal theory. It can be argued that there is a fairly close relationship between the critique of the primacy of ideal theory and a position inspired by realism in politics. Realists reject the "ideal guidance" of ideal theory, and the normative level in general, in the name of greater attention to historical facts.

Ideal theory also assumes "strict compliance," that is, not only the development of principles of justice under particularly favorable circumstances but also the full adherence of citizens to these principles once they are aware of them and (hopefully) convinced of them. Only in the light of an ideal theory thus conceived, "Existing institutions are to be judged in the light of this conception" (TJ, p. 246). To the ideal theory, then corresponds - always for Rawls - a non-ideal theory that performs a complementary task, so that "Non-ideal theory asks how this long-term goal might be achieved, or worked toward, usually in gradual steps. It looks for courses of action that are morally permissible and politically possible as well as likely to be effective"(LoP 89). It is not difficult to believe that the ideal theory, with the assumption of strict compliance that characterizes it, is unrealistic (see Simmons). The Rawlsian non-ideal theory actually has a more general task, divided as it is into two parts of which "One consists of the principles for governing adjustments to natural limitations and historical contingencies, and the other of principles for meeting injustice" (TJ, p. 246). In non-ideal theory there are various cases of non-compliance, cases that range from non-compliance within the state ranging from voluntary non-compliance in civil disobedience to non-voluntary non-compliance due to causes such as poverty and culture, and to those cases where it is individuals who violate compliance for example, by committing crimes. Similarly, at the international level, there are cases where nations deliberately violate compliance, such as outlaw states, and others where it is done unintentionally, such as when we encounter burdened societies. However, there is also a "partial compliance theory" that should help us in cases where there is manifest injustice and we need to find principles to direct our behavior.

It is sometimes argued that Rawls' non-ideal theory does not take sufficient account of specific but systematic injustices such as those involving race and gender. This is true to some extent. But it must be understood that non-ideal theory a la Rawls has a limited purpose and only makes sense within the normative perspective proposed by ideal theory. It serves, in other words, to fill in the gaps between factual reality and the basic just structure that would result from applying the principles of justice of the ideal theory under strict compliance. To this we must add that –in the context of the Rawlsian approach– the very idea of a non-ideal theory would make little sense if there were no ideal theory to precede it. In other words, if non-ideal theory serves to govern situations of relative injustice in the name of principles of justice, then it would be conceptually impossible to determine the extent and nature of these injustices if there were no ideal normative point of reference to inspire.

Therefore, the moralist position is undoubtedly characterized by a philosophical primacy of the normative: philosophers must deal with the normative aspects of a policy, leaving the implementation of projects to experts in the various fields. From this point of view, the concept of justice is a normative concept. We link a normative statement to the recognition of an obligation or the making of a publicly understandable commitment. As we would say in English, normative statements are usually linked to an "ought" rather than an "is." The reasons why there is an obligation or commitment - reasons that depend on one view or another of justice – are usually derived in political philosophy from justification, that is to say, from the "strength of the best argument" (Habermas). Where, of course, the problem lies precisely in understanding what kind of reasons these reasons are, and why they are normatively important. It can be said, in very general terms, that we give normative weight to reasons that invoke particularly significant ethical-political values. In other words, the thesis is that the reasons that incorporate values are those on which the assumption of the obligation or commitment mentioned above depends. This is the substance of political moralism, which thereby makes morality as the pivot of normativity prioritized over politics. In contrast, realism intends to give greater autonomy to purely political thought. As Williams argues, political philosophy cannot be a kind of applied moral philosophy.

This kind of objection is reflected in the critique of the consensualism implicit in political moralism. For Rawls, the conflict is surmountable in liberal democracy if one shifts the focus from good to right, as is explicitly stated in the doctrine of overlapping consensus in Political Liberalism. But this solution does not work, as Galston argues, following Waldron. There are certainly radical disagreements involving conceptions of the good of persons, but it is by no means certain that unanimity can be found in the area of right. The unanimous consensus on the right, desired by moralists, depends – according to these critics – on the fact that, for moralists, politics does not have its own autonomy and specificity, and the same institutions are conceived as instruments at the service of the realization of a previous ethical ideal that is supposed to be shared. But this is precisely the point on which realists disagree. In addition to the fact that, in the vision of moralists thus conceived, little importance is given to institutional procedures and processes.

The opposition is ultimately about the philosophical primacy of the normative, which is judged by many to be too abstract and utopian. The principles of justice, in the realist view, cannot be conceived as a priori standards without worrying about the possibility of realizing them. Among other things, there are cases in which the overall scenario does not allow one to believe in the possibility of realizing the principles. Conflict in politics can be irredeemable to the extent that it applies not only to values but also extends to situational analysis. Moreover, again for realists, political disagreement is not only intellectual but is pervasive and ineradicable; and in some cases even democracy cannot solve the problems. The same applies to the requirement of full compliance (Galston 395), seen by many as a mere ideal that is essentially unattainable in any human society.

However, as anticipated in the previous section, the core of this paper is not so much about the relationship between moralism and realism as such. Rather, the attempt is to understand why the realist hypothesis, the critique of ideal theory and the very desire to resize the space of the normative in political philosophy have become –after a long period of silence on the matter– so popular today. As we will see in the next Section, in my opinion there is a connection between the current realist trend not only with the political history that sees an undoubted decline of the democratic ideal but also with the crisis of normativity given the

general trend of contemporary philosophy. All in all, I am convinced that -as Leo Strauss argued, speaking of modernity- the attack on moralism in the name of realism depends on a progressive crisis of values in today's society, a crisis that is reflected in general philosophy. This is the theme of the next Section.

III.The crisis of normativity in contemporary philosophy

The difficulty in which every traditionally understood normative thought -including Rawls', but of course much more- depends on a crisis of meaning in contemporary philosophy. The latter, in my interpretation, has as its premises the end of the idealistic paradigm, one that has long constituted the background of different normative options. This renewed situation has found only a partial response in the spread of a thought inspired by post-modernism and in various ontological formulations that, on the whole, I will call "new metaphysics".

Almost everyone would agree that the crisis of idealism represents a major coup in the history of Western thought. This period can be distinguished in two parts (remembering that time limits are not the most important ones here): the first, which concerns the actual beginning of contemporary philosophy, goes from after the death of Hegel (1831) and the rise of the Hegelian schools to Nietzsche, historicism, and hermeneutics; the second, which goes into the merits of contemporary philosophy beyond its beginnings, sees the origin of the great philosophical schools of the twentieth century, such as logical positivism, phenomenology, and existentialism. Of course, there is overlap between the two sides. Now, few would doubt that in this long period there has been a rupture of the Western episteme, that is, of the way in which the theory of knowledge and metaphysics structure each other. Just as it is difficult to doubt that such a rupture of the episteme has parallel effects in the domain we often call the philosophy of practice, namely in the realm of ethical, political, and legal thought and consequently also in the Rawlsian paradigm.

The crisis of idealism has been made evident by what can be called the "postmodern climate." I speak of a postmodern "climate" because, to my advice, the postmodern is more a cultural climate than a proper philosophical direction.

This cultural climate has been revealed in the visual arts, literature and music since the first part of the twentieth century, and it has had its effects in all relevant fields from architecture to sociology. It is not easy and perhaps even improper to put together for example Joyce, Duchamp and Schoenberg, but it is from their ability to undo and reconstruct in an alternative way the languages of the artistic practices in which they operate that something like post-modernism was originated. This, of course, also has its philosophical inspiration and significant philosophical outcomes. Arguably, the heart of post-modern philosophy -which has planetary influence in post-colonialism and cultural studies- is French. It comes from the joint critique of the great narratives beginning with Hegel-Marxism, psychoanalysis and structuralism in politics, ethnography and linguistics. The best known representatives of that what can be called post-modern philosophy are in fact French, Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, Bataille, Lyotard, even if behind them stand out the figures of great Germans (Nietzsche for Foucault and Deleuze, Heidegger for Derrida, and so on). In short, we are in the midst of a sort of internal revision of continental philosophy, but a revision so substantial as to suggest a radical change.

It is difficult to say in a few lines what are the main ideas of this way of thinking and its most relevant outcomes. In my opinion, it can be hypothesized that the ideas and outcomes in question converge to determine a critical and profound revision of the idea of normativity. By normativity, I mean the categorical logic that holds together both a discourse and a practice, if you will the ultimate foundations of the true and the just. This founding normativity is, by post-moderns, deconstructed in the name of the impossibility of any starting point -conceptual as well as practical- that is reasonably sharable. In essence, what emerges is an extreme fragmentariness of every discourse so that any general theory becomes impossible. With Foucault, one can say that we live in a universe of micro-practices all consistent, all capable of promoting ourselves and damaging ourselves together; all capable of truth and at the same time harbingers of lies. With Deleuze, we can think of being immersed in a reality made of horizontal planes in which any claim to judge, understand, evaluate from the outside is vain if not fatuous. In a nutshell, it is impossible - if we enter the post-modern mentality

– to share any external point, that is to say a rationally defensible pivot from which to derive a shared normativity.

