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Newest Misogyny/Ies

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A note: My use of the term *women* is inclusive of trans, gender-variant, queer, and nonbinary identities, across and through racial and class and national borders. And my usage also recognizes the political construct of *woman* that must be reckoned with as a part of the subversive fight against misogyny. And misogyny is the political system—structures, ideologies, and practices that seek the control and exploitation of this formidable group/class. I wish to embrace the specificity and differences that clarify that *we* share this punishing system. *We* are similar but not the same. United but not *one.*

So, when I was invited to write a piece on the "varieties, or forms of misogyny today", about how it might be changing, morphing, and updating, I thought: of course, every political structural system of power—class, sex, gender, race are always shifting and adapting. And their laws, and ideologies, and institutions and practices are also in flux. Flux is not good for those trying to protect their power. These processes and practices are ideological, theoretical, structural, and right now are in crisis with one another.

The present flux of misogyny is a culmination of over half-a century of global turmoil. And always remember that power becomes vicious and exposed when those who are supposed to be dominated are expressing their freedom and potential power. This is a dynamic struggle. Women as an inclusive totality always have enormous potential power—why else would there be the continual attempt to dominate them/us. Domination is never one-sided; the so-called powerless always are potentially power filled. Hence, the continual morphing of misogyny.

So, how shall I think about this question? The question itself is significant because it augurs the changes and exposures that seem more visible right now. In this time of massive upheaval of global markets and labor, given the shocking of everything due to the Covid pandemic, nothing is ordinary. And all systems of power and oppressiveness are newly exposed: racism and white supremacy, global capitalism, and its complicity with wars across the planet, sex and gender systems that are morphing and debordering themselves. Misogyny—the targeting and hate-filled exploitation of all women—cis, trans, non-binary—relocates itself to the newest sites of gender oppression.

Power and its exercise always shift to protect and mystify itself. In these newest contestations—in Afghanistan, in Iran, in Saudi Arabia, Congo, the US, the needs of misogyny—to control all women and their gender expressions—exposes and therefore destabilizes the structures that imbibe male privilege. The hysteria of the Taliban or the right-wing Republican zealot in the US destabilizes the orderly patriarchal system that delivers a sexual division of labor and hierarchy of care. Misogyny defines the enforcement of the

burqa *and* the banning of abortion access and rights.

The crisis/challenge for misogyny is how it blends and supports capital, global capitalism, racism, casteism, white privilege and nationalism. Misogyny, like any systemic system of power finds new ways to extract the labor and sustenance that it needs and depends on. For the last half century patriarchy and its traditional family structures have been undermined by global greed that recognizes no borders, familial or national. Veils and burqas and head scarves have been thrown off by Iranian and Afghan women. Women across the globe, and especially US women are fighting hard to gain or regain control of their bodies through universal access to abortion and reproductive rights.

Sexual and gender violence against all women—no matter their color or their class/caste—has been practiced in private realms and only recently held accountable publicly and politically because of the organized resistance by women. Early struggles to publicize sexual violence and more recently the #MeToo movement first organized by Tarana Burke in the US, changes the arrogance and practice of this violence.

Trump is charged with rape in the US and he still runs free to possibly become President again. And he brazenly says that he will provide no defense witnesses.

Presidents and leaders across the globe have also shown their misogynist muscle more openly and brazenly: Putin in Russia, Modi in India, Bolsonaro in Brazil, Erdogan in Turkey, then Berlusconi in Italy—they outrageously publicize their contempt for women and gays–as part of their political strategy. And, we will see if the verdict in Trump's trial—that he is guilty of sexual abuse and defamation of character, *but* not guilty of rape, has any impact on who gets to rule.

Misogyny, on the state level, seems more and more exposed and visceral. It seems different so it becomes different. Maybe it is because I live in the US where women have lost the right to abortion that we had for the past 50 years. But maybe it is also because of the visibility of Afghan women's challenge to the Taliban's excesses, and the "woman-led revolution" in Iran, and the courageous Ukrainian women snipers, and the women activists in Chile and Brazil. Women demanding their freedom/s are seen across the planet even if there are endless attempts to enforce our *un*freedom.

Cis and trans women of every kind are leading the revolutions for freedom in Iran, in Afghanistan, in Argentina, and Chile, and in the United States. I am wanting to further expose and make visible the power *we* have as *we* fight for our bodies, their right to be free from sexual violence, and their right to determine and choose their destiny. This mobilized human struggle is part of the political crisis of this moment for humanity and planet earth.

Afghan Women and Girls

The struggle of Afghan women and the fight against misogyny is hardly new, and yet something might be newly happening. And newly mobilized global feminisms may be emerging. It would

be wonderful if this were to fully blossom. It might just save our planet.

Afghan women ask that there be no recognition of the Taliban as a governing body, that borders must be opened to all Afghans needing/wishing to leave; and to recognize the resistance and demands of Afghan women on the ground in Afghanistan.

In response there are many feminist global networks in place organizing on behalf of Afghan women—for those who want to stay in Afghanistan, those who need to leave, those who need safe-houses, those who are unwilling to be the pawns of political forces who have little concern for their rights, or freedoms, or liberation. This includes the fallen Afghan and US government.

The struggle of Afghan women—trans, queer, non-binary–seems all too familiar; 20 years too familiar. But there are something/s that are different that hold out new promise. First, Afghan women have been demanding and gaining new rights continuously for the last 2 decades so it may not be all that easy to abolish them now. And, also—the cis and trans women across the globe have been uniting more and more around reproductive rights for their bodies. These women in Argentina and Poland are formidable. The right-wing macho agendas in India, Brazil, Philippine's, and US have mobilized women on their own behalf.

Put this together with how Covid has created a massive, shared catastrophe for women refugees, women workers, women domestics, waitresses, nurses, etc. everywhere, from India, to Peru, to the US and you have a new possibility for anti-imperial/anti-racist pro-feminist camaraderie. The Covid pandemic is global, effecting women everywhere—from Peru, to India, to S. Africa. When Covid hit 54 million people around the world lost their jobs; most of the 90 percent exited the labor force completely. And women were/are doing disproportionate amounts of unpaid labor before the pandemic hit, and are doing more of it, after.

Women—trans, gender variant, queer, and non-binary– across the globe are mobilizing their support for Afghan women. As Afghanistan and especially Afghan women face the dire and complex forces of the Taliban, climate crisis and drought, a failing economy due to years of imperial wars, women—every kind of us– across the globe commit to be comrades in the struggle for our full rights and liberation. Women are disproportionately—almost 70 percent of the world's refugees suffering houselessness, statelessness and hunger. We will face these catastrophes together across our borders. This is the underbelly of global misogyny.

Abortion, and Post-Roe Misogynoir in the US; #BlackWombsMatter

I want to connect the misogynist assault on women's bodies, in all their variety, especially Black bodies as central to the newest assaults on the promise of democracy in the US. Misogyny always connects to other systems of power like caste, to Islamophobia, to antisemitism, etc., depending on the host country.

Racism and misogyny are at the helm of this right-wing dismantling of choice and access for people determining their lives in the US. The murder of abortion doctors and clinic health care workers and the bombing of abortion clinics is carried out by the people and forces who wish to destroy any promise of sexual, gender or racial equality.

The right-wing assault is located both inside and outside the US state—it structures the dysfunction of our government with Republicans obstructing and denying any moves towards democracy and Democrats lacking the courage or commitment to alleviate the suffering of so many of us: houseless people, the uninsured, Covid sufferers, gun violence and climate crisis victims.

The retraction of Roe is embedded and a spur to our present abortion chaos with its suffering. It is especially a catastrophe for Black women who die at four times the rate of white women while pregnant which makes this a full crisis for democracy. It is a tsunami for women's–trans, cis, non-binary, disabled, and undocumented–equality and liberation.

Before Roe was gutted, Mississippi was already a wasteland for abortion access. According to writer Michele Goodwin, a Black woman was 118 times more likely to die by carrying a pregnancy to term as by having an abortion. AND Black women are 2 to 3 times more likely to die than white women during pregnancy. AND about 40 percent of the women who get abortions are Black. These egregious statistics will now worsen. Black women will be at greater risk of death and increased poverty. It is long known that abortion allows women to maintain jobs and better determine their lives. Given this, the dismantling of Roe can be said to be a potential death sentence especially for Black women. And the racist misogyny of the Supreme Court could not be clearer. Meanwhile, the US ranks highest among wealthy nations for pregnancy and childbirth deaths even before you control for race.

Misogyny has once again become more brutalized, and especially for women of color, harkening back to the lives of enslaved women.

MISOGYNY and Its Newest Toxicity

So toxic masculinity and white supremacy connect in this historical moment different from before. I am always wondering why there is not better theory about how misogyny enables/instigates racism, and the reverse as well. Better theory means better thinking and language to see with, connecting the dots rather than severing them.

Trump unveiled too much, like Modi and Bolsonaro. They put too much in the bold. The secrets became truths especially with the assist of Covid—and they all hate truth. It is up to us to see what they have gifted: The absolutist formulations of *overt misogyny* to enhance racial and caste privilege. The key word here is overt, to be seen, to be named, to put in view. Successful politicians use systems of power while hiding and mystifying them. An effective politician obfuscates but today we are told outright that women are pussies to be man-handled and we are shown that Black and Brown people are to be abused, singled out, and murdered with impunity.

And Asian women? Asian—is already a problematic generalized term of ignorance. Which Asian am I speaking of: Filipino, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese?

National Geographic lists the following countries in Asia: Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Lebanon, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar (Burma), Nepal, North Korea, Oman.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a regional grouping that promotes economic, political, and security cooperation among its ten members: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. (Take note that women in these countries have been and are some of the fiercest fighters for freedom: in Vietnam, Iran, Myanmar, and so on.)

Asian racism needs no knowledge of these specificities. In this moment it is the physicality of the face, the eyes, the nose, the hair, the body, the walk that defines a person as Asian. The specifics are ignored because that is what racism does. Hatred does not need clarity or knowledge. I wrote in my book *HATREDS* that women's bodies are overdetermined with racist misogynist meanings, they are always a site of political struggle to define the nation, and who is a part of it. Nationalism is always written with the phantasms of hatred on women's bodies and female bodies become the battlefield.

The Iranian mullahs, the Afghan right-wing crazed Taliban, the US Supreme Court, and Putin are, each obsessed with dominating female bodies. Female bodies are always at risk as a battlefield for racist misogynist dominance. Bodies are always re-gendered in this process. And when I write of women's bodies, I include every variety of this expression. And Iranian women includes their entire specificities: Turk, Arab, Kurd. Variety is encompassed in any national identity.

Feminist Struggles in Response

The desire for a self-determining body is universal—although as I have sometimes written elsewhere, I prefer the term polyversal, which considers the differences and specificities that exist within this shared human desire. From the right to access abortion to the right to choose whether to wear a hijab or not, women and those who support them embrace self-determination as part of human liberation.

This revolutionary struggle exists in a plethora of resistance movements and pro-women's stances. In this sense there is much in common with our differing struggles–people fighting to re-establish the right and access to abortion have much in common with those fighting to determine their choices of hijab or burqa. And these struggles located in the body for choice/s is implicitly a part of the struggle to protect our planet from climate crisis. Without a planet, there is no freedom struggle for humanity.

Female bodies were a key battlefield in the rape camps of Rwanda, and Bosnia, and Syria and

the Nazi concentration camps of Germany, and the *comfort* stations of Japan. Conquer and disgrace the female body and supposedly the nation is ruined—its masculinist sense of self is destroyed. The *one* stumbling block to the unification of East and West Germany: the question of abortion—where it had been legal in the East but not the West.

The female body no matter how it is dressed, or exposed, or covered is a site of a political struggle. Every nation and every religion play a part in this structural system of misogyny. Politics is the process of molding misogyny to the newest demands of the moment. The ayatollah in Iran attempts to enforce outdated practices that readily expose its own criminality.

Anachronistic misogyny is teetering given the demands of global capital and its reconstitution of patriarchy. At one point reform politics might have worked; but now the Iranian demands are for an end to religious dictatorship. The struggles for the control of our bodies makes perfectly clear how political sex is. Politics is about power and who gets to own it, control it, and use it. It makes clear that sex is key here. That gender is political. That the personal is always political. Then the domain of politics is no longer contained.

Freedom leads to the desire for more freedom. And women's struggles against misogyny define many of the newest shifts and articulations. This is a dynamic struggle where women are hardly powerless. The desire for freedom, is not containable. It is endlessly radical in its desire. It is why misogyny cannot win. Here is my/our hope.

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Anti-Vaxxers And The Covid Crisis: The Sorry Story Of The Pernicious Influence Of A Pseudo-Science

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In the fall of 2014, I spent the semester at a research unit, connected to the university, in Stellenbosch in South Africa. The town is right in the middle of the wine-growing area and truly competes for the most beautiful place on Earth. I had intended to work on a book on global warming, but discovered on the first day that most of the holdings in the university library were in Afrikaans! So I switched to writing a book on Darwinism, my area of professional expertise, and literature, my private love. The main reason being that, from my desk, thanks to the internet, that within seconds I could get a novel by Thomas Hardy or a poem by Emily Dickinson.

It turned out to be one of the most successful and enjoyable projects in my whole academic life, producing *Darwinism as Religion: What Literature Tells Us About Evolution,* a book of which I am very proud. But there was one irritating factor disturbing my time in South Africa. A nagging cough that I simply could not shake off. I suspected, being in a strange place, it was an allergy. On my return to Florida, in December, I trotted off to my physician and then to the allergist. Nope! No allergies. Followed by month after month of fruitless visits to one pulmonologist after another. Finally, I was referred to the medical center in Jacksonville, nearly two hundred miles from my hometown, where the University of Florida runs a clinic. At once, a much more knowledgeable pulmonologist diagnosed my problem – idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF). She dashed off somewhere leaving me to read the posters on the wall, one of which breezily told me that people diagnosed with IPF should expect a two-year maximum life-span. Fortunately, at that moment my pulmonologist reappeared to tell me that she had just got permission to put me on a new drug, Ofev. And here i am, six years later telling you all about it.