The postmodern climate highlights the impossibility of normative thinking and by implication of Rawls' approach. There are neither epistemic nor ethical-political models capable of providing recommendations with universalistic claims. But this situation leaves us without references. We are as if suspended in a vast horizon without guidance. It is not difficult, therefore, to hypothesize that it is precisely from this impossibility of preserving a sharable idea of normativity that depends both the strong return of the sacred that we have witnessed in recent decades and the need to appeal to a new metaphysics. Within this new metaphysics, being often emerges rhizomatically, as Deleuze puts it, as an emanation of essences, and only violence, the magical and the sacred can impose decisions in an a-normative world.

At this point, it is convenient to reformulate our hypothesis starting from the crisis of idealism. If, to give an example, we were to make idealism coincide with the names of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, and their followers, then our research hypothesis could no longer work. One could not, in fact, derive much of analytic philosophy from such a hypothesis, nor would continental philosophy be capable of reconstruction in the same way. If, on the other hand in the crisis of idealism we insert Kant and in also part of English empiricism perhaps via Berkeley partly overturning a school dogma, things work better. Analytic philosophy, in fact, draws deep inspiration from Kant and English empiricism (especially Hume). Moreover, Kant had a deep connection to both rationalism and empiricism of his time. Thus, with this extension of the "crisis of idealism," we include a considerable part of the birth of analytic philosophy within the context of the crisis of idealism. After all, the birth of analytic philosophy corresponds to the development of logical positivism, and the latter can be read notoriously as a critique of Kant's a priori synthesis.

Beyond its boundaries and Kant's inclusion, the crisis of idealism and the spread of postmodern skepticism breaks a balance that had proved stable and fruitful. It is a balance between subject and object, between metaphysics and practice. For the moment, suffice it to say that under the label "idealism", one can conceive of an epistemological and metaphysical vision in which the subject constitutes a

fundamental aspect for the knowledge of the external world. With idealism, from Kant onwards, knowledge is no longer the representation of an external world given independently of the subject itself. Subjective mediation becomes, in this way, constitutive of reality. This renewed balance between subject and object begins with Descartes and via Leibniz reaches Kant and then Hegel, but to some extent -in the perspective of perception, it also concerns empiricism. The other side of this same epistemic and metaphysical balance concerns -and how could it be otherwise? - also the philosophy of practice. Ethics and politics, with nuances naturally different from theory to theory, reflect the priority of the epistemic and metaphysical subject in the centrality of the autonomy of man and citizen in the Kantian sense. This notion of autonomy certainly comes out re-dimensioned by Hegel's critique of Kant, but nevertheless remains alive in the sense that the history of the subject, even if incorporated in the concrete historical context, still remains the history of freedom and human affairs. As it is made evident by Rawls' approach.

In this way, idealism guaranteed symmetry between the protagonist of the subject in epistemology and metaphysics and the moral and civil autonomy of the person. This means that the basic metaphysics and epistemology also provided support for a liberal-democratic political regime, and for an individual morality independent of group ethics. It is this complex and fundamental balance that breaks down with the demise of idealism.

These are two different ways of expressing that fracture of normativity to which we alluded earlier. The very possibility of a universalist conception of knowledge and practice is declared impracticable here in the name of the impossibility of a collective subject - a "we" constructor of the theoretical and practical world - capable of such an undertaking. In the place of this "we", a human subject concerned with his destiny and his specific being in the world as an individual takes over.

IV. A New Metaphysics

Parallel to the impossibility of normativity, connected to the post-modern climate, one can hypothesize the coming of a "new metaphysics". This new metaphysics is anti-idealist and anti-Kantian. This new metaphysics also presents itself as a reaction to the bewilderment that follows the loss of reality that seems to result from dematerialization and deterritorialization. Not for nothing, the new metaphysics is often and willingly somehow pre-Kantian in presenting an ontology in which objects emerge as such without the mediation of the subject. At the same time, such an approach appears essentially non-anthropocentric, from this point of view consistent with the dictates of the transhuman. The latter and the digital revolution, in conclusion, influence the ontological nature of the new metaphysics; which, from this point of view, can also appear as the metaphysical basis for new eschatologies often mysterious and inspired to the magic and the mystic.

Up to this point, we are on the threshold of what I call the new metaphysics, that is to say, of that of a non-academic and diffused philosophy. One of the representative authors of this trendy philosophy is Nick Land. Land began his journey with a series of conferences (then published in a book entitled "Meltdown", text with music) dedicated to the relationship between philosophy and cybernetics. These suggestions would later serve as the background for the founding of the Cybernetic Culture Research Unit (CCRU). In Land's case, the relationship with the cyber punk world after Gibson is evident and robust, but also with architecture (he wrote a text on "Anarchitecture"), with artists like Jack Chapman who were inspired by his techno-nihilism, with musicians like Steve Goodman who read and followed him, as well as having a significant echo in theory fiction and dishumanist feminism and even with voodoo magic. Along with Mark Fisher (author of Capitalist Realism) and Timothy Morton, Land has been included in a group of philosophers who are inspired by "speculative realism," a label the latter of which may perhaps fit the Iranian philosopher and artist Negarastani as well.

In particular, Morton's inquiry has influenced contemporary thought in two areas, metaphysics and ecology. In metaphysics, Morton has proposed a complex theory of "hyper-objects" (on which see his "Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology

after the end of the world"), within what is usually called OOO, that is to say "Object Oriented Ontology" (on which see the book by Graham Harman, entitled "Object Oriented Ontology: A New Theory of Everything"). In general terms, it can be said that Harman's and Morton's ontological proposal are anti-idealist, in the sense that the relationships between objects matter more than our relationship with reality, and inspired by a kind of magical realism. Harman explicitly states : "As OOO sees it, the true danger to thought is not relativism but idealism". In this framework, hyper-objects are objects that escape a spatio-temporal location, such as global warming and radioactive plutonium. The reflection on nature and our relationship with nature -that which constitutes the heart of "Dark Ecology" - was then read within the metaphysical framework constituted by object-oriented ontology. Morton argues that traditional ecologism has now reached a dead end. This is because it conceives Nature as an abstract and separate entity to be respected and protected. But, conceived in this way, nature is presented as an Absolute Other, a fetish, more or less like women in traditional cultures. This attitude would derive from Neolithic agrilogistics. Morton, on the other hand, contrasts an equal relationship to which corresponds a totalizing immersion in nature.

In the philosophy of social sciences, the so-called "accelerationism" was born on similar bases, at the heart of which is the thesis according to which the overcoming of capitalism can be achieved by accelerating, and not opposing, the processes of capitalism itself. Accelerationist theory can be left-wing or right-wing. Left-wing accelerationism aims to push technological evolution beyond the logic of capitalism. The right accelerationism is instead in favor of an intensification of capitalism as such, even in order to cause an eventual technological singularity. Srnicek and Williams are the authors of the Accelerationist Manifesto , then deepened in the essay Inventing the future. The left-wing accelerationists set themselves the challenging task of reconciling the left with new technologies and with the future (in their opinion delivered into the hands of the right).

Accelerationists and speculative realists also seek to draw original philosophical conclusions in light of new technologies. On a similar wavelength, to which he adds the call to the East, moves Byung-Chul Han, author of numerous writings including "Philosophy of Zen Buddhism". Byung-Chui Han's writings such as

"In the Swarm" and "Psychopolitics" -both from 2016- are read and discussed animatedly. The reason for such popularity may lie in the global nature of the character. BCH (to simplify) is a good synthesis of East-West, born as he is in Seoul and perfected in philosophy in Germany. The philosophical-political interest of his work consists - as far as I believe - in the need to refound the subject and to prepare new therapies of the self within a thought that sometimes seems too coldly institutionalist.

This area, in a broad sense, can also include the critical reinterpretation of the technique of authors such as Gilbert Simondon (see "Du Mode d'Existence des Objects Techniques"), Federico Campagna (see "Magia e Tecnica") and Yuk Huy (see "Recursivity and Contingency"). According to Campagna, the metaphysical investigation reveals that Technique governs in an absolute way the reality of our time. But the dominance of Technique is equivalent to the triumph of nihilism; the critical and constructive instrument chosen to free us from this cage. As for Negarestani, he can be said to draw inspiration from the legacy of Deleuze and Guattari, the intellectual frequentation of Land, the vitalistic explosion of Morton's ontology. His "Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonynmous" straddles the line between speculative realism, accelerationism and pulp fiction.

V. A Rejoinder on Normativity for Realists and Moralists

So far, we have worked from a complex hermeneutic hypothesis that seems to admit no way out. We have said that Rawls' Era depended, besides the extraordinary quality of Rawlsian work, on a political climate and a philosophical culture. Then later we deconstructed both the climate and the culture in question. In the eyes of many, liberal democracy as a basic structure no longer seems to constitute the default from which protest in the name of social justice can find a solution. At the same time, contemporary philosophical culture -criticizing idealism- questions the possibility of a collective subject able to provide a universally significant view and option. This makes it implausible to base one's own theoretical hypothesis on an a priori normativity, as has been the case in a centuries-long trend that goes (at least) from Kant to Rawls. On this impossibilist basis, the realist critique of the supposed moralism of the Rawlsian received view takes hold and is reinforced.

But, in these terms, we seem to find ourselves in a dead end: there are no solutions to the dilemma arising from the crisis of normativity. The received view cannot continue its course without profound changes, some of which are related to the content of the realist critique. But at the same time, realism remains a purely critical view, capable of making serious objections to the Rawlsian view but in turn in need of a normative space in which to affirm its anti-moralistic conception of the political.

In essence, both realists and moralists must find a model of normativity, a model that must be different from the previous ones. For moralists, accepting by degrees the analysis proposed here, something like this seems obvious. After all, in this field it is only from the perspective of ideal theory that one can understand where injustice reigns. And ideal theory obviously has presuppositions of a normative nature. However, the criticism of the realists leaves its mark. And to a greater or lesser extent, the emphasis on the excess of utopianism that emerges from the realist critique is taken up by various thinkers in the wake of Rawls' Political Liberalism. A liberal thinker and overall adherent to the social justice paradigm like David Miller has insisted that we would need politics for earthlings (Miller 2008, 44). And lapidarily Jeremy Waldron, also undoubtedly liberal and not too far from the Rawlsians, explained that the received view of political theory failed because it did not adequately consider the descriptive aspects of the enterprise. In essence, given the position on the subject of even thinkers close to the Rawlsian orientation such as Andrea Sangiovanni (Sangiovanni 2008, 156–63.) Sangiovanniparticularly emphasizes concrete institutional conditions as the frame of reference

for interpretation of normative principles as well as their specific functions within concrete political contexts (ibid., 158–59)., it can be said that the search for a more equitable relationship between normative and descriptive is on the agenda of contemporary political theory as seen by moralists.

This appears more difficult from the perspective of realists. However, if –as noted above- moralists need a more grounded approach, realists cannot give up a normative platform (obviously different from the traditional platform of moralists). We insisted earlier that realists desire a political theory that can deal not with a normative dream but with the specific problems of the political dimension;

problems such as the question of power, the fact of disagreement, the necessity of order given conflict and the very nature of political authority. In substance, realists suggest that the essential and primary purpose of politics is to secure a social order based on authority. But, if this is the point, one cannot avoid asking -as Larmore does among others- what makes such an order endowed with authority. The answer can only be normative: the order must appear to citizens as adequately justified and thus endowed with legitimacy. Bernard Williams, from whom much of the realist critique has taken its cue, has no doubts about this. If, in fact, argues that the first political problem arises "in Hobbesian terms ... /consist in/ the securing of order, protection, safety, trust, and the conditions of cooperation," with equal conviction he asserts that each state has the task of "satisfying the basic legitimation demand" (BLD), which in turn requires to "offer a justification of its power". The justification in question need not be the liberal, egalitarian justification of Rawlsian moralists, which in turn responds to the demands of Western modernity. Instead, it can be consistent with the historical period and culture of reference. The main difference with respect to moralists would consist – if we follow Williams – in the fact that it would not be a question of appealing to a moral normativity that takes priority over politics, but rather to a morality within politics. This latter hypothesis is not too different from that of Rawls in Political Liberalism and from the remembered theorists of justice such as Miller, Waldron and Sangiovanni who are inclined to take institutional realism seriously.

Obviously, realists are not satisfied with the liberal vision, which justifies legitimacy in terms of ideal consensus. Nor, however, can they accept the reduction of politics to power and the adherence to the maxim "might is right". Instead, BLD at Williams assumes that there are normative conditions that justify legitimacy so that political power in the proper sense can be distinguished from pure and simple domination. This requires a normative basis, though it is a normativity that is less general than that of the realists and more related to history and context. As Larmore argues, 'The moral ideals to which the latter view [moralism] appeals are bound to prove controversial, forming part of the problems of political life, rather than providing the basis of their solution'.   In essence, realist legitimacy must distinguish the realist paradigm from mere effectiveness in command, but at the same time it must not collapse into political moralism. It cannot thus derive from moral conditions external to politics. From this perspective, Williams –discussing

the moral nature of BLD, says: 'If it is, it does not represent a morality that is prior to politics. It is a claim that is inherent in there being such a thing as politics'. In this way, even the realist approach accepts the space of the normative, within which there are also moral values. The condition for this to happen is that the legitimacy of a political power depends on the convictions of those who are subject to it. Therefore, normative judgments on legitimacy that judge the past from today or that are intercultural and made from the outside are not consistent.

The thesis that can be derived from these observations is that - precisely in light of the reasons and limits of the two main visions (moralism and realism) - today it is necessary to think of a vision of normativity that goes beyond these same limits. This vision should keep in mind two theoretical requirements that are indispensable for any good political theory. I call these needs descriptive plausibility and normative adequacy, respectively. A good political theory must be descriptively plausible, in the sense of being not only capable of providing an adequate description of the facts but also of showing how these same facts are best explained if the theory in question is relied upon. However, a good political theory must also be adequate from a normative point of view, that is, capable of indicating a direction of development that is inspired by ideals of justice and stability compatible with the theory itself.

Both realism and moralism in their original formulation are unable to maintain the mentioned standards of normative adequacy. Realism in fact lacks an explicit normative dimension that often remains implicit in the folds of the explanatory and descriptive account of the theory. At the same time, moralism while providing a normative version, ends up -as we have seen- often confusing, social justice with applied ethics or worldly religion. From the analysis of these theoretical deficits of realism and moralism comes the need for a theoretical turn in social justice and political theory in general.

VI. Towards a new sense of normativity

There exists -as we have seen in the previous section- a necessary function of normativity in both moralism and realism. This conclusion does not imply that our

vision of normativity must be the traditional one. Perhaps, we can adopt a new version of normativity more coherent with the requisites of normative adequacy and descriptive plausibility mentioned before. Aware that such a requirement is vague at best, in this final section I intend to defend normativity in general, and also to save political theory from the crisis generated by postmodernism and the new metaphysics without avoiding to take in due consideration their philosophical contribution.

I would like to do that putting aside the idea of top down normativity and suggesting a bottom up normative option. The latter rests on a form of evolutionary rationality which owes much to Kant and to some critics of the classical concept of rationality in economics.

It has been said so far that the postmodern climate and the new metaphysics both stem from a critique of the split between phenomena and objects typical of Kant's philosophy. Kant is the founder of the widespread way of thinking that Timothy Morton -following Meillassoux- calls "correlationism," that is, the idea that knowledge of objects passes through subjects. This assumption is at the root of the critique of postmoderns and new metaphysicians. For postmoderns, the critique in question is based on the conventional and cultural nature of the intersubjective agreement that grounds Kantian objectivity. And for some among the new metaphysicians -in the view for example of magical realism and speculative realism- a critique based on the derivative and non-transcendental nature of Kantian intersubjectivity. To put it in Morton's way, the transcendental presupposes hyper-objects and not vice versa. For both the one and the other, this implies the impossibility of normativity hinging on the centrality of the subject, as traditionally understood in the wake of Kant. This is considered impractical because it would have to act in a mouse down way on a subject considered autonomous both from the epistemic and the ethical-political point of view. To this skeptical vision we have ab initio opposed a normative option but from below and based on an evolutionary conception of rationality.

It is interesting to consider that also the alternative vision - "bottom up normativity" - can find its origins in Kant. This evolutionary vision, also useful to overcome the perverse split between ethics on the one hand and economics and science on

the other, goes back to Kant, and more precisely to what he argued in the second part of the Critique of Judgment dedicated to the Teleological Judgment. In this part of the work, it is clear - in my opinion - the connection between ethics and science in terms of normativity (as I will try to show later). Kant actually starts from the awareness that a critique of teleological judgment must start from two assumptions:

(i) Biological phenomena cannot be understood in a purely mechanistic way, contrary to what the Galilean-Cartesian model of modern science seemed to have suggested. Gravitational forces and absolute materialism do not explain the emergence of the organic universe.