Why am I telling you all about it, apart from the fact that anything to do with the life and times of Michael Ruse is, in itself, innately interesting. Because I want to draw to your attention the extent to which modern life depends on science, and the technology that stems from it. Just pick up on two things. First, my time in Stellenbosch. I could not use the library, so I turned to my computer and the internet. Had people not worked out the science behind functioning computers and how they can be used to transfer information, I would have been stuck for four miserable months with an Afrikaans-English dictionary and a vanishing amount of completed research. Second, back home in Florida, had people not worked out the science about the

physiology of human beings and how certain drugs – chemical combinations – can be used to affect and steer the functioning of our bodies, at best you would be stuck with the *Complete Works of Michael Ruse* which came to an abrupt end around 2018.

My point is the obvious one. Humans can be so truly awful. Think of Hitler and the Jews. Think of America and of centuries of oppression of black people by white people. Think of Putin and the Ukraine. Yet, on the other hand, people can be so transcendently good and worthwhile. Think of Sophie Scholl, dead on the guillotine for her opposition to the Nazis. Think of Plato and Aristotle, living in ancient Greece, almost single-handedly laying the foundations of our Western culture. Think above all of our scientists. Newton finding out the causes behind the heliocentric universe. Darwin discovering the theory of evolution through natural selection. Watson and Crick discovering the double helix, opening the way for molecular biology. Let us reject and refuse to follow the bad. Let us accept and embrace the good.

All so very simple. And yet, it isn't really. Take the relationship between blacks and whites in America. Last year in Florida, our Republican governor Ron DeSantis, who is hoping to be a presidential candidate in 2024, gerrymandered districts so that our number of black congressmen dropped from four to two. This year he has banned the teaching of a course about black American history. If one looks at the list of approved books for schools, *Tom Sawyer* is deemed suitable for seventh graders. *Huckleberry Finn* is conspicuous by its absence, even up to grade twelve. Could this have anything to do with the fact that a major event in this second novel is when Huck realizes that his companion Jim, a runaway slave, is a fellow human being and refuses to give him up to the authorities?

Turn to the good and focus on science. Obviously, science is a good thing in itself. A triumph of the human mind revealing the nature of the world within which we live. An achievement that ranks along with great art and music and literature. It is also a good thing in that it leads to technology that enables us to live the lives of civilized human beings and not scrabbling through the life of a hunter-gatherer, always facing danger from predators and famine thanks to insufficient food and the buffeting from vile weather and more. Yet the number of science deniers seems to multiply exponentially by the year. "Pseudo-science" – something shortly to be defined or characterized — is far too often the menu of choice.[i] Real science is rejected. Anti-genetic engineering, anti-global warming warnings, anti-vaccination. At some great cost. Because India refuses to allow genetic engineered crops, because of a lack of Vitamin A there are annually early childhood deaths and another 500K cases of irreversible blindness (Regis 2029); because of denial of global warming we face we can expect a speeding up of temperature rise, perhaps by two degrees or more by the end of this century, 2100 (Weart 2008); because of opposition to vaccination, death rates from Covid remain high (Reiss and Ruse 2023). The deaths of the unvaccinated at least six times those of the vaccinated.

The appeal to pseudo-science is not new. A paradigmatic example of a pseudo-science is the eighteenth-century belief system (and practice) of mesmerism (Ruse 2013a, b). So named after the German doctor Franz Mesmer, it postulated vital forces in living beings, open to discovery

and manipulation – in other words, a kind of "animal magnetism," that its practitioners regarded as a way to cure many illnesses and diseases. It was very popular – it is almost a mark of a pseudo-science that it is popular – and from the first criticized and condemned by regular scientists. In 1784, the French king Louis XVI set up a commission – including Benjamin Franklin and Antoine Lavoisier — to study mesmerism, and they drew conclusions that were very critical. Not that their report had much effect, because mesmerism road high until the middle of the nineteenth century, when it ran out of steam.

Two messages emerge from this little history. First, it does seem that we can go some way towards coming up with criteria for separating science from pseudo-science. Second, criteria or not, people are going to go accepting pseudo-science over real science! Let me pick up on these points by turning to a case in which I myself was intensely involved – so-called "Scientific Creationism" (Ruse 1988). The traditional Christian position on reading the Bible was laid out by St Augustine, around 400AD. How do we deal with biblical claims, especially those claims about the biblical order of creation, that seem completely impossible, from the viewpoint of reason? Genesis tells us that light and dark were created on the first day, but that we had to wait for the fourth day for the sun to make an appearance. Impossible! Augustine' solution was very modern sounding, or perhaps more generously we should say that our solution is very Augustinian sounding (Ruse 2023). He argued that the bible is true, through and through. But sometimes it is necessary to interpret it allegorically. Why? Well, for a start, the Ancient Jews were on the whole illiterate. They were not sophisticated thinkers like fourth century AD Romans. Too literal, and they wouldn't understand a word going on. So, God tempered the wind to the shorn lamb – or Israelite. God created, probably all at one time, and then explicated in a way that we can catch the important truths.

All of this was lost on Americans in the early days of the young state, as the country began its push west. As is known to anyone who has read the *Little House on the Prairie* series – far better as books than the gooey television series – it was a harsh and unfriendly country that was being settled: from droughts and winter storms to dangerous animals, not to mention not-always-friendly humans long there and now being disturbed, as well as the distances and efforts needed to socialize and live normal community life – stores, schools, churches. Itinerant preachers played crucial roles, with crusades and other ways of spreading the gospel. Thanks to the industrialization of printing, books – Bibles – were much more freely available and affordable. It was natural that the Holy Book started to take a very prominent place – what one should believe, what one should do. What are the proper relationships between man and wife? How does one train and discipline one's children? Servants and slaves? What is owed to them? What is expected of them? Look to the Bible for advice.

The newly founded Seventh-day Adventists had a major role in structuring the ways in which the Bible was approached and read (Numbers 2006). They were literalists, grounded in their need to take the six days of Creation as six periods of 24 hours. It was to be anticipated that this would get caught up in the disputes leading to the Civil War. Anti-slavers, in the North, cited the Bible – the Beatitudes for instance – as evidence against the owning and subjection of other human beings. In the South, to the contrary, the Bible was cited in favor of

slavery. Ephesians 6:5–9 was a particular favorite:

[5] Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. [6] Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. [7] Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, [8] because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free.

If St Paul said this, who is to argue otherwise?

After the Civil War the Bible, taken literally, continued to play a big role – in the South, in the newly occupied lands of the mid-West, and increasingly in poorer regions of large cities, where the already-existing inhabitants felt threatened by the flux of European immigrants – Catholic, with a leavening of Jews. For the South, the story of the Israelites in captivity to the Babylonians was much appreciated. God inflicts greatest hardships on those whom He loves most. This was enshrined in a series of pamphlets, the *Fundamentals*, published at the beginning of the twentieth century. Hence the popular term of "Fundamentalists," for biblical literalists. More recently people refer to themselves as "Creationists" (or "Scientific Creationists").

Expectedly, opposition to evolutionary theorizing (especially Darwinian evolutionary theorizing) played a major role in the thinking of Creationists. The Bible, taken literally, talks of six days of Creation, of a single pair as the ancestors of all subsequent humans, of a worldwide flood, and much more. All of this is denied by Darwinism. However, it was not until after the First World War that things really came to a head when a schoolteacher in Tennessee, John Thomas Scopes, was put on trial for teaching evolution (Larson 1997). Prosecuted by three-times presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan and defended by notorious secular thinker Clarence Darrow, the trial became a public spectacle, widely reported in America and abroad. Scopes was found guilty, although, on a technicality, his conviction was overturned on appeal. Nevertheless, the trial had a chilling effect on what was permissible in the classroom. As always, sales figures rated more highly than dissemination of the truth, and publishers of biology textbooks, seeing which way the wind was blowing, dropped all mention of Darwin and his theory. Until events like Sputnik, in 1957, the success of which was taken as a sad confirmation of the inadequacy of American science education New Darwin-friendly texts were commissioned and distributed by the *Biological Sciences Curriculum Study* program, notably *Biological Science: Molecules to Man*. The evangelicals found that their children were being taught the hated evolution – as gospel, to use a phrase.

There was immediate reaction. In 1961, a biblical scholar and a hydraulic engineer, John C. Whitcomb and Henry M. Morris,, published *Genesis Flood*, arguing against evolution and for the literal truth of the whole Holy Bible – six-day creation, universal deluge, parting of the Red Sea, and so on down to the present. It was hugely successful – the emphasis on the Flood, rather than Creation, reflected the fear of atomic conflict and the feeling that it was a foreteller of worse to come, Armageddon. Through the 1960s and 1970s, Creationism gained strength,

and things came to a climax in 1981, when the State of Arkansas passed a law insisting that in biology classes of publicly funded schools of the state, Creationism (or Creation Science) be given “balanced treatment” along with the teaching of evolution (Gilkey 1985; Ruse 1988).

At once, the American Civil Liberties Union sprang into action, arguing that the law violates the First Amendment of the Constitution, because it egregiously mixes Church and State. Another trial ensued – along with popular scientist Stephen Jay Gould and leading Protestant theologian Langdon Gilkey, I (a philosopher) was a witness for the prosecution. There was little surprise that the judge, William Overton, ruled firmly against Creationism. He said flatly:

More precisely, the essential characteristics of science are:

(1) It is guided by natural law;

(2) It has to be explanatory by reference to natural law;

(3) It is testable against the empirical world;

(4) Its conclusions are tentative, i.e. are not necessarily the final word; and

(5) It is falsifiable. (Ruse and other science witnesses).

Creation science … fails to meet these essential characteristics.

Evolutionary thinking is science. Creationism is religion and, as such, can have no place in the classrooms of publicly funded schools.

End of argument. But, of course, it wasn’t! Creation science went on being taught in schools, especially in proliferating private schools. Without wanting to give the impression that I am picking on my home state of Florida – which, to be honest I am – the legislature have just passed a bill, tht will undoubtedly be signed by our governor, making available large sums of public money to support the running of private schools. Many of these are Christian schools – Christian at the extreme end of the evangelical spectrum – and one is very naïve if one thinks that, in biology classes, evolution is getting equal treatment with Genesis taken literally. The conservative state government, egged on by Governor Ron DeSantis, has increasingly taken steps to direct the teaching in establishments of higher education – for instance, banning various teachings about black history – and it would be a foolish bet that there will never come a directive about university biology departments having to recognize the credentials of would-be students who have been taught that Genesis is true and evolution false.

The point I am making is that judgments about pseudoscience are rarely if ever based solely on factual criteria, for instance the demand of Karl Popper (1959) that genuine science always lays itself open to falsification. Motives and intentions play a major role. In the case of

Creationism, religious convictions clearly play a major role. This point was brought home dramatically some twenty years ago at my own institution, Florida State University (Ruse 2013a). The University had just started a medical school, despite the worries of most of the faculty that this would mean a significant draining of resources for the rest of the campus. The new school went out of its way to make itself seem user friendly, for instance by focusing on the training of rural GPs, a desperate need in Florida. How could a John Stuart Mill liberal like me object to that?! (I should say that the school carried through its promise and the rest of the campus now regards it with pride.) However, back then the new school was understandably nervous abut its status. Disaster struck. An influential member of the state government secured a grant of several million dollars for the school to open a department of chiropractic. That was the last thing the new school needed, given the iffy reputation of chiropractic as a legitimate form of medical practice. Opinion piece after opinion piece was penned saying openly that chiropractic was a pseudo-science. (That language was actually used.) to the school's great relief, the offer was withdrawn. All reverted to normal, which included almost all the local GPs reverting to their usual practice of referring patients with back pain to the local chiropractors.

The point I am making is not to draw attention to the hypocrisy of the medical profession – we philosophers need to make sure that our own house is in order before we start to do that – but to show how ascriptions of pseudo-scientific practice are so very dependent on subjective social factors, as much as if not more than supposedly objective philosophical factors. Which brings me (at last!) to the topic of this essay, the recent covid epidemic and vaccination, more particularly anti-vaccination, or, as they are usually know, anti-vaxxers. I shall take without argument that the vaccines are safe and very effective. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention: "All vaccinated groups had overall lower risk of dying from COVID-19 and testing positive for COVID-19 compared with people who were unvaccinated."

Now, accepting the objective fact that vaccines save lives, turn to the subjective question of why so many people refuse to be vaccinated? Speaking with some personal experience, for some, it is part of an ongoing anti-vax philosophy. In the 1950s, my mother having died, my father married a young woman from Germany. She came from a family of Rudolf Steiner enthusiasts. Steiner (1861-1925), whose world picture was called "anthroposophy," an esoteric spiritual movement, with roots in German idealist philosophy and theosophy. Steiner did not confine himself just to a spiritual philosophy, but pronounced on almost all aspects of life – agriculture ("Biodynamic" farming, a kind of organic farming with esoteric demands like cows horns buried at midnight), education ("Waldorf" schools which emphasize the arts over formal learning), architecture (distinctive windows with lots of curves), and medicine. A major element of which was hostility to vaccination.

It will be the main concern of these spirits of darkness to bring confusion into the rightful elements which are now spreading on earth, and need to spread in such a way that the spirits of light can continue to be active in them. They will seek to push these in the wrong direction. I have already spoken of one such wrong direction, which is about as paradoxical as is possible. I have pointed out that while human bodies will develop in such a way that certain spiritualities

can find room in them, the materialistic bent, which will spread more and more under the guidance of the spirits of darkness, will work against this and combat it by physical means. I have told you that the spirits of darkness are going to inspire their human hosts, in whom they will be dwelling, to find a vaccine that will drive all inclination towards spirituality out of people's souls when they are still very young, and this will happen in a roundabout way through the living body. ("Rudolf Steiner on Traditional Childhood Illnesses and Vaccines" Compiled by David Adams: 07 RS-Traditional Childhood Illnesses and Vaccines.pdf (wildapricot.org))

Grant then that religious/philosophical ideas can turn people from vaccination. Grant also that this can be of general concern where there are many Waldorf schools – notably California – where refusal to vaccinate for things like measles and mumps, let alone covid, can lead to outbreaks of disease that can get out and affect the general population – especially those who for various reasons cannot be vaccinated. This hardly accounts for the huge opposition to covid vaccination in America in the last two to three years. There are very strong clues. Consider an analysis by national public radio (NPR):

"Since May 2021, people living in counties that voted heavily for Donald Trump during the last presidential election have been nearly three times as likely to die from COVID-19 as those who live in areas that went for now-President Biden. …

NPR looked at deaths per 100,000 people in roughly 3,000 counties across the U.S. from May 2021, the point at which vaccinations widely became available. People living in counties that went 60% or higher for Trump in November 2020 had 2.73 times the death rates of those that went for Biden. Counties with an even higher share of the vote for Trump saw higher COVID-19 mortality rates.

In October, the reddest tenth of the country saw death rates that were six times higher than the bluest tenth…"

(Pro-Trump counties now have far higher COVID death rates : Shots – Health News : NPR)

Asking about the statistics rather than the behavior: Does this make sense? It certainly does (Ruse 2022). Start the explanation in the 1970s, when huge numbers of working-class people lost their jobs because of outsourcing and automation. Gone was a good job at General Motors, starting at 18 after high school, with holidays, health care, and pensions, and nothing in return. No work and non-stop daytime television, living on the wife's income as a worker in a supermarket. In the 1980s, Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher pushed a neo-liberal philosophy of lower taxes and more successful businesses and, as they rose, so would everyone. Didn't work out that way. The rich got richer. The rest did not. So came the Potemkin Village promises of Donald Trump and Brexit. To hell with the comfortable and educated. Let them taste their own medicine and let us grab something of what is going. More actually of tasting than of grabbing.

Frighteningly informative is the following from an opinion piece in the *New York Times*:

“In 2016, shortly after Mr. Trump’s victory, Katherine J. Cramer, a political scientist at the University of Wisconsin- Madison, summed up the attitudes she observed after years of studying rural Americans: “The way these folks described the world to me, their basic concern was that people like them, in places like theirs, were overlooked and disrespected,” she wrote in Vox, explaining that her subjects considered “racial minorities on welfare” as well as “lazy urban professionals” working desk jobs to be undeserving of state and federal dollars. People like my neighbors hate that the government is spending money on those who don’t look like them and don’t live like them— but what I’ve learned since I came home is that they remain opposed even when they themselves stand to benefit.” (Potts 2019, quoting Cramer 2016)

“‘Lazy urban professionals’ working at desk jobs.” That tells everything. Especially the contempt for education.

Really, though, it is a question of respect. “People would talk about opposing social programs because the recipients were lazy and not hardworking like themselves; those were often dog-whistle racist claims. But, at times, they were also talking about the laziness of desk-job white professionals like me.” It all adds up. “The way these folks described the world to me, their basic concern was that people like them, in places like theirs, were overlooked and dis-respected. They were doing what they perceived good Americans ought to do to have the good life. And the good life seemed to be passing them by.”

It works the other way too. Perceptively, a recent commentator has written: “Sympathy for the working class has, for many, curdled into contempt” (Leers 2021, 8). The Harvard political philosopher Michael Sandel (2020) writes: “It is important to remember that most Americans— nearly two-thirds— do not have a four-year college degree. By telling workers that their inadequate education is the reason for their troubles, meritocrats moralize success and failure and unwittingly promote credentialism— an insidious prejudice against those who do not have college degrees.” He adds: “Survey research bears out what many working- class voters intuit: At a time when racism and sexism are out of favor (discredited though not eliminated), credentialism is the last acceptable prejudice.” Continuing by noting a recent survey: “Beyond revealing the disparaging views that college- educated elites have of less-educated people, the study also found that elites are unembarrassed by this prejudice. They may denounce racism and sexism, but they are unapologetic about their negative attitudes toward the less educated.”

It all falls into place. Vaccination is endorsed by the educated middle class. Hence, it must be suspect and rejected by the working class. Not because of what it is. Rather, because of who endorses and takes advantage of it. And that I am afraid is the end of this rather sad little essay. Until we can reform the social situation, things like the anti-vax movement are going to arise again and again. I am not intending to preach a message of unrelieved despair. I think there are things we can do to start rectifying the situation. If the pandemic has taught us anything, it is tht there is desperate need of people able and willing to work with those in need – old people for example. Community colleges could play a major role in giving people training and qualifications to fill such roles. Four-year degrees are not needed for many such

jobs. Work and respect are possible. So perhaps this is not really the end of this sad little essay. Rather the message is that simply making theoretical scientific and philosophical arguments are not enough. We have got to pull back and think about the social factors involved and, as we can, start to change them for happier futures.

Michael Ruse is Lucyle T. Werkmeister Professor of Philosophy at Florida State University. His most recent books include Why We Hate: Understanding the Roots of Human Conflict *and* Understanding the Christianity-Evolution Relationship.

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[i] I have written extensively on the subject of pseudo-science and draw on some of this work in this essay. (See Ruse 1988, 1996, 2013.)

A Letter Of Concern To Black Clergy Regarding “Cop City”

By | 2023: Vol. 22, No. 2

with an introduction by Joy James

Earlier this month, the Atlanta city council approved $67 million by an 11-4 vote to fund the controversial new police training facility nicknamed “Cop City.” The project, which was approved despite community protest, will destroy acres of forest to provide military-style training in assault tactics to Atlanta’s police.

The following is an open letter by Atlanta-based activist Rev. Matthew V. Johnson, Jr. It is addressed to members of the clergy, but speaks to the challenges, principles, and strategies of activists opposed to the building of “Cop City.” It appears with an introduction by Prof. Joy James, a member of Logos’s *editorial advisory board, which proves context for our publication of the letter.*

Introduction

Last March, I spoke at a University of Michigan conference, titled “Insurgent Research: Practice and Theory,” organized by Comp Lit doctoral students. The conference flyer showed a photograph of Atlanta protests against “Cop City” and a banner with the image of Tortuguita (Manuel Paez Teran), who was assassinated by Georgia state troopers in January 2023, while they sat unarmed with their hands in the air. After police forces slandered Tortuguita, falsely stating that they had shot a trooper in the leg, the traumatized family released the private autopsy: Troopers shot the meditating forest protector/communal caretaker **57** times. (People registered their concerns with Georgia State Patrol https://dps.georgia.gov/divisions/georgia-state-patrol.) My talk in Ann Arbor focused on resistance to (proto)fascism, from Mao’s 1941 statement on the “united front against fascism” through the Black Panther Party and Students for a Democratic Society 1969 attempts to fashion a united front against US fascism and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to the Black communities’ rights to self-defense today. As local police forces increased their use of lethal force and assassinations to derail freedom movements, a student conference table offered diverse literature and postcards for those swept up in mass arrests during and after the Atlanta music festival where police and the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) levied unsubstantiated “terrorism” charges against activists and advocates enjoying cultural events.

Several weeks after the conference, I travelled to Atlanta for an *In Pursuit of Revolutionary Love* book talk with beloved comrades working with ARC on reproductive rights and

protections for LGBTQIA+ communities. In Atlanta, I met with forest protectors who knew Michigan students. At a café, over tea, Reverend Matthew (whose brilliant missive appears below), a young Black (fe)male anarchist, and I reflected how best to cope with and minimize tragedies inflicted by state violence.

During the conversation, I asked about security strategies for forest/community protectors and war resisters. I wondered aloud how to magnify concentric circles to protect the epicenter where risk-taking and Agape-driven actors hold space to shield Black working-class communities adjacent to the forest and gardens from a former prison farm and plantation (one would think that reparations due would allow the community to keep its communal lands). Activists are routinely brutalized or disappeared by predatory city/ county/state/federal police forces. While those devoted organizers hold the core, how might we as local, national, international communities and organizers increase our capacity to build rings of concentric circles that mobilize medical, legal, media and security to deflect state violence. Working to cushion the blows of predatory policing, how can I and my kin in outer rings deliver encompassing care and forms of security that radiate from the local community through the city, state, nation and international communities in ways that aid war resisters and deter predatory police forces. The proverbial ripples from the pebble thrown into the pond make legible movements that radiate beyond the spot in which the pebble drops.

Dishonor and torture by state violence will continue; so, we must provide security rings to deflect blows. We best face the predatory state by committing to encircle each other in care. Those who take the most risks to resist war should receive the most resources for self-defense. Conventional politicians— mayors and city councils— dishonor and endanger our lives, lands, and loved ones. Their mammon-like appetites for prestige and power— from payouts to pulpits and presidential politics —must be contained. Our devotion to the Beloved Community, despite our fears, will align with Agape — love as political will. We have capacity for struggles in diverse zones that interconnect caretaking, protests, movements, marronage, and war resistance.

Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote in his August 1963 “Letter from Birmingham Jail”: “I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta . . . . Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” Just as King saw it sixty years ago, this is an international struggle. The militarization of forests and gentrification of Black working-class communities reflect corporate and colonial ambitions. Police violence, arrests and executions disproportionately target Black/brown poor and working-classes. The militarization of society strips public funding for decent housing, education, food, employment, and culture and redirects funds towards entities such as the police foundations, and corporate entities. Black/brown compradors will continue to cash in on the colonization of cities until they are forced to stop their exploitation and greed.

A security apparatus can protect not only lives but also international boycotts, recalls, referendums, primarying incumbents bought by corporations and military industries. Increasingly forced into marronage, with the theft of lands, waters and collective reparations,

we mutate to better figure out how political kin and communities build concentric care and security. Officialdom marches the mass and communal caretakers into muddy waters. Through agency as Captive Maternals, we retain capacity to wade and evade the cesspools created by corporate donors and compradors.

— Joy James, author of *In Pursuit of Revolutionary Love*, and *New Bones Abolition: Captive Maternal Agency and the (After)Life of Erica Garner*; her most recent article for *Inquest* is "The Rubik's Cube of 'Cop City.'"

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A Letter of Concern to Black Clergy

Dear Siblings in the Faith,

I write to you during this Lenten season from my home in Atlanta. I write with a heavy heart, having lost friends to jail under false charges and one to murder, covered up poorly by police. I pray without ceasing for those who are still under arrest, denied bail, deemed a threat to the community for no good reason. I pray that the mother of the slain, Belkis Terán, a devout Catholic, know who her child truly was, despite the misinformation swirling around their death. Tortuguita was murdered, shot over a dozen times with their hands raised and their legs crossed. May the bullet holes through their palms, holy stigmata, be a reminder that their child was a servant of God.

In Atlanta, we find ourselves in a struggle at the intersection of climate change, police militarization, racialized police violence, and environmental racism: The movement to Defend the Atlanta Forest and to Stop Cop City. I have never been so certain that Jesus is guiding my path, but that path has most often been far from the church. That is certainly not Jesus's problem, nor do I believe that it is a me-problem. After much reflection and patience, I have come to believe that it is Atlanta's well-established Black Churches that ought to examine themselves. After two years of protest, a year and a half of a forest occupation, over forty people arrested for domestic terrorism without one injury to a living being, and a murder by police, the only thing that stirred respectable Black Clergy to mumble a word was the destruction of property being used to flout the will of the people most affected. Many others remain silent.

In order to curry favor and privilege with corporate interests and Black faces in high places, Atlanta's Black churches have been silent for decades of iniquity. Whatever they have gained is miniscule in comparison to the amount of wealth, opportunity, and life chances expropriated from the Black masses who continue to build this city. The time for silence in the face of systemic injustice in exchange for a few sterling examples of Black Excellence is over. I have

been back home in Atlanta since 2019 before I chose to say one word of criticism.

Atlanta's racial consciousness exists with a profound cognitive dissonance. On one hand, we are proud to elect politicians, appoint government officials, and promote some corporate leaders from Atlanta's Black population. On the other hand, we are not blind to the fact that these immense efforts failed to stem the tide of inequality and systemic injustice that maintain the largest racial income gap of a major city in the United States. While we do not want to call out our folk who "made it", we begin to wonder whether these *leaders* are unable or unwilling to make the changes we need. While we hoped they would bring us closer to liberation, it too often appears that these Black *leaders*' position, power, and status is predicated on their ability and willingness to keep the rest of us in line.

Greater disparities in wealth and increasing state violence show cracks in this façade of peace and raise questions about the veracity of this oft-repeated claim of Atlanta as the Black Mecca. The long-standing unwillingness at the national, state, and local level to allocate resources to social programs now provide the justification for another policy decision that makes our world more violent. The wealthy and corporations see the development of a militarized police training facility as the only means to keep themselves and their wealth safe. The false scarcity and unresponsiveness to the needs of the people created by corporate greed necessitates the state violence required to maintain itself. This is the role that the police are being trained to fulfill. Continued investment in this cycle of violence will only perpetuate violence and the widening gap between have's and have-not's.

In order to push forward these widely unpopular ideas, the wealthy and powerful send the Black Political Class and a host of pre-approved community *leaders* who are ingratiated to them. Whether it is for wealth, power, status, or for continued patronage of valuable community work, Black *leaders* often make political compromises deleterious to the Black masses in order to, at best, benefit a small segment of our people. After watching the Concerned Black Clergy of Metropolitan Atlanta mobilize so quickly on March 10th, following interfaith leaders gathering on March 6th in front of City Hall, and a Black activist-led mobilization on March 9th, it was dreadfully obvious what their role was. They came to stamp out opposition to a militarized police training facility in a Black neighborhood already feeling disproportionate impact of environmental degradation.

Let's be clear: no matter how many Black clergy or politicians they put in front of this project, the wealthy private citizens, ownership of the corporations, and decision-makers of foundations that support this project are **overwhelmingly White;** they simply have the resources to buy off more influential Black people to put out front to mislead others. We cannot allow our elders to invoke the Civil Rights struggles of the 1960's to disparage the struggles and tactics of a completely different time without scrutiny in the name of respectability. It is time we ask our heroes of yesteryear what they are doing now if they continue to act as representatives of our people in the present.

We often find a subtle contradiction among such senior clergy: while they speak about how long they have been involved in activism, they talk about the need for forging new relationships to transform the system. If you have been so deeply involved and connected to the system, how on Earth did things get so bad? If you have been so deeply involved for so long with things getting so bad, why on Earth should we believe that you are the people that will be able to do a new thing? My journey leads me to question the fitness of past generations to speak to the popular struggles of the past decade.

2 Timothy 2:15

I do not come to ministry lightly. By virtue of the assignment, being ordained implies that you accepted a calling to speak on behalf of the most powerful being in the universe, the most expansive being and thought that any being could ever conceive of. In order to take such an assignment you must be certain, arrogant beyond belief, out of your mind, or not believe that God exists. I am certain of that call, and I know that God Exists (I am open to arguments). I fully understand the assignment. I have worked for some time to prepare myself for it as best as I could.