(ii) Given what was said in (i) it should not be thought that the only alternative to this is an appeal to the supernatural.

The conjunction of (i) and (ii) makes it possible to think of the meaning and significance of living beings in a third way, which is then the one presented in nuce in the critique of teleological judgment. Within the framework of this mode, inspired by a naturalistic teleology, living beings are conceived as products of a natural development and not as artifacts. In the Analytics of Teleological Judgment, first, and then in the Dialectics, Kant defends the concept of a natural end (see especially sections 64,65) and its non-contradictory nature. An object, in this view, exists as a natural end when it is cause and effect of itself. The condition for this to occur is that each of its parts exists for the others and for the whole. Plants and animals qualify precisely for this as natural ends. Now, two observations are necessary here. To be in coherence with the whole is typical of any artifact, for example of any well-made industrial product (take the various parts of an automobile for example). And it is implicit in the case of direct divine creation. In both cases, behind there is in fact a design, an intelligent and intentional project. For living beings, it would not be so –Kant tells us– because the propulsive force is internal and not external, if we can say so. The only way to argue this thesis is to maintain that our (human) way of understanding presupposes something like this. To be a little less vague, there would be an underlying normativity in the development of living things that secretly corresponds to our way of understanding in general.

The connection of the Kantian hypothesis with the foundations of biology is well known and studied. More complicated is to look for the relationship with an evolutionary view. After all, Darwin comes after Kant, and so there is no historical possibility of connection. But Kant's idea of natural endings can help in general thinking about the concept of evolutionary cognition in Gerd Gigenrenzer's way. The concept of evolutionary cognition so understood implies a reversal of the idea of normativity as usually understood. Typically, we think of normativity as a top down process. Instead, Gigenrenzer -and those who see it as he does- conceives of normativity as bottom up. As a result of repeated trial and error (Taleb, in Antifragile seems to make such an option his own). The classical paradigm of economics based on maximizing rationality exemplifies well the claims of evolutionary cognition. In the traditional view, an omniscient and omnipotent subject would act by maximizing expected consequences within the horizon of a predefined vector, e.g., utility. Even in the critiques of this standard paradigm, from Khaneman to Simon, the idea remains that there is an a priori logic according to which we should direct our behavior, and the difference from the standard paradigm is that we are not able to achieve the aforementioned logical level. In essence, the a priori normativity would remain unaffected while being utopian in the bad sense of the word. Evolutionary cognition rejects the very idea of a priori logic and brings normativity to life from below.

Gigenrenzer's rationality "for mortals", that is for people like us, was born within the project on "bounded rationality". It is in substance a form of evolutionary rationality. From this point of view, it rejects "omniscience", which would be nothing more than the mental ability to deduce the future from a form of perfect knowledge. Intuitively, "unbounded" rationality corresponds to the traditional idea of normativity. Like traditional normativity, omniscient rationality does not predict errors but certain (deterministic) predictions. On the contrary, evolutionary rationality foresees errors and the possibility to revise them continuously in a logic of evolutionary survival. The thesis of those who -like Gigenrenzer- champion evolutionary rationality is the only one able to join a normative perspective with a reasonable descriptive background, which instead would be completely lacking in the theories and strategies connected to omniscient rationality and traditional normativity. Evolutionary rationality, so understood, is part of the larger family of bounded rationality, of which the theoretical options of Simon and Khaneman

are also part. In all of these options, information seeking acts as a complement to the a priori model. The main difference is that theoretical options based on optimization under constraints -such as those of Simon and Khaneman- assume that human beings are rational so to speak regardless of their relationship with the external world. There are laws that would lead to optimal knowledge provided that we are able to overcome biases and cognitive illusions.

The evolutionary rationality is instead or more empirical than the other options of bounded rationality and in its ambit we can say that the a priori normative model does not exist without the a posteriori information. As if to say that the laws of logic and probability have no citizenship outside of contact with reality. It is only the natural and social environment that can determine - within a process made of trial and error - the best heuristic to solve a certain type of problem.

VII. To conclude somewhere

We said ab initio that the main purpose of this paper is to make clearer the after Rawls era by critically investigating its philosophical and political cultural bases. Something like this presupposes the will to analyze some philosophical consequences of contemporary cultural and political climate. So far, however, the nature of today's cultural and political climate has not been made sufficiently explicit, which is then what would make our philosophical offering interesting (in the auspices).

All in all, I am defending here a general thesis of the type: instead of basking in the lukewarm sun of the end of political ideologies, we should return to a climate in which ideology, when appropriately justified, still constitutes the normative horizon within which the political flourishes. Pragmatism, populism and authoritarianism, that is to say the most common political responses to the crisis of ideologies, are not in fact the anti-ideological solution to a problem. Rather, they too are ideology-filled options, i.e., potentially coherent systems of political thought that can serve as backgrounds for parties and movements. Indeed, they are hidden ideological options and as such usually poor ones. This is because all too often, as is not difficult to note, the lack of ideology becomes a lack of ideas tout court, and

therefore of Politics with a capital P. In fact, the lack of ideology borders on the domination of "alternative facts", with communication made of fake news, with the tendency to turn the page, with the permanent and widespread aspiration to compromise in the bad sense of the term, if not in the flight into magic and hyper-real (which can lead to authoritarianism). So far, it's easy. In order to escape from nostalgia, it would thus be necessary to do something very difficult, that is, to explain why ideology is hidden or missing, and what kind of ideology could assert itself in the changed historical conditions that characterize the present.

I will limit myself to mentioning the two explanations in question. First, ideology is weak, hidden and deficient in the contemporary. The explanation can be made to depend on the structural difficulty in reconciling reality and reason - something that would require a basic normativity - in the so-called post-modern climate we inhabit. This finds a decisive philosophical support in the refusal of the a priori synthesis (positivism), in the gap between essence and existence (existentialism), in the Nietzschean, Bergsonian and magical realist drifts (inspired by the new metaphysics) that pervade the legacy of French post-structuralism, not to mention the cyborg and post-human jolts. One consequence of all this is experienced intellectually in the difficulty of applying models to the devices with which we are confronted. This is a prima facie epistemological affair, no doubt, but its political-ideological significance should not be underestimated: ideologies vanish as part of a more general loss of meaning (which characterizes contemporary philosophical thought). And they vanish because theoretical models fail to come to terms with the reality of facts.

Second, how can this be remedied. There are two options: either nihilistic, magical and authoritarian consolation, or an attempt to give new logical and practical space to normative models. I opt for the second option. But what does it mean to hypothesize a kind of alternative model with respect to tradition? It means transforming the vision of what is normative. The sphere of the normative concerns duty to be both logical and normative in an ethico-political way The normative of tradition descends in this way on reality from above, like the principle of the excluded third or the categorical imperative. The transformation of the models I have in mind implies new options in which the models, instead of descending from above, ascend from below. It is an evolutionary vision of normative models, of making mentality compatible with the reality of facts.

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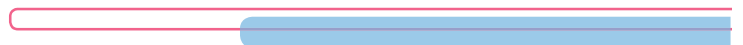
REVIEWS

Review of
Vinay Lal,
*The Fury of Covid-19: The Politics,
Histories and Unrequited Love
of the Coronavirus.*

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This is a belated response to the historian Vinay Lal's brief but illuminating book, written as early as August 2020, and published the same year by Macmillan. The volume accomplishes something that a lot of academics would have dreamt of doing in that first "pandemic year," namely, expressing in real time one's understanding of a singular event in world history as it unfolds, using one's disciplinary lens to do so, while also delineating the various areas of uncertainty and incomplete knowledge, employing a world-view and/or axiological framework in adjudicating what is known, and touching upon the numerous anxieties unraveled by humanity's encounter with the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2. At the time of publication, there was no vaccine in sight, and the death toll was climbing steadily in most countries of the world, including both the United States, the country where the author lives and works, and India, the country of his origin, and an important focus of his research. Works of this kind are valuable for capturing current responses to historic occurrences —it is no coincidence that Lal refers to Samuel Pepys's diary from the time of the Black Death— while communicating one's "hot take" to readers around the world is made possible in part by the patterns of academic and literary production that are the norm today. But this is not a book that aims to ride the wave of the pandemic. Rather, it emerges from the imperative to understand, to live through the churn of numerous ideas, historically salient memories and worries that jostled for space with the advent of the coronavirus, and say what one makes of them all. This is what makes it the important document that it is.