I am no “outside agitator”. I attended Morehouse College where I was President of the debate team and a coach of Grady High School’s speech and debate team years before God called me. My basis for understanding the world around me was firmly grounded in reason. When God spoke to me, I examined every other possibility of my experience. I spent years learning about the world around me and learning skills outside of church walls before graduate education to prepare for ministry. I received a Master of Divinity from the University of Chicago and returned to Atlanta in the Summer of 2019.

By January 2019, in Hyde Park, performing my morning prayers facing south, I knew God was calling me back to Atlanta. I faced significant harassment when I was in Chicago. This was not simply for political and theological beliefs; my real offence was my commitment to learning the requisite skills and competencies to actualize societal changes. I have been all too familiar with ministers who spoke to the concerns of Black people but lacked interest, capacity, will, skill, or knowledge to enact the changes they talked about. These people are not a threat to the system; they say all the right things but cannot execute any of them. I resolved to prepare as best I could to build a world in line with the vision of societal transformation Jesus cast. I have continued to learn, prepare, and practice in ways that are reflective of the world I want to see. I have tried my best to understand who Jesus was and find out how to follow his example; too many co-laborers spent more time building a platform to reach people without the foundation to know what to say.

When I returned to Atlanta in the summer of 2019, a local Pastor of a well-established Black Church, whom I knew from family connections, asked me to preach for him. He explained to me that a member whom he never knew to have means gave $25,000 on the Sunday I visited in the Spring. I sat by the man and we spoke that Sunday, and the pastor said that he saw me as a “good luck charm”. Although I was not yet convinced that this was where I should stay, I

decided that it was where I would plant my feet as I discerned next steps in ministry.

I began to seek pastorate positions in February 2020. The pandemic quickly paused that search, and I spent the next few months diligently supporting my current church community in many ways, including but not limited to teaching weekly bible studies. I also deepened my support of an organization primarily comprised of “far left” activists who were delivering food to families that were primarily working-class Black folks. This group did not have resources from the city or any other large organizations as many other churches did, but we delivered more groceries at the height of the pandemic lockdown than churches with much greater capacity. Meanwhile, the church I worked with shut down its food distribution program during this same period.

I remember the Sunday after the George Floyd Rebellions started and I attempted to explain what I saw near the CNN Center. I saw police firing pepper spray indiscriminately, using violence disproportionately with no adequate response to people emboldened to protest their treatment en masse. Even if the reader believes that arbitrary violence against people is a reasonable response to property destruction, I left that evening before any police cars were set on fire. What I saw was wrong done by police that were panicked, but unlike other people who use violence when they are panicked, law enforcement officers are protected by the state and do not lose years of their lives in prison when they make such mistakes.

I never got time to explain what I saw that day. As I began to explain, the Pastor quickly interjected in our Zoom service, and he messaged me that he would address the protests later. The only thing that he said in the moment was “people seem most worried about property destruction, but should be worried about the value of human life”. That was it. In the face of the largest demonstrations against state violence in recorded history, my pastor gave a quippy one-liner and moved on with his sermon as if the world was not burning all around him. Although I had been teaching Wednesday night Bible studies almost every week for the past two months of the pandemic, those weekly invitations disappeared. Perhaps we both knew that my assignment and this well-established church would not align.

Shortly after Rayshard Brooks was murdered by Atlanta police officer Garrett Rolfe, I met a young activist that was only armed with a megaphone at a protest that was headed toward APD’s Third Precinct. I gave him a respirator since the police liberally used tear gas during protests in those days, and told him that he could reach me if he ever needed support. We stayed in touch, and he asked me to come to Rayshard Brooks’ funeral along with him. As we sat in Ebenezer Baptist Church and watched speaker after speaker give their respects and proceed through the program, the young activist looked over to me and said, “Do you think they would have ever welcomed Rayshard here if he weren’t killed by the police?” He understood the deep class divide that existed in Atlanta’s most internationally known church, the spiritual home of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Such events were politically expedient while Rev. Dr. Warnock was running for office as a progressive, but his critiques of police brutality and militarism faded as Senator Warnock settled into office. That young activist named Antonio Lewis that spoke boldly against police brutality and Cop City on the campaign trail said nothing

when he became Councilman Antonio Lewis. Garret Rolfe, the officer that shot Rayshard Brooks in the back, received backpay and was reinstated as an APD officer on his watch. Now Councilman Lewis spouts conspiracy theories about protestors sabotaging critical infrastructure as he supports Cop City, pads the pockets of police officers, and funds APF projects that further the surveillance of Black Communities.

While Warnock and Lewis claimed that they would change things from the inside, they are the ones who changed. Police killings across America, the murder rate in Atlanta, and the Atlanta Police budget disproportionately were rising since 2020. Our communities are no safer, but Sen. Warnock and Councilman Lewis gained notoriety. I expect little from politicians, especially without strong checks from community voices that hold politicians accountable to what they said they would do before they got in office. I expect the most ardent advocacy from those who commit to the ultimate reality beyond this plane of existence, yet the clergy have let us down yet again in the fight against America's modern, militarized policing apparatus.

Many of the people whom I have organized with over the past three years only learned that I am ordained Baptist clergy in the past few months. Over the past three years, I did not offer unsolicited feedback; I did not tell people how things should be done based on how things were once done; I did not rush to podiums or seek out interviews; I did not assume that I knew the answers simply because I was in a position of influence. Over the past three years, I helped and listened where I saw worthwhile work being done. I asked questions where I did not understand the situation. I waited to speak until we were facing unprecedented repression; I voiced internal criticism and encouraged holistic, critical thinking about our predicament when disagreements on tactics and strategy arose. This order of operations, based on discernment, empathy, and introspection is more in keeping with the Gospel of Jesus Christ than an approach characterized by bolstering the credibility of worldly power, rash judgement of a movement with little to no research on policing or environmental impact, and a lack of scrutiny or calls for tangible policy change to advance systemic justice. The latter approach is the common characterization of clergy many activists held, informed by their personal experiences.

The ministers who gathered on March 10th in reaction to the Faith Coalition of Forest Defenders and the prior night's Black-led protest to Stop Cop City should be embarrassed to only raise their voices about policing in the United States at this juncture. Atlanta's Black *leadership* class became so obsessed with maintaining relationships with people in power, that they were willing to sacrifice their responsibility to speak truth to those powers. Thus, you end up with the Blackest city in America having the largest racial income disparity in the country, continually contaminated water supply, widespread displacement of legacy residents, and *corporate outside agitators,* bringing employees from elsewhere at far higher salaries with no tangible benefits to the neighborhoods they settle in, driving up the cost of everything. It appears outsiders only become *agitating* to our government when they are questioning the power structures that legitimate racialized capitalism.

Do not expect me to publicly condemn property destruction of equipment being used to destroy

public property against the will of the public. Furthermore, the destruction of this publicly owned land builds capacity for law enforcement that fails to respect the sanctity of human life and a commitment to nonviolence. Police routinely destroy and confiscate protestor-owned property and dole out unreciprocated violence as we wage the fight to Stop Cop City. However, many have deluded themselves into believing that this asymmetrical warfare against the public is justice, and this is reinforced in multiple facets of our society.

People fighting for a better tomorrow with no sanctioned power to defend themselves are consistently faced with moral purity tests in the media while people who have a state-sanctioned monopoly on violence are never asked to commit to non-violent strategies. The people who have no protection under the law are expected to act with unflinching pacifism while militarized police forces, each receiving millions of dollars to learn to not use excessive force, are constantly given the benefit of the doubt when they do. We are accustomed to the asymmetry of asking people who are part of decentralized movements to justify the tactics of people whom they have no control over, while politicians such as Andre Dickens and Antonio Lewis go without questioning on Garret Rolfe being rehired and receiving backpay from APD after being elected to their current offices. Both supported measures to reallocate police funding and condemned the murder of Rayshard Brooks when it was politically expedient. A government, corporate, media, or clerical apparatus that reinforces such asymmetry has no moral authority to condemn the Movement to Defend the Atlanta Forest and Stop Cop City.

When we see Atlanta City Council and consecutive mayors vote in favor of this training facility and/or refuse to speak out, despite widespread opposition, I have no empirical evidence that the electoral process will reflect the will of the people rather than monied private and corporate influence. When we have seen Ryan Milsap continue work on contested public land after a Dekalb County Stop Work Order, David Wilkinson push forward with a land disturbance permit despite an appeal to Dekalb County, and judges deny bond to protestors with no evidence to deem them a threat to the community, I have no empirical evidence that our judicial system will protect the will of the people. I have personally dealt with police harassment and repression without committing one crime. I have no empirical evidence to tell activists and organizers that widely accepted means of protest or their innovative strategies will shield them from excessive force or repression. It is not reason, it is not faith, but a failure of nerve, delusion, or preservation of privileged access that leads clergy to mention systemic injustice in general but condemn individual “sins” of protesters in particular. Such rhetorical strategies work to discredit movements that contain multitudes, while people called to be mouthpieces of God use their moral authority to ingratiate themselves to worldly powers, failing to speak truth to them as they were called to do.

Ecclesiastes 4:13

Despite deep concern with the patterns of engagement I have seen with clergy cozying up to power and privilege rather than investigating these facets of society with a critical eye, I have not directly criticized clergy, especially our elders, affording grace and patience in things that I may not see. Granted, there are many things that I may still not understand, but I have seen

enough to know that many of our elders speak out of a lack of knowledge and desire to be associated with power and prestige. I will focus here on conversations I had with Rev Dr. Gerald Durley and the speech I watched Rev. Timothy McDonald give on March 10. Both are well-esteemed members of the community and members of the Concerned Black Clergy of Metropolitan Atlanta, and from their comments, I believe that these elders could benefit from research and self-reflection.

I have spoken with Rev. Dr. Gerald Durley three times in the past year or so. Once at a fundraiser in Spring 2022, once shortly before the March 4-11 Week of Action, and once on March 25th. I initiated the conversation each time. In the first conversation, I explained to him the importance of supporting local, grassroots organizing to instill a sense of agency in everyday people to effectively create political change, the second conversation I just listened, and the third time I explained the environmental impact and racism that the Cop City project furthered. The first time Rev. Durley explained to me how he was working with Rev. Warnock's campaign, the second time we spoke he told me of how the Mayor came to speak with the Concerned Black Clergy and mentioned his recent engagement with President Biden and Rev Warnock, and in the last conversation he spoke to me about his association with important people who were also in support of Cop City as he called claims I made from credible research "erroneous". I think it worth mentioning that the one common thread in the conversations is Rev. Dr. Durley emphasizing his relationship with important people rather than what these relationships yield for the people. I hypothesize that he confused the means as the end in political relationships: rather than using esteem with political power to provide access for the people, it seemed that Dr. Durley has leveraged esteem with the people to access political power as the end goal.

I was not sure whether or not he knew it, so I explained that I had been involved with the movement to Stop Cop City. I noted that I was not able to watch the entire press conference, only a portion that was primarily Rev. McDonald speaking. I noted that there were some things he said that I did not find disagreeable at all. I noted that I would like to have a deeper conversation with the Concerned Black Clergy, because if we cannot have a reasoned dialogue based on the information, who can? He did not respond to this request but instead questioned me on why I opposed the project. I explained to him the environmental impact and the history of the court cases with the Stop Cop City and Stop the Swap coalitions. He asked where I got my information from. Before I could go into detail about the research I have been doing for two years, he cut me off to tell me the claims I made were "erroneous". He then explained how he worked with groups such as the Sierra Club and GreenPeace. I then explained to him that both groups publicly supported the movement to Stop Cop City. He then mentioned other respectable individuals that are supporting the project to which I responded, "I am not a respecter of persons, but I do my research". He then explained that he had to go after he initiated a conversation that I only hoped to schedule for the future.

As it turns out, Rev. Dr. Gerald Durley accepted a seat on the new Advisory Committee for Cop City before we had this conversation. Also, I understand why Dr. Durley would be so quick to dismiss the claims of environmental degradation. The same EPA administrator, Daniel

Blackman, who was unresponsive to the South River Watershed Alliance's demand that the Clean Water Act be enforced is on the Board of the Concerned Black Clergy of Metropolitan Atlanta. The future of a city and Black People are at stake. I have the impression that Dr. Durley has not done his research. When an honest man is faced with the truth, he must change or cease to be honest.

Rev. Timothy McDonald's speech reflect talking points that the City of Atlanta has brought forth without ever being subject to scrutiny. There are also some points that Rev. McDonald brings up that are in line with the values of the people protesting Cop City, however, there are some preconceived notions that the Reverend holds that are inaccurate. I quote Rev. McDonald from March 10— "Rev James Orange would always say Look out for Antifa. . ." — to raise questions about the premises of these arguments. Rev. McDonald explained his unwillingness to stand up for the people that have been arrested under domestic terrorism charges, painting them with a broad, uninformed brush. Antifa means Antifascist. He fails to acknowledge that there has been virtually no evidence tying any jailed individual to violent crime or property destruction. Given his stance on Cop City, Rev. McDonald does not hold local and state law enforcement and government to the same moral standard whereas they have destroyed evidence, property, and have a long-standing history of assaulting and disappearing activists. People identifying themselves as Antifa have been most active protecting Civil Rights protests, far-right counter protests, and LGBTQIA events. This caution from Rev. Orange is a bit out of place. Rev James Orange, God rest his soul, died in 2008. If this is the most recent example that Rev. McDonald can think to reference clergy concerns during street protests, he should cede the microphone to clergy better in touch with organizers and activists from the past 15 years.

"I see [the training facility] as an opportunity for the community to make a template of how we can do law enforcement. Imagine, if you will, the city of Atlanta working with the faith community, working with community organizers, with community leaders, sitting down with law enforcement, and talking about how training ought to look!"

What have the Concerned Black Clergy been doing when sitting down with the City of Atlanta thus far? Why should we believe that a training facility whose infrastructure is geared toward militarized training in real-world cityscapes is needed in order to have conversations with community stakeholders? And if there is already a blueprint for the facility made, what leads Rev. McDonald to believe that they have not already determined what the priorities for training are? That's like having a discussion of what you envision for your home after the blueprint and layout is finalized. Furthermore, community organizers and voices of opposition have never been invited to these conversations. The major point of contention is whether this project should move forward, and the conversation is presupposing that it should and will happen. In other words, the only conversation that the Mayor and the City are willing to have inherently rejects the majority opinion.