One of the motivations behind Lal's book is to build a narrative history around what he identifies as "political epidemiology"—a field of enquiry in which one seeks answers to "a... set of questions on how national histories and conceptions of national character have shaped the response of politicians and populace alike to [public health crises] across countries and political systems" (p. 56). Such a story might reveal patterns in how the origins of trans-national epidemics are inscribed into public memory. (Diseases have historically been thought to travel from the East to the West.) By examining the language used by rulers to present their chosen measures to contain a disease, we learn something about the construction of national identities as well as presumptions about the beliefs of the populace. (Thus Emmanuel Macron's government emphasized that lockdown measures would not violate such treasured Gallic values as liberty, and Prime Minister Modi admonished Indians in various ways, infantilizing and expecting obedience from his devoted constituents.)

From a social epistemological perspective, these issues are of great interest. Is political rhetoric meant only to "push through" measures that are aligned with a government or party's ideological beliefs, or are they meant to reinforce existing beliefs about the nation and its people? Does trust in the state (e.g., to ensure a percentage of one's salary when lockdown restrictions make it impossible to go to work) invariably depend upon a "track record" of doing good by its citizens, or something that, assuming rational choice on the part of citizens, *ought not* to count for much in a democracy (e.g., promissory notes about "*achhe din*")? How does one understand faith in science —Lal points to the effective use of homoeopathic prophylactics by the Cuban state to query scientism in the US— or its opposite number, namely, paranoid rejection of sensible recommendations such as handwashing etc. because they are "imposed" by the state? The book demonstrates ways in which the pandemic offers an opportunity to study the creation of meaning of big-ticket philosophical ideas such as liberty and state power across the political spectrum.

These questions are closely tied to that of who the restrictions are for: who is picked out by the "we" in slogans such as "We are in this together"? The answer to that is political. The populist democratic state has to reassure only so many citizens as it considers itself accountable to, and their number is a function of

the power that those citizens have in relation to their economically weaker and socially marginalized compatriots.

To this reader, the two most important skeins in Lal's argument appear to be the following. First, the extraordinary interventions by states in the social lives of their citizens in the course of the pandemic have caused great harm to vulnerable individuals. By now, several countries have published deeply worrying data on rates of unemployment, domestic violence, and loneliness-induced mental health disorders. Lal expends a few chapters working out the implications of "social distancing" in a country already riven by the caste system. He sees the pandemic as having reinforced the divide between towns, where the "work" is, and villages, where those who once sold their labour in the towns flee in order to live among their own. The story does not end there, unfortunately, because the reasons why people are forced to migrate to the towns don't go away, as it suits both the state and the capitalists to perpetuate this arrangement.

Secondly—and this is one possible interpretation of the phrase "unrequited love" in the title of the book—just as the enforced solitude of the lockdown helped many to reevaluate their desires and priorities, perhaps societies worldwide would have a chance to value anew such things as social cohesion, and care for one's fellow-being, so badly undermined by the scientifically kosher strictures that they bought into. Perhaps they would learn to respect the natural environment by limiting the spheres of human activity, because not doing so would simply bring another novel pathogen into our lives? Would the pandemic clear our vision, such that we finally learn to reject what we do not need, and seek to enrich our lives in ways envisioned by such thinkers as Gandhi? Lal toys with a pessimistic answer to these questions, but in the end, appears to reserve judgment on the whole business.

The events that unfolded during the second wave in India—the graveyards and crematoria bursting at the seams—would, one hopes, be hard for most Indians to put behind them. Emerson, whom Lal quotes at one point, remarks that the death of his young son a few years prior strikes him now as the loss of "a beautiful

estate," lamenting that he cannot get that unspeakable grief "close to [himself]."[1] But, one might argue, this fact gives him pause, and challenges him to make meaning of it. In a similar way, one hopes that the pandemic would abide as a scar in our collective memory, demanding creative resolutions to what we are forced to remember. (1138 words)

1   R. W. Emerson (2000). "Experience," *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. New York: The Modern Library, p. 309.

Review of

Neeraj Ghaywan's
Geeli Pucchi from *Ajeeb Dastaans*
(Netflix, 2021)

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Hindi films are attempting to resurrect from its ailing phase through experimenting with novel themes. New digital platforms have impacted the transformation of diverse language films across India. *Geeli Pucchi* is one of the short films in the anthology of Hindi films, Ajeeb Daastaans (Director : Neeraj Ghaywan, Netflix). Questions of caste, gender and sexuality are inextricably linked to the India's social and political terrains. This short film attempts to map the various linkages of subordination and domination related to the complex caste-gender-sexuality relations. Bharti Mandal, a Dalit woman is the central character of this film. She works in a factory as a craftsperson irrespective of her sound educational qualifications. The factory is a male dominated space and she has to undergo bullying from her macho colleagues on a day to day basis. At the same time, Priya Sharma, a Brahmin woman, joins the factory as an accountant without adequate qualifications. Bharti's colleague, a Dalit man convinces her that she won't get Priya's post due to Bharthi's lower caste identity. Stereotypes of femininity and masculinity are juxtaposed via the reception of Priya Sharma and the marginalization of Bharthi Mandal. The manager tries to justify Bharti's subordinate professional location by differentiating her as the only craftswoman among the machine men. It is also a way to sideline Bharthi's competence. At the same time, the manager provides a job for Priya Sharma irrespective of her lack of competence and educational qualifications. Professional aspirations of Dalits are shown in the midst of the larger constraints on their social mobility grounded in caste. Priya Sharma befriends Bharathi without knowing her caste identity.

However, their friendship is also determined by caste. Initially their interactions operate through the silence about their caste. Anonymity in the so-called modern spaces in India is always challenged by caste. Priya asks Bharathi's caste identity and Bharthi hides her Dalit identity. She deploys the Bengali brahmin surname, Banerjee, to overcome the shame of being a Dalit. Their friendship is also built on the recognition of their repressed, lesbian identities. Bharti is a Dalit divorcee who lives a lonely life. She fondly remembers her female partner and their consequential separation due to her marriage. Priya too shares her relation with her female friend. Both of them seek their lost partner through their amity. Repression of the past is thus recovered through the new bondage between them. Priya and Bharti understand their same sex sexual orientation. Bharti shares her caste location as the child of Dalit mid wives as a sign of their friendship. Priya does not express her shock directly but the film shows the nuances of human relations that are fragmented by superior and inferior caste locations. Bharti's revelation of her caste identity leads to the tensions of acceptance and rejection of a Dalit as a friend. Patriarchal bargain and caste functions as undercurrents to such troubled relations. Caste and labor also operate as subtext of the film and Bharthi asks Priya how she got the job in the factory without required technical knowledge. Priya says that the Manager was impressed by her palm reading skills. It shows the caste-based networks and its persistence in the private sector. Priya also shares her repressed, lesbian identity and her disinterest to give birth to a baby. Bharthi talks to her about pregnancy and mothering in a compulsory, heterosexual space of Indian family. While discussing these aspects, Priya asks Bharthi, how she knows different aspects of pregnancy, mothering etc. Bharathi taunts her saying that like Priya knows palmistry, she knows about all these aspects due to her caste location/caste related labor. Priya's mother-in-law did not allow her to work in the factory after the birth of her child. She insists that Priya leaves the job and take care of the child. Her mother-in-law also says that since Bharti is from the mid wife-caste, she may be better informed than Priya. When Bharti visits Priya's home, they offer her tea in a different tumbler. Priya's husband also appreciates Bharthi for her efforts to convince Priya about mothering and other related domestic chores. Paradoxical coexistence of the appeasement of Dalits and caste-based discrimination unfolds the manner in which caste, gender, patriarchy and sexuality divide Bharti and Priya's family. Bharti realizes that there is a stark caste division between them and encourages Priya to leave the job and

take care of her child. She recognizes that this is the only way to enter into a highly Brahminic, higher professional arena. It can be also read as an act of revenge by Bharthi against socially regulated professional arenas. Claims related to merit is also debunked through the acceptance of Priya in the factory. The film thus captures shifting forms of caste, gender, patriarchy and sexuality.

For a Rawlsian reading of the film, family and justice need to be probed in a systematic fashion. Family, as a social institution, for both Bharathi and Priya are rooted in the larger questions of gender and caste. On the contrary to Rawlsian take on family as a basic institution that grants rights and duties becomes a hazard for Bharti due to her intersections of her identity as a Dalit, a woman, and a divorcee. Fair opportunity and its relations with family, in Rawlsian sense, could not operate in the context of Bharti due to her subjugated, social locations (Rawls, 2013:74). Free choice and individual rights of Bharti and Priya cannot be equated on the same parameters of the west in general and India in particular. One of the key questions that need to be asked here is whether societal and political institutions in India are able to create any common ground for the justice and equality for those women who do not conform to the homophobic, casteist ideologies and its practices. The principle of justice as fairness related to same sex marriage is contested within the field of family (Gray,2013:158–170). Liberal underpinnings of Rawlsian premises also need to be revisited according to the neoliberal moorings of the contemporary capitalism. Reading a film on Rawlsian grounds becomes complicated due to the geopolitics of visual cultures and geopolitics of nation-state, nature of citizenship, renewed understanding of rights and duties.

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OBITUARIES

Sonal Shukla

Gita Chadha

image source : Instagram@abc.gy

Department of Sociology

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Doyens are remembered by little things.

At least that is how I remember you.

It was the summer of 1989.

Safdar Hashmi had been killed.

Nursing an aching heartbreak and teaching consummately,

I was discovering feminism.

I was young, and somewhat idealist, somewhat fatalist

Performing Om Swaha on the streets of Bombay with my even younger students,

I was looking to find references, in people

***

I invited you for the college annual day.

Because a friend asked me to

Nervous and excited, I stood at the gate to welcome you

It was my first interaction with a flesh and blood feminist.

Firebrand, they had said.

I waited with bated breath

***

And then you came.

Well draped- in flaming colours of red, in rich silk

And the perfect pout, the perfectly upturned nose

We chatted.

I was comforted, a little intimidated - because you could do that to many.

As the journalist sought a picture, of us, for the next day's report

You picked out your comb from your stylish hand bag and ran it through your short hair,

Performative as hell, I thought

***

And then you spoke, and sang, to the young and the old in the audience
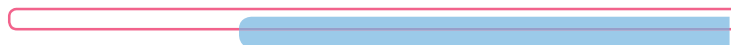
Each was moved, more than a little

I thanked you with a smile, then

And will remain thankful forever

For being an early reference

***

Adieu, Sonal Shukla, Adieu.

- Gita Chadha

Jean Luc Nancy: A Homage
(26th July, 1940- 23rd August, 2021)

Rajlaxmi Ghosh

image source : https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/0/0e/WikipediaNancy20060611.png

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A thinker of non-essential structure of being-with as a mode of being Political: A Homage

At a time when our very notions of what it means to 'do' philosophy are under attack, philosopher Jean Luc Nancy has re-defined an astounding new 'political' verge in Continental philosophy. Philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy, renowned for his wide-ranging, challenging, and thoughtful writings on art, film, and politics, died on August 23 at the age of 81. He is best known for over 200 books, in some of the most scintillating prose gifted to us by a philosopher, covering subjects as diverse as philosophy, literature, politics, film, sexuality, contemporary art, history, and the recent coronavirus pandemic. His work always sought to engage with contemporary issues as a part of a philosopher's job. Nancy's 2000 essay "The Intruder", served as the basis for Claire Denis's well-regarded 2004 film of the same time.

Born near Bordeaux in France, in 1962 Nancy graduated in philosophy from the University of Paris, going on to teach all over the world for the following two decades while writing extensively. In 1973, he obtained his Ph.D. under the supervision of Paul Ricoeur. In 1973, he took up a teaching job at Strasbourg, where he would work for the next thirty years. In 1873, Nancy obtained his state doctorate from the Universite de Toulouse le Mirai; his thesis, which put forth the concept of freedom as a kind of personal property, was reviewed by

Jean-Francois Lyotard and Jacques Derrida, and subsequently published as The Experience of Freedom in 1988. In the seventies and eighties, he was a guest professor at the most diverse universities. Jacques Derrida is a philosopher who makes an enormous impression on him. Nancy discussed in many interviews that after Sartre, something very contemporary and innovative was born in philosophy.

A good bit of Nancy's early work was pursued in collaboration with Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, who went on to write several interesting works in the area marked by the intersection of the thought of Derrida and Heidegger. Their first book was *The Title of the Letter* (1973), a short but dense essay on Lacan's 'Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious'. Nancy soon published several solo essays, also of a deconstructive nature, each bearing on a key figure or movement in the history of philosophy: Hegel, Descartes, Heidegger, Kant, and with Lacoue-Labarthe, German Idealism. During this time, he and his family lived communally with fellow philosophy professor Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and his family. Describing in Expert Comment the co-teaching style of Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe, John Mckeane

characterized the pair's preferred method of working "in a haze of cigarette smoke and without the rituals of authority" as "unthinkable in today's universities". Nancy's thinking on the political emerged at the limits of philosophy and art. It was centered on the importance of distinguishing between politics (as an ontic concern with this or that measure or policy) and the political (an ontological concern with the condition of being together). What he proposed consistently was a commitment to being with as a form of being political that resisted the fraternal sacrifice, celebration, and excesses of 'real communism', republicanism, and fascism. In his influential essay "The Inoperative Community" (1985) he warned of the dangers of the community including the totalitarianism of fascism and communism, and the rituals of sacrifice demanded in the name of a nation, people, or religion.

If the breakdown of tradition, the general loss of *sens*, abandons us to thinking of freedom, sens, art, and community anew, this abandonment does not entail the freedom to abandon tradition. Such aporias situate and condition the work of Nancy, and this work enters into the tradition of thinkers

who have exposed and limned the mode of aporia. Nancy, in his way, exemplifies the thrust of this particular philosophical tradition, by seeking to break with tradition once again. His thinking refuses to settle down in a fixed territory. His philosophy can be described as work only in the sense of working, a work-in-progress, on the condition that one understands by this not the present unfinished nature of a project which one day will be realized (such a closure thinking would be anathema to a thinker like Nancy), but rather, the labor of thinking which is pursued at the very limit of exhaustion. In his text *Being Singular Plural* (1996), he elaborates a logic of the 'with' by which he tried to distribute singularities which themselves are nothing outside of this with and which communicates them to other singularities. And there lies the non-essential structure of being-with, the singular/plural structure of existence. Nancy argues that Heidegger makes it clear, in the most radical way that every human being (Dasein as he calls it) is always being opened unto a world. Being in the world is being with others, and this being-with is an essential trait— if one can still speak of the essence; rather it is the unsubstantial essence, the being of every being-there. So,

being-there is being-with, to exist is to coexist. We are always being with-, but this being-with is no longer a substantial being-together out of a shared trait, identity. For Nancy, the attempt to think of community radically as being-with gets its start in Heidegger's Being and Time but is largely insufficient.

My reflections here touch on a tiny fragment of Jean-Luc Nancy's immense oeuvre. Here I don't want to prescribe what is central and what is peripheral to Nancy's work. This is just a small attempt to provide a spur of interest for further engagement with his work. What is common, what binds us irrevocably to the world and each other, is a bond whose activity unbinds us and uproots us, while submitting us to the open exposition of a being-with the world, and the one another. Nancy displayed extraordinary creativity, all the more impressive since he has gone through serious health difficulties—a heart transplant and cancer—an experience of which he writes movingly in "The Intruder" (2000).

For it is with your corpus that I will continue to think!

In memory of Kamala Bhasin (1946-2021)

Leena Pujari

Professor (Formerly)

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Kamala Bhasin- a feminist icon, poet, writer and a fine orator passed away on 25th September, 2021, after a period of prolonged illness. She was widely acclaimed and was a tall figure in the Indian Feminist movement. Born in West Pakistan, just before partition, her family moved to Rajasthan, where she completed her schooling and college, and later travelled to Germany to pursue her research. She worked in the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization for 27 years and founded 'Sangat' – a feminist collective. Her writings and books have been an essential part of our everyday feminist classrooms. Her writings could convey the nuances and complexities of feminism and its myriad practices in a language that was lucid and relatable. Her books

on 'Understanding Gender', 'What is Patriarchy', 'Feminism', 'Exploring Masculinity' are replete with examples drawn from the everyday life. Her simple essays and articles, with charts and sketches, became useful readings for students. With her writings, feminism was no longer the heavy theoretical jargon-distant and alien to students, but something that connected deeply to their everyday lives.

She became a household name when she appeared on Aamir Khan's television show 'Satyamev Jayate' in 2014 and spoke about patriarchy and masculinity. She was involved in creating and nurturing networks of solidarity among activists, artists and academics across South Asia's borders, through her work with the

Food and Agriculture Organisation, United Nations, Asian Cultural Forum for Development, South Asian Network of Gender Activists and Trainers, Jagori and One Billion Rising.

I vividly remember my first meeting with Kamala Bhasin, way back in 2002, at the Indian Association for Women's Studies (IAWS) Conference in Bhubaneshwar. When I walked up to her and introduced myself, she fondly put her arms around my shoulder as we walked on the lawns, discussing feminism. I was struck by her warmth and affection, and witnessed her spirited and vivacious self over the course of the next three days. She leaves behind a rich legacy of poems, speeches, songs and slogans. Her thoughts and ideas will continue to resonate in our classrooms. Despite humongous challenges and adversities in her personal life, she worked relentlessly deriving strength and succor from feminist solidarities.