"You do not need a gun in every situation."

This statement calls for reforms to public safety. However, police literally bring a gun in every situation. This statement is precisely what people have been saying about overinvestment in police. Police are consistently asked to involve themselves in situations that have nothing to do with their training. We need groups of people with training in other fields to handle these situations, rather than someone with a gun and the threat of force as their primary means of engagement.

"The God that we serve is getting ready to do a new thing."

Rev. McDonald, I could not agree more. However, all the things that Rev. McDonald mentions are piecemeal reforms that many people with close ties to government officials from the Black Community promised before, and it never amounts to anything. Meanwhile, police budgets have ballooned, the equipment has become more militarized and expensive while we are no safer. Spending more and more money on policing is not a new thing. Investing in communities and new and creative ways to keep our communities safe is new. That is precisely what we are proposing. Rev. McDonald, is supporting the old system that continues to fail us while promoting reforms people have been promised around the country to no avail.

"This is not just about the police. Our fire training facility has been condemned."

Is anyone arguing against the fire department having a new training facility? No. The lion's share of Cop City is allocated to the police. If the fire facility building is condemned, then why can't a new facility just be built where the previous one is condemned? Why do we need this tacked on to the wildly unpopular training facility proposed for the police? It's called Cop City for a reason. The mock city that will be used for urban warfare drills is larger than the entire facility that will serve the needs for the fire department.

"How are you going to have people come in internationally and tell us Atlanta, tax payers, what to do?"

This is a statement regarding two people arrested under domestic terrorism charges from outside the US. However, this is precisely what happens with international corporations in Atlanta, endangering our natural resources for their profits. Atlanta was named the most overpriced housing market in the country, prices driven up by investor-owned rental companies, extracting wealth where Black Families could be building it. Their aggressive strategies to buy up real estate in Atlanta has increased the burden on the taxpayers in Atlanta, but these issues that do harm to Atlantans are not what Rev. McDonald holds a press conference to address. These corporate interests have undue influence in our legislation, maintain flat wages for working class Black families, and pump money into law enforcement foundations that invest in a more punitive, surveillance state rather than social services, receiving tax credits for doing so. International corporations continually work to undercut our social safety net and efforts to secure livable wages while patting themselves on the back for donating a penance of what they have pilfered through policy back into well-meaning nonprofit organizations. In fact, the most common form of theft in the United States is wage theft by

employers, but that is not treated as a serious criminal offense.

Police are the frontliners to reinforce these social injustices that rich and powerful private interests reify by expenditure in government and law enforcement. Eliminating basic scarcity of community resources proves a far more effective crime reduction strategy than militarized policing, but that is not as profitable as cheap labor and imprisonment of the poor. The reason why people have such hostile feelings toward the police is an understanding that they are not being mobilized to keep people safe but more so to protect ill-gotten private property and enforce a legal system that devours the poor, setting them up for continued exploitation.

"These men and women are not afraid to stand for justice, to stand for truth, and stand against the powers that be. . . . I'm glad we got a mayor that listens, and we're going to make sure that he listens, he has a faith liaison that's a part of us that's going to make sure that he listens. . . "

Rev. McDonald, my brother in Christ, you are accommodating the powers that be. The mayor listens because the Concerned Black Clergy of Metropolitan Atlanta are telling him what he wants to hear. Despite the immense social problems aforementioned in Atlanta, the most significant mobilization from this group was called to shout down dissent against Cop City. The Concerned Black Clergy of Metropolitan Atlanta are supporting a project that increases capacity for militarized police training while they give no tangible reason to believe that they will impact the curriculum for police training. Furthermore, Rev. McDonald's speech failed to address any of the systemic issues that lead to so many of our Black Children getting stuck in the system from their teenage years. The Atlanta Police department uses a point system to evaluate job performance in which *answering service calls count for a quarter of a point while arresting a juvenile counts for five points.* Why on Earth would clergy want people to support a facility that will better train police in a system that heavily incentivizes incarcerating children over arriving orderly where people actually ask for police presence? Georgia incarcerates a higher percentage of its people than any democracy on the face of the earth, and before any policy changes, the people who represent God blindly say: "Yes, we need more resources for the people doing that!" Essentially, these clergy are assuring the community that the bullet wound that is policing in America will heal because the Mayor promised them a band aid.

Rev. McDonald cites the mayor's advisory committee, which is the second iteration of a committee that presupposes the continued development of a project whose very existence is the contentious issue. In the initial Community Stakeholder's Advisory Committee (CSAC). The one person with qualifications to assess the environmental impact of the militarized training facility, Lily Ponitz, left the committee because of her concerns with the project. Another person who remained on the committee, Amy Taylor, filed the appeal for Dekalb County's Land Disturbance Permit. Yet, the project continues to move forward. There is no reason to believe that their recommendations or outcry will make a difference in the Atlanta Police Foundation's decisions for the project. We have heard these empty promises for police accountability that are rarely pursued at all by committees packed with folks that would choose acquiescence rather than risk their status by holding powerful people accountable.

Matthew 6:21

The questions still remain: *How did things get this bad with these same ministers being so cozy with power?* I will give them the benefit of the doubt and say that it is a lack of knowledge that inhibits them from speaking truth to power. Perhaps they do not know how derelict the government has been in its duties. On the other hand, it may be to maintain their own positions and institutional benefits. Many organizations and churches receive benefits from the city, foundations, and corporations because of their willingness to turn a blind eye to rampant corruption. Or perhaps our leaders are so enamored with having a seat at the table they dare not make any demands, lest they will lose their dinner invitation. I have often witnessed pastors speak far outside of their depth and fail to do the research necessary to speak wisely. There is danger in pastors using their pulpit to address wide-ranging issues without broad based study and understanding. This is what I encountered speaking to Rev. Dr. Durley and listening to Rev. McDonald. This is not to disparage the ways that they contribute to the community otherwise. This is to address where they spoke without the requisite information to have an informed opinion, and they were too proud to listen to other voices. If they had previous knowledge about the project, why did they wait until now to say a word? It was not when people were being charged for domestic terrorism for nonviolent existence in a public park, it was not when there was a murder at the hands of police, but when people set fire to private property of corporations.

What should this lead me to believe about their values?

If the March 4-11 Week of action was the first time they heard about Cop City, it is simply more evidence of how out of touch they are in the first place. If they heard and stayed silent, which I will not assume, it is damning to their moral fiber. I can no longer mince words. Seniority in the church does not exempt you from criticism. It was the elders who killed Jesus in his thirties because he was too disruptive to their cozy existence in Roman-occupied Palestine, and we should never forget that.

The ultimate concern I have is not the disappointing engagement of the Concerned Black Clergy of Metropolitan Atlanta; they are indicative of a wider trend. Many of the most esteemed and well-established Black pulpits across the country cannot discern the Gospel of Jesus Christ from Mainstream Democratic (and sometimes Republican) talking points. They believe that this accommodation to the powers of this world is wisdom when it is akin to idolatry. Overcoming the current conditions of Black America requires astute political analysis. We must determine our own political goals rather than doing what is comfortable or advantageous for short-term resources and political positioning. The Realm of God on Earth will not have a Cop City. The ultimate aim of our work ought to be creating a world less dependent on militarized policing or policing of any kind to keep one another safe. Cop City is a step in the wrong direction. We must protect the environment in Black Communities for the generations to come. Cop City is a step in the wrong direction. We cannot fly the blood-stained banner of Jesus Christ (or any prophet or deity I have ever heard of!) to support a project that goes against all generations of social justice organizers and activists who have fought for the

past decade. Cop City is a step in the wrong direction.

Engagement in the real world requires nuance. However, the world's systems of power and distribution of resources ~~is~~are too far out of balance to think that furthering the capacity for state violence will address our problems. We must seek new ways to address social problems. If more gear and more money for police were the answer, we would have solved the problems by now. Many pastors are afraid to speak out because of ties to the criminal justice system and law enforcement that sustain their church. However, if a pastor is qualifying what he/she/they say about injustice to accommodate the powers that be from the pulpit, they already lost their moral authority. Continued accommodation simply leads to the Church becoming a well-meaning organization with compromised interests just like so many other nonprofit organizations without a commitment to one of the most radical thinkers of a new society that ever walked this Earth: Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

If someone wants to run a nonprofit organization that is able to provide resources to the Black community because they do not offend the powers-that-be, be my guest! Just don't call it a church. To invoke the legacy of Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Gospel of Jesus Christ to advocate for a training facility that allocates an inordinate proportion of its space for further militarization of police is a mockery of the pursuit of the Beloved Community. Let us honor Atlanta's Prophet and the Savior of the World by joining the fight to Stop Cop City.

Your Brother in Christ,

Rev. Matthew V. Johnson Jr.

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Amílcar Cabral And The Politics Of Culture And Identity

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We talk a lot about Africa, but we in our Party must remember that before being Africans we are … human beings, who belong to the whole world.

– Amilcar Cabral, *Unity and Struggle*

Drawing in particular on the ideas of the Guinea-Bissau revolutionary, Amilcar Cabral, I discuss how the term 'African' became a synonym for the non-human or lesser human being that justified enslavement, slavery, colonialism and exploitation, and how the meaning of the word evolved subsequently to consider the African as 'uncivilized' under colonialism, and then 'underdeveloped' in the post-independence period. I discuss how the term African was appropriated by those engaged in the struggles against enslavement, slavery, exploitation and colonialism and came to represent the assertion and affirmation by Africans of their humanity, and as human beings, both makers of history and contributors to the history of human emancipation. And in that struggle to assert their humanity, culture was to play, as Cabral insisted, played a central role. That proud assertion did not last long: in the neocolonial period, and especially in the neoliberal period post-1980, the term African became disarticulated from any connection with the struggle for emancipation, freedom, justice, dignity and universal

humanity. Being African thus became merely a taxonomic term that has become indistinguishable from the individualistic identity politics that is so prevalent today, to which the current fad for 'intersectionality' falls victim. I will argue that it is not possible to understand, or even recognize, African people's humanity without taking into account their long history of struggles for emancipation. That is only possible, I suggest, if the politics of African histories are understood and transcended to reveal their fundamental contributions to the universal human condition – experiences that, as Cabral (1979: 80) put it, 'belong to the whole world'.

My starting point here is the following excerpt from an important speech Cabral made to party members of the PAIGC:

We talk a lot about Africa, but we in our Party must remember that before being Africans we are … human beings, who belong to the whole world. We cannot therefore allow any interest of our people to be restricted or thwarted because of our condition as Africans. We must put the interests of our people higher, in the context of the interests of mankind in general, and then we can put them in the context of the interests of Africa in general. (Cabral 1979: 80)

There are three elements in this statement around which I will structure this chapter. First, how did a section of humanity come to be viewed as 'African'? Second, how might the 'condition as Africans' restrict or thwart the interests of the people? And finally, what is meant by putting 'the interests of our people higher' in the context of the interests of humankind in general, a people who 'belong to the whole world'?

HOW DID HUMANS BECOME AFRICANS?

It has long been established how the peoples who lived on the continent of Africa formed a diverse range of social formations that paralleled, and, in some instances, were in advance of those that emerged in other parts of the world (see, for example, Anta Diop 1987; Parris 2015; Pithouse 2016; Rodney 1972). While these societies occurred on the vast geographic landmass that today we refer to as Africa, the inhabitants of these societies would not have considered themselves at the time as being 'African', even if today we might refer to them as 'African' societies. The continent was home to many of the world's great civilisations, such as Kush, Aksum, Ghana, Mali and Great Zimbabwe, to say nothing of Egypt. Peoples of the continent were the source of major scientific ideas well before they became adopted by Europe, including the concept of the Earth being spherical and the adoption of Arabic numerals and the concept of zero (adapted from India and the Middle East) to simplify mathematical calculations. The southern regions of Europe were conquered by North African (so-called 'Moorish') civilisations in the eighth century that lasted some 700 years. The establishment of the state of Cordoba brought to Europe many of the developments in medicine, chemistry, astronomy, mathematics and philosophy that originated from Africa and West Asia and were translated from Arabic scripts. Societies from Africa sent ships across the Atlantic as early as 500 BCE, and indeed the first European sailings to Africa were guided by pilots and navigators from Africa (Adi 2008;

Robinson 1983; Rodney 1972).

There are many hypotheses about the etymology of the term African: the Latin term *Afri* refers to the people in the region south of the Mediterranean, which, it is believed, refers to a society around Carthage. There are hypotheses that the term has a Phoenician origin from the word 'Afar', meaning dust; still others claim that its origins come from the word *Ifriqya*, the Arabic name for the region that is roughly Tunisia today. There are, in fact, many theories about the origin of the term. Whatever its origin, it is clear that prior to the fifteenth century the term referred only to limited areas of the continental land mass. The term African was not a self-proclaimed identity of the people inhabiting that part of the world. Rather, it was a term used by *others* to refer to those that lived in a limited part of a region south of the Mediterranean Sea (Mazrui 2005; Mudimbe 1994).

It was not until the fifteenth century that the concept African came to be applied as the nomenclature of all the peoples who lived on the continent, a derogatory word that was even subsequently applied to those people in France who opposed white supremacy. In France, immediately after the Thermidor, anyone who resisted the turn intended to re-establish if not slavery, then the regime of white supremacy in the colonies, was branded 'African'. (Gauthier 1992). It was a term conceived by Europe that came to prominence in the period of the establishment of enslavement, the Atlantic slave trade and the condemnation of large sections of humanity to chattel slavery. While Europe was aware that there was a great diversity of societies and cultures of the people across the continent (which were exploited to facilitate the capture and enslavement of Africans), they assigned the category 'African' to all those who in their minds belonged to the 'dark continent'.