Notwithstanding the criticisms of the absence of an intersectional focus in her writings and her inability to look beyond the binary of men and women, that also saw her being embroiled in a controversy some months before her death, her writings and her activism spoke to

several constituencies and have richly contributed to the feminist movement in India.

Remembering bell hooks:[1]

Panchali Ray

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Already reeling from pandemic-induced loss, grief and a sense of bereavement, the news of bell hooks passing left many of us bewildered. bell hooks or Gloria Jean Watkins, trailblazing author, feminist, activist, passed away on December15, 2021 at the age of 69 leaving behind a contribution to feminist theory that cannot be easily surpassed: Ain't I a Woman? (1981), Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center (1984), Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black (1989), Black Looks: Race and Representation (1992), Teaching To Transgress (1994), Killing Rage: Ending Racism (1995), Reel to Real: Race, Sex, and Class at the Movies (1996), Remembered Rapture: The Writer at Work (1999), Where We Stand: Class Matters (2000), Feminism is for everybody (2000), Communion: The Female Search for Love (2002), We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity (2003) and The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love (2004). Her incredible oeuvre draws on themes of feminism, race, love, capitalism and gender and interlocking webs of oppression.

In Feminism is for everybody, she powerfully wrote that "Feminists are made, not born. One does not become an advocate of feminist politics simply by having the privilege of having been born female. Like all political positions one becomes a believer in feminist politics through choice and action." As hooks was quick to note that patriarchy was not men against women but a social order that devalued everything that did not fit into hetero-patriarchal

normative of what masculine and feminine meant. At odds with reformist feminists who were organizing so that women could be equal to men in the existing system, she chose to fight against white supremist patriarchy; against the notion that you could be feminist while being conservative or liberal. Her incisive writing pushed feminism beyond the hold of white middle-class women, and addressed those who were made to inhabit the margins. She urged women, particularly Black women, to love themselves with an unapologetic fierceness in a world out to demean them. Her writings resonated across the globe, reaching the farthest corners, in a voice that was distinctly black, and overwhelmingly woman. She wrote of love, justice, feminism, teaching, living, politics, and mounted a scathing criticism on white liberal feminism, holding those in power accountable to those they claim to represent, or erase. She hammered the last nail in the coffin of universal sisterhood when she wrote: "Privileged-class white women swiftly declared their "ownership" of the movement, placing working-class white women, poor white women, and all women of color in the position of followers."

What was it about hooks that gave her such a wide readership? If testimonies on social media are anything to go by, women of all age, location, space read her, nodding in agreement, tearing up, and resolving to carry on as they found their lives written on those pages. Her writings on the possibilities of love and its abandonment, on rage and justice, on feminism and healing, struck a chord with us all — women facing patriarchal norms and disciplining, and paralysed by an inability to grasp the world. An inability that emerges from a bewilderment. A bewilderment that cannot comprehend a world that devalues traditional femininity and yet hates the deviant female. A world designed to exploit, extract, and profit from the lives and labour of women.

For many, hooks was not just a powerful feminist writer, but also a sister and ally. In *All About Love*, she cajoled us into trying again, into loving again, urging us not to curl in but to open ourselves up to a world that recognises and respects vulnerabilities and differences. One can imagine the electrifying effect hooks has on young adults, particularly in India, growing up in patriarchal families that normalise

violence and abuse as love and care, when she writes "...the intensity of our woundedness often leads to a closing of the heart, making it impossible for us to give or receive the love that is given to us." She also teaches us that absence of justice makes love impossible and the absence of love is antithetical to justice. She urges us to forgive, and to love, again. bell's insistence in sharing her personal experience of love, sexuality and gender broke grounds of what counted as theory—She exploded the false binary between the personal and the academic and in doing so reached countless women who otherwise felt alienated from academic writing: writing the drew from the experience of poor, working-class women's lives but was not accessible to them.

In the past few decades, neo-liberal feminism has imagined a world strangely at odds with a vision of feminism that envisages a transformation in consciousness. While the former talks of inclusion of certain kinds of women in hegemonic structures, hooks' brand of feminism calls for an end to caste, race, gender and sexuality-based inequalities that govern the ways we inhabit the world. Her searing critique of reformist feminism foregrounds how

working-class, racialised feminine labour formed the basis on which bourgeois (as well as white/upper-caste) women secured a degree of freedom within the existing system for themselves. The epistemological knowledge developed by hooks insisted that one must go beyond women's freedom and rights to talk about self-development and self-actualization of those who are at the bottom of the hierarchy. In Feminist theory: from margin to center, hooks wrote, "being oppressed means the absence of choices. It is the primary point of contact between the oppressed and the oppressor."

For me and many feminist teachers, her book Teaching to Transgress left an indelible mark at the core of our beings. She taught us that critical pedagogy meant perceiving students as not receivers of compartmentalised knowledge but as seekers who "want an education that is healing to the uninformed, unknowing spirit. They do want knowledge that is meaningful." She urged feminist teachers to make women's studies classrooms a site of resistance, based on curriculums that do not reflect dominant ideologies but questions them. For her, the classroom was a space where marginalised students would

speak of their experience of theory, practice, and politics. And she declared it was these utterances that frightened teachers who continued to perceive students as mere consumers of knowledge. She wrote, "Many professors have conveyed to me their feeling that the classroom should be a "safe" place; that usually translates to mean that the professor lectures to a group of quiet students who respond only when they are called on." In India (as much elsewhere), where academic institutions are central to reproducing inequalities rather than dismantling them, education has always been a pathway to producing good workers and citizens. It ensures that the middle-class and/or upper-caste continue to take advantage of the social and cultural capital granted to them through inter-generational privileges.

Her words never rang truer than today. In Karnataka, the unfolding of a macabre drama where Muslim women and girls are asked to remove their *hijabs* to be able to enter the classroom has predictably brought about a false dichotomy between the right to education and the right to religion. The battle has now become framed as a struggle between two patriarchal right-wing

groups, one more powerful than the other, in taking forward women's oppression. As the political project of the Hindutva regime gains rapid success in exterminating Muslims, it seems that it is young women's bodies that are once again the site of competing interests. Instead of supporting women's right to education, in whatever clothes/markers she prefers, the state and the media in cohort with right wing groups have launched an outright campaign to delegitimize Muslim women as 'brainwashed' who prefer to observe religious precepts than educate themselves, and thus embrace modernity. One forgets, that it is education that liberates women: an education that leads one to question and to transgress, that allows women and members of the minority groups to bring in their experiences to a safe and secure environment, where thoughts and practices can be debated, questioned and challenged. As liberal feminists and progressives join the chorus in debating the meaning of sartorial codes, little realizing that what is at stake is denying women of faith (of a particular community) agency to articulate their thoughts and beliefs. In the current environment where women's and gender studies programmes across

the globe have taken a conservative turn; particularly in the global north, where liberal feminism has allied with militaristic and supremacist ideologies by targeting Asian women, particularly Muslim women, as objects of feminist campaigning, thus strengthening neo-imperialism, hooks' words, "These days, I am compelled to consider what forces keep us from moving forward, from having that revolution of values that would enable us to live differently" strike a chord. It is this 'revolution of values' that we keep striving for, again and again, in face of repeated failures, appropriation, and devaluation.

Her statement that "the classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy" has inspired many feminist scholars and teachers (including me) not to quit academics, even when our spirits were broken by the systemic sexism, casteism, and homophobia rampant in our universities. For her, education is a practice of freedom, a practice that taught students to 'transgress'; transgress the racial, sexual, caste and class boundaries that disallowed freedom. As feminist teachers and practitioners, we remain indebted to hooks, for she has taught us that the goal of transformative pedagogy is to create a democratic classroom where everyone takes ownership of learning, where everyone is an agent. hooks has given us, a whole generation of feminist teachers and educators, a language — to express, to resist, and to transform.
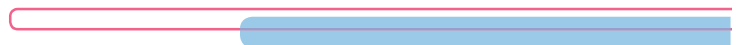
CONTRIBUTORS’ BIONOTES

Contributors

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Thomas M. Schmidt is Professor of Philosophy of Religion at the Department of Catholic Theology and adjunct faculty member at the Department of Philosophy at the Goethe-University in Frankfurt, Germany.   His fields of specialization are philosophy of religion, political philosophy, German idealism and the philosophy of Jürgen Habermas. He has taught at California State University, Long Beach, at Saint Louis University and the University of Washington, Seattle, USA. In 2009 he was invited as Distinguished Visiting Fellow at the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, and in 2011 as Fellow at the Max Weber Center for Advanced Cultural and Social Studies at the University of Erfurt.   Some of his key recent publications include, "Dialectics and Despair: Negativity after Hegel", in: The Meaning and Power of Negativity. Ed. Ingolf Dalferth/Trevor Kimbell. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2021, 169–184 "Human Nature and Genetic Manipulation: The Future of Human Nature (2001)" in: The Habermas Handbook, Ed. Hauke Brunkhorst/Regina Kreide/ Christina Lafont. New York: Columbia University Press 2018, 461–473, „Recognition and Absolute Disruption. Brandom's and Bataille's Hegel on Experience and Religion", in: The Origins of Religion. Perspectives from Philosophy, Theology, and Religious Studies. Ed. Hanne Applqvist and Dan-Johan Eklund. Tampere 2017, 270-280.