To be able to subject millions of humans to the barbarism of enslavement and slavery required defining them as non-humans, and to do so required their *dehumanisation*. The process required a systematic and institutionalised attempt at the destruction of existing cultures, languages, histories and capacities to produce, organise, tell stories, invent, love, make music, sing songs, make poetry, produce art, philosophise, and to formulate in their minds that which they imagine before giving it concrete form – all things that make a people human. But as Cabral pointed out [], this attempt to destroy the culture of Africans turned out to be a signal failure. For while they destroyed the institutions on the continent, the memories of their culture, institutions, art forms, music and all that which is associated with being human remained both on the continent and in the diaspora where the enslaved Africans found themselves. The enslavers, the slave owners, and all those who profited from these horrors, including the emerging capitalist classes of Europe, engaged in a systematic re-casting of human beings as non-humans or lesser beings, a process in which the Christian church and the European intelligentsia were deeply involved (see Losurdo 2014; Parris 2015; wa Thiong'o 1986).

In essence, if we were to search for a word that, in the period of the emergence of enslavement, the Atlantic slave trade and chattel slavery, encapsulated the outcome of this

dehumanisation process, it is the word ‘African’, a word that represented the transformation of humans from a particular geography into non-humans or subhumans. Africans were to be considered as a people without a history, without culture, without any contribution to make to human history, a view perpetuated by philosophers of the Enlightenment (see Losurdo 2014). To be defined as African was to be considered non-human, to have all aspects of being human eliminated, denied and suppressed. As slaves, they were mere chattel, that is, property or ‘things’ that can be owned, disposed of and treated in any way that the ‘owner’ thought fit. Anthropologists, scientists, philosophers and a whole industry developed to ‘prove’ that these people were not human, that they constituted a different, subhuman, biological ‘race’.

Enslavement and chattel slavery played a critical role for the accumulation of capital that gave birth to capitalism in Europe (Du Bois 1962; James 1963; Williams 1966). These were the cornerstones of capital accumulation, as were the concurrent genocides of the indigenous populations of the Americas and beyond (Dunbar-Ortiz 2015). The systematic dehumanisation of sections of humanity by virtue of their supposed race or origin as enslaved or as colonial subjects – that is *racism* – was intimately intertwined with the birth and growth of capitalism, and continues to play a role in the survival of capital today.

Racism was a fundamental feature of nascent capitalism and later a fundamental feature of the emergence of capitalism and the subsequent period of colonisation that subjugated vast sections of humanity across the globe to its voracious need for increasing the rate of accumulation of capital. As such we cannot talk of capitalism, and its evolution as a colonising power, as imperialism, and in the form of modern-day ‘globalisation’, as something independent of racism – the process by which vast sections of humanity are defined as being less than human. As Domenico Losurdo points out, liberalism and racial slavery had a twin birth and have remained forever intertwined since. The history of liberalism has been one of contestation between the cultures of what Losurdo refers to as the sacred and profane spaces. The democracy of the sacred space the Enlightenment gave birth to in the New World was a ‘*Herrenvolk* democracy’, a democracy of the white master race, a democracy that refused to allow blacks, let alone indigenous peoples, or indeed even white women, to be considered citizens (Losurdo 2014: 181). They were considered part of the profane space occupied by the less-than-human. The ideology of a master-race democracy was reproduced as capital colonised vast sections of the globe.

It is important here to make a distinction between the term *racism* as a systemic feature of capital, and *racialism*, which refers to subjective views or prejudices with which it is often associated. As Kwame Ture (Stokely Carmichael) is said to have stated: ‘If a white man wants to lynch me, that’s his problem. If he’s got the power to lynch me, that’s my problem. Racism is not a question of attitude; it’s a question of power. Racism gets its power from capitalism.’

This process of dehumanisation was to continue from its origins in the European enslavement of people from Africa to the expansion of Europe’s colonial ventures into the continent. The representation of Africans as inferior and subhuman justified – or perhaps required – the slaughter, genocides, imprisonments, torture, forcible removal from their lands, widespread

land-grabbing, forced labour, destruction of societies and culture, violent suppression of expressions of discontent, restrictions on movement, and establishment of 'tribal' reserves or 'bantustans'. But central to that process was the attempt to destroy – or remould – the culture of the peoples of the continent since culture, at its heart, as Cabral insisted is a form of resistance. It justified the dividing up of the land mass and its peoples into territories at the Berlin Conference in 1884–1885 by competing imperial powers, reflecting the relative power of each. "When imperialism arrived in Guinea it made us leave our history – our history . . . the moment imperialism and colonialism arrived, it made us leave our history and enter another history . . ." (Cabral 1979: 17–18). Furthermore, In Cabral's words:

The ideal for foreign domination, whether imperialist or not, would be to choose: either to liquidate practically all the population of the dominated country, thereby eliminating the possibilities for cultural resistance; or to succeed in imposing itself without damage to the culture of the dominated people – that is, to harmonize economic and political domination of these people with their cultural personality.

By denying the historical development of the dominated people, imperialism necessarily denies their cultural development, which is why it requires cultural oppression and an attempt at 'direct or indirect liquidation of the essential elements of the culture of the dominated people'.

The use of violence to dominate a people is, argued Cabral, 'above all, to take up arms to destroy, or at least neutralize and to paralyze their cultural life. For as long as part of that people have a cultural life, foreign domination cannot be assured of its perpetuation'.

The reason for this is clear. Culture is not a mere artefact or expression of aesthetics, custom or tradition. It is a means by which people assert their opposition to domination, a means to proclaim and invent their humanity, a means to assert agency and the capacity to make history. In a word, culture is one of the fundamental tools of the struggle for emancipation.

Whatever these debates today about who ought to be considered African, the term was an invention of Europe, a shorthand for describing those it considered to be non-human or lesser beings.

RECLAIMING HUMANITY: REDEFINING AFRICAN IN EMANCIPATORY TERMS

If being cast as African was to be defined as being dehumanised, the resounding claim of every movement in opposition to enslavement, every slave revolt, every opposition to European colonisation, every challenge to the institutions of white supremacy, every resistance to racism constituted an assertion of their identity as humans. Where the European considered Africans subhuman, the response was to claim the identity of 'African' as a positive, liberating definition of a people, a people who are part of humanity (Manji 2017a). As in the struggles of the oppressed throughout history, a transition occurs over time in which derogatory terms used by the oppressors to 'other' people are eventually appropriated by the oppressed and turned into terms of dignity and assertions of humanity. As Cabral put it:

‘A reconversion of minds – of mental set – is thus indispensable to the true integration of people into the liberation movement. Such reconversion – re-Africanization, in our case – may take place before the struggle, but it is complete only during the course of the struggle, through daily contact with the popular masses in the communion of sacrifice required by the struggle’ (Cabral 1973: 45).

The most important breakthrough in asserting the universalist humanity of Africans occurred on an island in the Caribbean. The San Domingue revolution, which began with the uprising of slaves in 1791, led to the establishment of the independent state of Haiti in 1804, the first successful revolution led by African slaves (most of whom were originally enslaved from what is today the northern regions of Angola and the southern regions of the Congo). This was to shake the western world because of its truly emancipatory nature. ‘Few transformations in world history have been more momentous, few required more sacrifice or promised more hope’ (Hallward 2004: 2). It resulted not merely in the freeing of African slaves, as Toussaint Louverture put it: ‘It is not a circumstantial freedom given as a concession to us alone which we require, but the adoption of the absolute principle that any man born red, black or white cannot be the property of his fellow man’ (Louverture cited and translated by Neocosmos 2016: 69). ‘Toussaint Louverture, the first leader of the rebellion, drew on an explicit commitment to a universal humanism to denounce slavery. Colonialism defined race as permanent biological destiny. The revolutionaries in Haiti defined it politically. Polish and German mercenaries who had gone over to the side of the slave armies were granted citizenship, as black subjects, in a free and independent Haiti’ (Pithouse 2016). Being Haitian was defined, thus, not by colour, but *politically* in terms of the role played in the struggle for emancipation.

It was this same cry to assert that Africans are humans that informed the movements for national liberation in the post-Second World War period, and indeed informed the emerging revolution in South Africa from the mid-1980s until 1994. It was the mass mobilisations of those seeking to overthrow the oppressive yoke of colonialism that formed the basis upon which the nationalist movements were thrown into power. The struggle for independence in Africa was informed, at the base, by the experience of struggles against oppression and brutal exploitation experienced in everyday life. ‘[N]ational liberation is the phenomenon in which a socio-economic whole rejects the denial of its historical process. In other words, the national liberation of a people is the regaining of the historical personality of that people, it is their return to history through the destruction of the imperialist domination to which they were subject’ (Cabral 1966: 130).

For Cabral, culture has a material base, ‘the product of this history just as a flower is the product of a plant. Like history, or because it is history, culture has as its material base the level of the productive forces and the mode of production. Culture plunges its roots into the physical reality of the environmental humus in which it develops, and reflects the organic nature of the society’.

Culture, insists Cabral, is intimately linked to the struggle for freedom. While culture comprises many aspects, it ‘… grows deeper through the people’s struggle, and not through

songs, poems or folklore. … One cannot expect African culture to advance unless one contributes realistically to the creation of the conditions necessary for this culture, i.e. the liberation of the continent'. In other words, culture is not static and unchangeable, but it advances only through engagement in the struggle for freedom.

National liberation, says Cabral, 'is the phenomenon in which a socio-economic whole rejects the denial of its historical process. In other words, the national liberation of a people is the regaining of the historical personality of that people, it is their return to history through the destruction of the imperialist domination to which they were subject'.

Or, as Fanon put it: 'To fight for national culture first of all means fighting for the liberation of the nation, the tangible matrix from which culture can grow. One cannot divorce the combat for culture from the people's struggle for liberation'. Furthermore: 'The Algerian national culture takes form and shape during the fight, in prison, facing the guillotine and in the capture and destruction of the French military positions.' And, 'National culture is no folklore … [it] is the collective thought process of a people to describe, justify, and extol the actions whereby they have joined forces and remain strong.'

In the struggles for national liberation, the term African had become intimately associated with the concept of freedom and emancipation. The very definition of African came to be viewed in *political*, not racial or ethnic, terms. Cabral went so far as to draw a distinction between those whom he defined as 'the people' and those whom he classed as 'the population', based on their political stance against colonialism: the definition of people depends, he insisted, on the historical moment that the land is experiencing:

Population means everyone, but the people have to be seen in the light of their own history. It must be clearly defined who are the people at every moment of the life of a population. In Guiné and Cape Verde today the people of Guiné or the people of Cape Verde mean for us those who want to chase the Portuguese colonialists out of our land. They are the people, the rest are not of our land even if they were born there. They are not the people of our land; they are the population but not the people. This is what defines the people today. The people of our land are all those born in the land, in Guiné or Cape Verde, who want what corresponds to the fundamental necessity of the history of our land. It is the following: to put an end to foreign domination in our land. (Cabral 1979: 89)

In other words, the people or the nation comprise those who fight consistently against colonialism and the domination of colonialism – a political definition.

'RICE ONLY COOKS INSIDE THE POT': DELINKING AFRICAN FROM EMANCIPATORY FREEDOMS

We cannot therefore allow any interest of our people to be restricted or thwarted because of our condition as Africans.

– Amilcar Cabral, *Unity and Struggle*

What happens when the concept of 'African' becomes delinked from the idea of the struggle for emancipation, freedom or sovereignty? What then is left of the meaning of the term African? As I have argued, the concept of African had been appropriated from the original definition imposed by Europe as being a synonym for the dehumanised subject, to being politically defined as representing those who sought to fight for freedom, emancipation, justice and dignity.

But the outcome of the national liberation struggles did not always result in the achievement of emancipation. The rise of neocolonial regimes in the post-independence period, many of which arose out of the defeat or grinding down of the mass movements, gradually resulted in the demise of the struggles for emancipatory freedoms in Africa, and consequently had the result of delinking the concept of African from an emancipatory goal.

The blame for what happened after independence cannot be placed entirely at imperialism's door. As Cabral points out: 'True, imperialism is cruel and unscrupulous, but we must not lay all the blame on its broad back. For, as the African people say: "Rice only cooks inside the pot"' (1979: 116).

Despite coming to power on the tide of the anti-colonial mass upsurges, once in power, the nationalist leadership (composed usually of representatives of the newly emerging middle class) saw its task as one of preventing 'centrifugal forces' from competing for political power or seeking greater autonomy from the newly formed 'nation'. Having grasped political self-determination from colonial authority, it was reluctant to accord the same rights to its own citizens. The new controllers of the state machinery saw their role as the 'sole developer' and 'sole unifier' of society. The state defined for itself an interventionist role in 'modernisation' and a centralising and controlling role in the political realm (Manji 1998: 15). The idea of modernising was reduced to developing only the infrastructure of capitalism in the peripheries that would allow more efficient integration of the former colonies into the world capitalist economy. The term 'development' provided an implicit allusion to progress of some kind, and acted as a counterweight to the attraction of socialism that the US saw as a threat to its growing hegemony. Whereas the movements for independence were characterised by mass actions in which the people *presented* themselves on their own terms and defined their ambitions and aspirations on their own terms, the nationalists assumed that they could *represent* the masses in terms defined by the elites, not by the people (for discussions on the politics of presentation and representation, see Neocosmos 2017).

Born out of a struggle for the legitimacy of pluralism against a hegemonic colonial state, social pluralism began to be frowned upon. The popular associations that had projected the nationalist leadership into power gradually began to be seen as an obstacle to the new god of 'development'. No longer was there a need, it was argued, for popular participation in determining the future. The new government would bring development to the people. The new government, they claimed, represented the nation and everyone in it. Now that political

independence had been achieved, the priority was ‘development’ because, implicitly, the new rulers concurred with evolving imperialism that its people were ‘underdeveloped’. Social and economic improvements would come, the nationalist leaders said, with patience and as a result of combined national efforts involving everyone. In this early period after independence, civil and political rights soon came to be seen as a ‘luxury’, to be enjoyed at some unspecified time in the future when ‘development’ had been achieved. For the present, said many African presidents, ‘our people are not ready’ – echoing, ironically, the arguments used by the former colonial rulers against the nationalists’ cries for independence a few years earlier (Manji 1998: 15).

The post-independence period was an era of ‘developmentalism’. Camouflaged in the rhetoric of independence, the prevailing narrative treated the problems faced by the majority – deprivation and impoverishment and its associated dehumanisation – not as consequences of colonial domination and an imperialist system that continued to extract super-profits, but rather as the supposedly ‘natural’ conditions of Africa. The solution to poverty was seen as a technical one, with the provision of ‘aid’ from the very colonial powers who had enriched themselves at the expense of the mass of African people whom they had systematically dehumanised to maintain their control over the continent. Developmentalism was characterised by a growing commonality of the interests of the African elites with those of imperial powers.

Despite some of the shortcomings of the nature of many of the neocolonial regimes that emerged after independence, it is nevertheless important to recognise here that in a very short period of time, essentially from the mid-1950s to the beginning of the 1990s, there were remarkable social achievements. This was the case across the decolonised world. The gains made in the post-independence period internationally have been well documented by Surendra Patel (1995) for a UN/WIDER report. He recorded the achievements of the Third World in sustaining average annual growth of over five per cent over a period of 40 years from 1950–1990 by a population 10 times larger than that of the developed world. Significant economic transformation included increasing urbanisation and a declining share of agriculture in GDP, increasing industrialisation and share of manufacturing in exports, an increase in the rates of savings and investment and an unprecedented expansion of capital formation, including health and education, both public and private:

While the development gap in terms of GDP per capita was large and continued to increase, the social gap was significantly reduced: life expectancy increased from around 35 to 60–70 years; infant mortality rates declined from about 250 to 70 per thousand; literacy rates rose to 50 per cent in Africa and 80 per cent in Latin America; and while there were 10 times more students enrolled in higher education in the North than in the South at the start of the post-war era, 40 years later the numbers were approximately equal.[1]

Such achievements notwithstanding, there were few examples of fundamental transformations of the economic system of production or in the relationship with imperialism (save that the US became increasingly dominant in the economic, political, military and cultural fields). The former colonial state, which had been established, together with its armed forces, military and

police, to serve the interests of colonialism and international capital, was in most cases not transformed but, rather, occupied by the newly emerging elites. In exceptional cases, such as in Burkina Faso, where attempts were made to transform the colonial state machinery from within, assassination and coups were used to ensure the continuity of a state that protected the interests of capital. Indeed, the repressive arms of the state remained largely unchanged. Freedom fighters of the liberation movements were, if not entirely marginalised in the post-independence period, incorporated, integrated and placed under the command of the existing colonial military structures.

It was against this tendency that Cabral was adamantly opposed. He did not think that independence movements could take over the colonial state apparatus and use it for their own purposes. It was not the colour of the administrator that was the issue, he argued, but the fact that there was an administrator (Cabral 1973: 83). 'We don't accept any institution of the Portuguese colonialists. We are not interested in the preservation of any of the structures of the colonial state. It is our opinion that it is necessary to totally destroy, to break, to reduce to ash all aspects of the colonial state in our country in order to make everything possible for our people' (Cabral 1973: 83).

Cabral (1970: 80) argues further: 'We are fighting so that insults may no longer rule our countries, martyred and scorned for centuries, so that our peoples may never more be exploited by imperialists, not only by people with white skin, because we do not confuse exploitation or exploiters with the colour of men's skins; we do not want any exploitation in our countries, not even by Black people.'

He argues that the failure of the national liberation movements in Africa was their dismissal of theory and of ideology: 'The ideological deficiency, not to say the total lack of ideology, on the part of the national liberation movements – which is basically explained by the ignorance of the historical reality which these movements aspire to transform – constitutes one of the greatest weaknesses, if not the greatest weakness, of our struggle against imperialism' (Cabral 1979: 122).

For Cabral, theory is an essential weapon in the struggle against imperialism and for the emancipation of humankind. 'It is true that a revolution can fail,' he argued, 'even though it be nurtured on perfectly conceived theories, [but] nobody has yet successfully practiced revolution without a revolutionary theory' (Cabral 1966).

As I have argued elsewhere (Manji 2017b), emancipatory freedoms require and express the collective power of peoples to determine their own destiny. They are an expression of what Lewis Gordon (2008: 51) characterises as a historical aspiration, one that continues to exist and transcends the constraints that might have been wrung in any given historical period. Emancipatory freedom implies, therefore, an assertion of dignity, of self-worth, a commitment to a project that transcends frequently even the threat or possibility of death, a proclamation and assertion of, and an insistence upon, a claim to be part of humanity. By definition, emancipatory freedoms require a conception of the 'long arc of history', an ability to think and

act in terms of historical eras. But that very understanding of the need to continue the struggle for emancipatory freedoms gradually became lost in the growing hegemony of the idea of 'development', 'modernisation' and 'globalisation'.

Whereas the mass movements for liberation were informed by the need for emancipatory freedoms, the neocolonial states that emerged substituted the struggle for emancipation with aspirations only for concessionary freedoms, that is, freedoms whose parameters are set by constraints imposed by others than those who seek their own freedom. Those seeking concessionary freedoms accept the authority of those who set its limits. The focus of the newly independent governments was on seeking concessions from imperialism and its institutions. In the early period, there were concessions that permitted some degree of 'modernisation' that would improve the ability of capital to extract profits from the former colonies while permitting some degree of social improvement for the population, such as health care, education and access to water.

THE DEPOLITICISATION OF IDENTITY

Once the struggles for independence became delinked from the historical emancipatory struggles for reclaiming humanity that were embodied in the movements for African liberation, then all that was left in the meaning of being 'African' was a taxonomic identity and seemingly apolitical definition of a people. The delinking of the concept of African from its connection with the search for freedom results, in effect, in a depoliticisation that renders people merely objects rather than determinants of history. The concept becomes associated with the delinking of Africans as humans who, being human, seek constantly to emancipate themselves, to becoming instead at best mere 'citizens' of African countries, at worst the 'beneficiaries' of development.

Culture was no longer considered a means of liberation. Instead, disarticulated from such notions, it was left empty of meaning beyond representing a caricature of some imagined past comprised of customs and traditions, consistent with notions of the savage that still prevailed in liberalism and which provided fodder for tourists' imaginations. As Fanon described it, 'Culture never has the translucency of custom. Culture eminently eludes any form of simplification. In its essence it is the very opposite of custom, which is always a deterioration of culture. Seeking to stick to tradition or reviving neglected traditions is not only going against history, but against one's people.'.

The meaning of being 'black' has not been immune from a similar phenomenon. W.E.B. Du Bois, C.L.R. James, Angela Davis, the Black Power Movement, Malcolm X and even Martin Luther King Jnr all connected the identity of being black as a liberating identity intimately bound up with the reaching for emancipatory freedoms. With the defeat of the black liberation movement in the US (and indeed in Europe as well), following the rise of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, came the emptying of political identity into a form of taxonomy – African American, black, brown, Asian, Latino, in the US; and Asian, African, Caribbean, Indian, etc. The recent rise of the Black Lives Matter movement has perhaps begun to shift the identity of

black back towards an association with freedom as a political, not a 'racial', identity.

In mainstream media today and, sadly, even among sections of the left, it is not uncommon to hear people write about different 'races' in Africa. The concept has been widely used as the basis for explaining, for example, the Darfur conflict, where, we are told, 'Arabs' have been terrorising 'black Africans'. In doing so, they perpetuate the colonial mythology of the existence of 'races' among human beings, which has its origins in Europe, and ironically, adopt the spurious racial categorisation of people of the Sudan developed by the British (Mamdani 2009). There is, in fact, no biological basis for claims for the existence of race in humans. For the human species, race is a social, not a biological category (Lewontin, Rose and Kamin 1984).

'And it is all too true that the major responsibility for this racialization of thought, or at least the way it is applied, lies with the Europeans who have never stopped placing white culture in opposition to the other nonecultures' (Fanon 1961: 151). Nevertheless, it is surprising that even among post-apartheid South African intellectuals there appears to be a resurgence of the idea of race, especially ironic given how clearly the concept of race was a political construct under apartheid. The official categorisation of people according to race, as established by apartheid, has hardly changed. Race is a term that needs to be avoided. It sidesteps or masks the real issue – *racism* – which is an instrument of capitalism and of white supremacy. And struggles *against racism* reassert a meaning to being black or African as something that is connected with an emancipatory goal, a reclamation, if not an invention, of humanity.

If being human (or for that matter, being African) is devoid or emptied of an association with the aspiration for freedom, then, in effect, the resultant identity as taxonomy remains a form of dehumanisation, no better an identity than the one perpetuated by white supremacy in dividing humanity into so-called races, a social construct with no biological basis.

Cabral's assertion in the excerpt referred to earlier that the interest of his people could potentially be restricted or thwarted because of 'our condition as Africans' holds true, I have argued, so long as that identity remains unlinked with aspirations for emancipatory freedoms. The taxonomic concept of 'African' renders the definition essentially a racial one, locking people out of having a commonality with humanity or an ability to determine their own future.

The ideology of Negritude that emerged in the 1930s and 1940s in Paris was to become associated with the writings of Léopold Sédar Senghor and Aimé Césaire. Its philosophy was based on essentialising Africa and Africans, claiming that Africans have a core quality that is inherent, eternal and unalterable, and which is distinct from the rest of humanity.

However, as Michael Neocosmos (2016: 530) points out, if Africa 'historically was a creation of liberalism's sacred space which claimed a monopoly over history, culture and civilisation, then as a way of resisting, Africans have understandably tended to emphasize and idealize their own distinctive identity, history, culture and civilization'. And as Fanon (1989: 47) puts it: 'It is the white man who creates the Negro. But it is the Negro who creates negritude.' Furthermore, 'Colonialism did not think it worth its while denying one national culture after the other.

Consequently the colonised's response was immediately continental in scope . . . Following the unconditional affirmation of European culture came the unconditional affirmation of African culture' (Fanon 1961: 151).

While the ideas of Negritude had positive impacts on the way in which the colonised viewed themselves, and helped to inspire the flourishing of poetry, art and literature and of research about the pre-colonial civilisations in Africa – such as the exceptional work of Anta Diop – it also contributed to depoliticising the meaning of African and of culture that was once powerfully associated with freedom.

This resulted in eschewing the idea of human universality, preventing African people's 'return to history through the destruction of the imperialist domination to which they were subject' (Cabral 1966).

Depoliticising the nature of African identity through delinking it with an emancipatory agenda meant that what constituted being African increasingly resorted to colonial tropes of tribe. Those considered by colonial powers to be 'indigenous' to the colony were described as tribal and rendered under the command of the 'native authority' of chiefs backed by the state, a status that was in many cases a continuity of colonial methods of rule, while those considered non-indigenous were considered to be races (Mamdani 1996), people whose legitimacy as citizens were frequently contested. And from considering tribes as cultural, not political, identities, there was an almost inevitable transition to essentialise the idea of the tribe, assigning to each its supposed unique characteristic. The nation, forged in the cauldron of the liberation struggle, lost its meaning, and became defined as a collection of tribes, whose definition in many cases were forged or adapted by colonialism. And those who still held on to the 'old-fashioned' notions of liberation, emancipation and freedom, were denounced as trouble-makers, standing against the national interests, and more recently simply as 'terrorists'. As Robert Sweeny (2009: 36) puts it, 'Ethnically determined history is almost always racialized history', based on certain characteristics being considered as part of the essential character of the so-called tribe. He continues, '. . . essentialism always dehumanizes, because it denies that people are making choices.' Such tendencies became accelerated in the 1980s with the establishment of the hegemony of neoliberalism.

TOWARDS A UNIVERSAL HUMANISM

Cabral's (1979: 80) statement that 'We must put the interests of our people higher, in the context of the interests of mankind in general, and then we can put them in the context of the interests of Africa in general' reminds us that the struggles to reinvent ourselves as humans is relevant not just for those in the location in which such processes take place. They are of universal importance and have value for the struggles to claim and express humanity everywhere. His statement is also a challenge to the Eurocentrism of the many who assume that only the western experience and its associated revolutions in France and America are of universal significance. The silence about the importance of the San Domingue revolution in much of left literature is shameful. It is a failure to recognise that the experiences and

struggles of African people to assert and invent their humanity belong to the whole of humankind.

Those who have, for centuries, experienced dehumanisation inevitably and constantly struggle to reclaim their humanity, to assert that they are human beings. The process of reclamation is not, however, a harking back to some supposed glorious past when everyone was human, but rather a present and continuing process of constant invention, constant re-invention, and redefinition of what it means to be human.

For example, those who have suffered over millennia from the dehumanisation processes that are associated with patriarchy have an experience that helps define what being human really means: the gains of the women's and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender movements over recent years have provided glimpses into the potential being that humans could become, countering the narrow-minded, tradition-focused and often violent constructs that patriarchy portrays. In the perpetuation of patriarchy, men have themselves become dehumanised, unable to map out what being human is about, and it is only through the emancipatory struggles of those oppressed and exploited by patriarchy that insights into the possibility and potentials of what it means to be human can be found.

Similarly, those who have experienced and struggled against the horrors of enslavement, chattel slavery, colonisation and imperial domination have insights that emerge from their struggles into what it means to be human and what the potentials and possibilities are that can be released in becoming human. One can see in the struggles against oppression and exploitation the release of invention, creativity, different ways of organising and of making decisions, in each struggle that takes place, as in the revolutionary uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia. The anti-colonial struggles that Cabral led in GuineaBissau, for example, released a torrent of creativity in the way in which society could be organised, how education could be transformed, how health services could be provided, and how people could exercise democratic control. In every revolution or uprising that is informed by desires for emancipation, there are examples of such creativity and drive to invent what humans, as social beings, are and can become.

One final point has important implications for those in Africa seeking their own emancipation. The process of dehumanising others has an effect not only on the victims but also on the perpetrators. As Chinua Achebe (2010) puts it: 'We cannot trample upon the humanity of others without devaluing our own. The Igbo, always practical, put it concretely in their proverb *Onye ji onye n'ani ji onwe ya*: "He who will hold another down in the mud must stay in the mud to keep him down".' The 500 or so years of dehumanising Africans (and indeed of peoples of the global South) has resulted in the profound dehumanisation of large sections of the populations of the North over whom capital has exercised its hegemony. The historical task that is faced by those engaged in the struggle for freedom and the universality of humanity is therefore not only the achievement of their own emancipation and freedom but also providing the way forward for the reclamation of the humanity of the peoples of the North. For it is the 'post-apocalyptic' societies that survived genocide, mass killings, enslavement, colonisation and

dispossession who can point the way forward for humankind as to what it really means to be human.