Style Guide

**Citation Style: Author-Date Referencing System of *The Chicago Manual of Style*
(Chapter 15, 17th edition)**

Authors should adopt the in-text parenthetical Author-Date citation system from Chapter 15 of the *Chicago Manual of Style* (17th edition).

Some examples are listed below

1) BOOKS

REFERENCE LIST ENTRY:

Book references should be listed at the end of the paper as "Works Cited" in alphabetical order.

Single Author

Carson, Rachel. 2002. *Silent Spring*. New York: HMH Books.

Dual Authors

Adorno, Theodor, and Max Horkheimer. 1997. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. London: Verso.

Multiple Authors

Berkman, Alexander, Henry Bauer, and Carl Nold. 2011. *Prison Blossoms: Anarchist Voices from the American Past*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Anthologies

Petra Ramet, Sabrina, ed. 1993. *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union*. New York: Cambridge University Press

IN-TEXT CITATION:

References to the specific pages of the books should be made in parenthesis within the text as follows:

(Carson 2002, 15)
(Adorno and Horkheimer 1997, 23)
(Berkman, Bauer, and Nold 2011, 100-102)
(Sabrina 1993, 122-135)

Please refer to 15.40–45 of *The Chicago Manual of Style* for further details.

2) CHAPTERS FROM ANTHOLOGIES

REFERENCE LIST ENTRY:

Chapters should be listed in "Works Cited" in alphabetical order as follows:

Single Author

Dunstan, John. 1993. "Soviet schools, atheism and religion." In *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union*, edited by Sabrina Petra Ramet, 158–86. New York: Cambridge University Press

Multiple Authors

Kinlger, Samual A., and Paul H. De Vries. 1993. "The Ten Commandments as values in Soviet people's consciousness." In *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union*, edited by Sabrina Petra Ramet, 187–205. New York: Cambridge University Press

IN-TEXT CITATION:
(Dunstan 1993, 158–86)

(Kingler and De Vries 1993, 190)

Please see 15.36 and 15.42 of *The Chicago Manual of Style* for further details.

3) E-BOOK

REFERENCE LIST ENTRY:

List should follow alphabetical order. The URL or the name of the database should be included in the reference list. Titles of chapters can be used instead of page numbers.

Borel, Brooke. 2016. *The Chicago Guide to Fact-Checking*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. ProQuest Ebrary.
Hodgkin, Thomas. 1897. *Theodoric the Goth: The Barbarian Champion of Civilisation*. New York: Knickerbocker Press. Project Gutenberg. http://www.gutenberg.org/files/20063/20063-h/20063-h.htm
Maalouf, Amin. 1991. *The Gardens of Light*. Hachette Digital. Kindle.

IN-TEXT CITATION:

(Borel 2016, 92)
(Hodgkin 1897, chap. 7)
(Maalouf 1991, chap. 3)

4) JOURNAL ARTICLE

REFERENCE LIST ENTRY:

List should follow alphabetical order and mention the page range of the published article. The URL or name of the database should be included for online articles referenced.

Anheier, Helmut K., Jurgen Gerhards, and Frank P. Romo. 1995. "Forms of Capital and Social Structure in Cultural Fields: Examining Bourdieu's Social Topography." *American Journal of Sociology* 100, no. 4 (January): 859–903.

Ayers, Lewis. 2000. "John Caputo and the 'Faith' of Soft-Postmodernism." *Irish Theological Quarterly* 65, no. 1 (March): 13–31. https://doi.org/10.1177/002114000006500102

Dawson, Doyne. 2002. "The Marriage of Marx and Darwin?" *History and Theory* 41, no. 1 (February): 43–59.

IN-TEXT CITATION:

Specific page numbers must be included for the parenthetical references within texts
(Anheier, Gerhards, and Romo 1995, 864)
(Ayers 2000, 25-31)
(Dawson 2002, 47-57)

For further details please see 15.46–49 of *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

5) NEWS OR MAGAZINE ARTICLE

REFERENCE LIST ENTRY:

List should follow alphabetical order and need not mention the page numbers or range. The URL or name of the database should be included for online articles referenced.

Hitchens, Christopher. 1996. "Steal This Article." *Vanity Fair*, May 13, 1996 https://www.vanityfair.com/culture/1996/05/christopher-htichens-plagiarism-musings

Khan, Saeed. 2020. "1918 Spanish Flu cure ordered by doctors was contraindicated in Gandhiji's Principles". *Times of India*, April 14, 2020. http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/75130706.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

Klein, Ezra. 2020. "Elizabeth Warren has a plan for this too." *Vox*, April 6, 2020. https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2020/4/6/21207338/elizabeth-warren-coronavirus-covid-19-recession-depression-presidency-trump.

IN-TEXT CITATION:

(Hitchens 1996)

(Khan 2020)

(Klein 2020)

See 15.49 (newspapers and magazines) and 15.51 (blogs) in *The Chicago Manual of Style* for further details

6) BOOK REVIEW

REFERENCE LIST ENTRY:

Methven, Steven. 2019. "Parricide: On Irad Kimhi's Thinking and Being." Review of *Thinking and Being*, by Irad Kimhi. *The Point Magazine*, October 8, 2019

IN-TEXT CITATION:

(Methven 2019)

7) INTERVIEW

REFERENCE LIST ENTRY:

West, Cornel. 2019. "Cornel West on Bernie, Trump, and Racism." Interview by Mehdi Hassan. *Deconstructed*, The Intercept, March 7, 2019. https://theintercept.com/2019/03/07/cornel-west-on-bernie-trump-and-racism/

IN-TEXT CITATION:

(West 2019)

8) THESIS AND DISSERTATION

REFERENCE LIST ENTRY:

Rustom, Mohammed. 2009. "Quranic Exegesis in Later Islamic Philosophy: Mulla Sadra's *Tafsir Surat al-Fatiha*." PhD diss., University of Toronto.

IN-TEXT CITATION:

(Rustom 2009, 68-85)

9) WEBSITE CONTENT

REFERENCE LIST ENTRY:

Website content can be restricted to in-text citation as follows: "As of May 1, 2017, Yale's home page listed . . .". But it can also be listed in the reference list alphabetically as follows. The date of access can be mentioned if the date of publication is not available.

Anthony Appiah, Kwame. 2014. "Is Religion Good or Bad?" Filmed May 2014 at TEDSalon, New York. https://www.ted.com/talks/kwame_anthony_appiah_is_religion_good_or_bad_this_is_a_trick_question

Yale University. n.d. "About Yale: Yale Facts." Accessed May 1, 2017. https://www.yale.edu/about-yale/yale-facts.

IN-TEXT CITATION:

(Anthony Appiah 2014)
(Yale University, n.d.)

For more examples, see 15.50–52 in *The Chicago Manual of Style*. For multimedia, including live performances, see 15.57.

9) SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT

REFERENCE LIST ENTRY:

Social media content can be restricted to in-text citation without being mentioned in the reference list as follows:

Conan O'Brien's tweet was characteristically deadpan: "In honor of Earth Day, I'm recycling my tweets" (@ConanOBrien, April 22, 2015).

It could also be cited formally by being included in the reference list as follows:

Chicago Manual of Style. 2015. "Is the world ready for singular they? We thought so back in 1993." Facebook, April 17, 2015. https://www.facebook.com/ChicagoManual/posts/10152906193679151.

Souza, Pete (@petesouza). 2016. "President Obama bids farewell to President Xi of China at the conclusion of the Nuclear Security Summit." Instagram photo, April 1, 2016. https://www.instagram.com/p/BDrmfXTtNCt/.

IN-TEXT CITATION:

(Chicago Manual of Style 2015)
(Souza 2016)

9) PERSONAL COMMUNICATION

REFERENCE LIST ENTRY:

The expression "personal communication" covers email, phone text messages and social media (such as Facebook and WhatsApp) messages. These are typically cited in parenthetical in-text citation and are not mentioned in the reference list.

IN-TEXT CITATION:

(Sam Gomez, Facebook message to author, August 1, 2017)

Notes should preferably be listed as endnotes, followed by a works cited/references column.

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All contributions should be electronically sent to the following emails:
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