CONCLUSIONS

The condition of being ‘African’ was a creation of the European, a synonym for the non-human or lesser human being, that justified enslavement, slavery, colonialism and exploitation. The specific terminology evolved subsequently to consider the African as ‘uncivilised’ under colonialism, and then ‘underdeveloped’ in the post-independence period. The struggles against enslavement, slavery, exploitation and national liberation represented the reassertion by Africans of their humanity, and as human beings, as makers of history, as contributors to the history of human emancipation. When the term ‘African’ becomes devoid of, or disarticulated from any connection with the struggle for emancipation and freedom, as it did in the aftermath of independence, it becomes indistinguishable from the taxonomy of race and of identity politics created by the European that identifies ‘Africa’, rather than its continued exploitation of its people and resources, as the ‘problem’. So long as the experiences arising from emancipatory struggles are perceived as merely ‘African’, it is not possible to understand their contribution to universal humanity. That is only possible if the politics of African experiences are transcended and considered as part of the human condition that ‘belong to the whole world’.

NOTE

1 K. Polanyi Levitt, Personal communication, from incomplete manuscript on development economics, 2016.

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The “New” Lukács

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The reception of Lukács’s *History and Class Consciousness* has always been fraught, even frankly hostile. The early attacks among Marxists in the Soviet Union and Hungary provoked Lukács to write a clarifying “*Defense*” of his book, but he did not publish it and it has only recently been available. Those early attacks were effective: *History and Class Consciousness* practically disappeared after 1923, to be republished in Germany, with Lukács’s permission, in 1967. It was available earlier, in 1960, in French translation, which is how I first read it. I studied the book in Lucien Goldmann’s class in Paris, along with Michael Löwy. We both wrote books about Lukács, in the late ‘70s and early ’80s, attempting to find a new path for Marxism in his work, but our voice was drowned out, at least in the English speaking world, by a chorus of attacks on *History and Class Consciousness*.[1] The *doxa* of the time was entirely negative. His concept of totality was Hegelian, rather than Marxist, his theory of class consciousness led directly to a proto-Stalinist concept of the party, he either viewed nature as a mere construction or on the contrary cleaved history from nature as though they could be separated. And so on… Lukács himself piled on, attacking his own early book in the preface to the new edition.

The one heritage of *History and Class Consciousness* that survived the attacks was the concept of reification, the transformation of social relations and their associated objects into isolated, measurable things, precisely what commodification accomplishes when the products of labor are exchanged, not between workers and consumers, but as goods exchanged for money. This concept reappeared, usually without citation, in the works of the Frankfurt School. It is important for Adorno, and Axel Honneth has written a book specifically on reification in an attempt to update the concept. In the 1960s reification inspired the dystopian arguments of the Frankfurt School that culminated in Marcuse’s concept of one-dimensionality. Paradoxically, these arguments resonated with young people whose protests had a huge impact on society.

My book on Lukács came out in 1981. It had no influence on the major players in Critical Theory who by this time were fascinated by Habermas’s approach, while in England Althusser held sway among Marxists. In contrast with the usual view of reification as an ideology, I proposed to treat it as a cultural phenomenon, patterning not only thought but also the material culture of the society. This was my interpretation of Lukács’s concept of the “form of objectivity,” an essential category of the book that was lost in the English translation.

This alternative interpretation came naturally to me as a student of Marcuse, with his rather similar concept of one-dimensionality. Marcuse argued that one-dimensionality went beyond ideology to penetrate the technology of capitalism.[2] A careful reading of Lukács’s text showed something similar.

In 2014 I returned to my book on Lukács and revised it quite drastically on the basis of a much deeper understanding of Lukács's philosophical background in German neo-Kantianism and phenomenology. This new version appeared at a time when a number of younger scholars were beginning to question the standard interpretations of Lukács.

Three remarkable books should completely revised our understanding of *History and Class Consciousness* in the English speaking world. I refer to *Georg Lukács's Philosophy of Praxis: From Neo-Kantianism to Marxism*, by Konstantinos Kavoulakos, *Lukács's Phenomenology of Capitalism*, by Richard Westerman, and *Lukács: Praxis and the Absolute* by Daniel Andrés López. These books all borrow from my earlier study and pursue it further in terms of neo-Kantian, phenomenological and Hegelian influences on Lukács. I recommend these books as an antidote to much of the earlier scholarship, which all too often was ignorant of Lukács's intellectual context.

Unfortunately, the English translation of *History and Class Consciousness* has made it more difficult than it should be to understand that context. For example, consider this version of one of the key sentences in the whole book. After asserting that the commodity is the central structural issue in understanding every aspect of capitalist society, Lukács adds: "Only in this case can the structure of commodity-relations be made to yield a model of all the objective forms of bourgeois society together with all the subjective forms corresponding to them".[3]

The sentence seems to make sense but what is an "objective form"? Unless we can understand this concept it is not clear what Lukács is trying to say. In fact the German original does make it clear. In place of the translator's "objective forms," we find the neo-Kantian term "*Gegenständlichkeitsformen,*" "forms of objectivity". This term refers to a particular way of being an object, a particular type of what we might call "thinghood." In the contemporary German context, such ways are multiple. The natural sciences address things of a certain type, quite different from the objects of artistic production, and so on. Many types of objects exist, each of them a coherent cross section of the infinite complexity of experience. In the sentence I have highlighted Lukács is saying that the commodity exemplifies a particular way of being an object that characterizes all objects in bourgeois society and shapes the subjective response to those objects.

The form of objectivity is characterized in the first part of Lukács's essay on reification. The objects of bourgeois society come to resemble the objects of the natural sciences in terms of quantification and lawfulness. Since the natural sciences are the paradigm case of rationality in this society, the imposition of its forms amounts to the rationalization of society. Rational forms resembling those successfully imposed on nature through experimentation, research and technology have become social forms. In sum, capitalism strives to create a "second nature," built out of the materials of the social world, including the human beings who inhabit that world and the artifacts and organizations they live with. This explains why the philosophical debates over the nature and limits of scientific-technical rationality, which begin in the 17th century and continue through Kant down to the present, turn out to be relevant to social theory.

This surprising connection becomes visible toward the end of the 19th century as the industrialization process reaches a climax. By the early 1920s it was clear that the effects of industrialism went well beyond the expansion of the market into ever more aspects of social life. Apparent to Lukács as to many of his contemporaries was the parallel growth of mechanization and bureaucracy. Together with markets, these new techniques of production and organization amounted to the total submission of society to technical rationality. Reification had become the universal meaning of social objects.

German philosophers struggled to save a remnant of culture from the aggressive advance of business and technology. The neo-Kantians distinguished “meaning” from factual existence in order to better understand the differences between science, art and history. They introduced the notion that different types of objects reflect specific domains of meaning, i.e. “forms of objectivity.” In this way they attempted to escape the grip of a scientism that reflects the totalization of capitalist industrialism. But the gap between meaning and existence shows up in a problem that already worried Kant: the unknowable thing-in-itself. If we know objects exclusively through their meanings, their sheer existence, independent of those meanings, escapes our knowledge. What is the social significance of this obscure philosophical conundrum?

Lukács argued that reified forms are instantiated in contents of some sort. The commodity form corresponds to meaning in the neo-Kantian construction, while the contents correspond to use and the concrete act of labor. What is the relation between those forms and their contents? Can the meanings fully determine the content or is there a remainder that escapes from any formal structuring? The Kantian problematic of the tension between form and content, meaning and the thing-in-itself, appeared now in the relation of technical rationality to the human beings whose lives it shapes. Where neo-Kantianism had found a theoretical limit, Lukács identified a practical one: resistance to the imposition of capitalist forms, class struggle.

You may ask what these philosophical reflections add to the usual accounts of class struggle based on the exploitation of the proletariat. In fact, Lukács’s argument brought Marxism into the 20th century. Previously, Marxist had denounced the irrationality of capitalism, but it was no longer possible to believe this without a significant concession. On the contrary, capitalism had been rationalized to the point where rationality itself appeared as a problem. Of course, at the macro level capitalism still produced crises, and so could be said to be irrational, but the organization of all social institutions around rational methods imitated from scientific reason required a new approach.

This would have consequences for the idea of socialism Marxists failed to heed. Engels, for example, believed the separation of management from ownership and the creation of national trusts already anticipated the planned society, although still under the exploitative control of capital. Such notions proved naïve in the light of the rationalization of capitalist society, and overshadowed more democratic notions of socialism which might have had more legitimacy

and staying power than the bureaucratic Soviet system.

Lukács did not anticipated all this in 1923. His ideas on revolution were primarily influenced by the early success in Russia. He could not imagine the catastrophic effects of the Soviet version of rationalization which was even more indifferent to its "contents," namely the lives it structured, than the capitalist version. Nevertheless there are occasional indications in his writings in this period that suggest the relevance of his theory of reification to the organization of socialist society. These indications are connected to his lingering loyalty to Rosa Luxemburg's theory of mass action and the idea of workers' councils.

Lukács understood that there can be no escape from some sort of rationalization in a modern society. What is required is a way of bringing the "contents" into relation with the reified form so as to favor human life rather than capital. There is one passage in *History and Class Consciousness* that hints at this alternative. Lukács writes, "the world which confronts man in theory and in practice exhibits a kind of objectivity which–if properly thought out and understood — need never stick fast in an immediacy similar to that of forms found earlier on. This objectivity must accordingly be comprehensible as a constant factor mediating between past and future and it must be possible to demonstrate that it is everywhere the product of man and of the development of society."[4] Here Lukács seems to imagine an alternative "form of objectivity" compatible with socialist democracy.

While Lukács did not develop the implications of this passage, his critique of what came to be called "instrumental reason" or "technological rationality" inspired the Frankfurt School and contributed to the response of the new left to the technocratic tendency of advanced capitalism. Alienation from rationalized systems, reification, underlay revolts that took many forms. Attempts to spread this new form of resistance to the traditional working class had some success at the time. Stanley Aronowitz wrote *False Promises* to document these Lukácsian revolts against the reification of the proletariat.[5]

Once we understand Lukács in these terms, where can we go both theoretically and practically? We must heed the "contents" of the reified forms. Those contents manifest themselves in progressive social movements that resist the rationality of the established system in the name of alternative forms of rationality. I have focused on the technical politics that has arisen out of the ashes of the new left. There have been movements in medicine, urban affairs, communication and the environment that aim directly at "mediating" between technical rationalization and human and natural needs.[6] Other movements need to be studied in terms of the logic of reification and dereification. This is the living legacy of Lukács' famous book.

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[1] See Andrew Feenberg, *Lukács, Marx and the Sources of Critical Theory* (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1981), revised as *The Philosophy of Praxis: Marx, Lukács and the Frankfurt School*, Verso Press, 2014; Michael Löwy, *Pour une sociologie des intellectuals révolutionaire* (Paris, PUF, 1976); Michael Löwy, *Georg Lukács: from Romanticism to Bolchevism* (London, Verso, 1981.) For a typical example of the critique, see Gareth Stedman Jones, "The Marxism of the Early Lukács: An Evaluation," in *New Left Review,* no. 70 (1971).

[2] For my interpretation of Marcuse's thought, see *The Ruthless Critique of Everything Existing: Nature and Revolution in Marcuse's Philosophy of Praxis* (London: Verso, 2023).

[3] Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. R. Livingstone (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1971), 83.

[4] Ibid., 159.

[5] Stanley Aronowitz, *False Promises* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1973).

[6] See Andrew Feenberg, *Technosystem: The Social Life of Reason* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017).

The Continued Relevance Of W.E.B. Du Bois, Sixty Years On

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I had to be reminded that 2023 marks the 60th anniversary of the passing of one of the greatest thinkers of the 20thcentury: W.E.B. Dubois.

Du Bois passed away the day before the legendary 1963 March on Washington. In fact, a few months prior to his death he wrote a solidarity statement with those engaged in the march. A brief and reluctant tribute was offered for him to the marchers by then NAACP leader Roy Wilkins.

I was too young to have been at the 1963 March on Washington, but Du Bois' name was quite familiar to my household, and not simply due to his historic significance. Du Bois had been a family friend; in fact, he and my great-grandfather, the renowned pre-Harlem Renaissance poet, author, and anthologist William Stanley Braithwaite, had not only been good friends, but were also colleagues teaching at Atlanta University. In visiting the Du Bois Archives at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst recently I was reminded of that friendship.

Regardless of the family friendship, Du Bois stood as a critical figure for my family, though I do remember my grandmother describing him as "distant." This reference remained in my memory over the years because it helped to summarize a piece of Dubois that would, in some respects, haunt him for much of his life.

Du Bois was as brilliant as he was complicated. His life and career were far from a straight line. Though there are certainly consistencies, he was not above changing his mind and, in some cases, admitting error. He was as committed to social justice as he was contradictory. In many ways one or another version of Du Bois' notion of the "Talented Tenth" clung to him despite the fact that he passionately believed in social movements and struggle. He supported US involvement in World War I, despite vehemently—and correctly—denouncing it upon its conclusion. He advanced Pan Africanism while at the same time allowing himself to be played by the US establishment in the efforts to destroy Marcus Garvey. That said, his remarkable work on the Reconstruction period in US history, his deep analysis of colonialism and race, his anti-Cold War stand, all made him the giant that he is recognized as having become. And, as he aged, despite a certain "distance"—and what some would characterize as elitism—one can certainly argue that he prioritized social movements and the activists who made them possible.

While Dubois was an activist, he was fundamentally a scholar and theorist; in some respects a political architect. A Black Internationalist through his bones, his pre-1945 Pan-Africanism was

not mass movement in character, this to be noted despite the historic significance of the Pan-African Congress movement that he helped to bring into being and nurture. The Pan-Africanism articulated by Marcus Garvey, by contrast, was certainly not as far left-leaning as that advanced by Du Bois, but it achieved a mass character that has never been rivaled, at least among US African Americans.

The focus of this essay is on Du Bois as Black Internationalist, one of the many components of his life and career.

Du Bois attended the 1900 Pan African Conference held in London, which had been led by the Trinidadian Henry Sylvester Williams. It was, however, in the Pan-African Congresses, specifically the first four beginning in 1919, where Du Bois was central, and in the fifth, celebrated.

Du Bois' internationalism did not start in 1919, but World War I and its aftermath had a decisive impact on his development. This is illustrated in the final/revised version of his *The Souls of White Folk*. One of my favorite Du Bois pieces, this is a passionate, biting critique of imperialism and colonialism, but also very much a critique of the workers' movements in the colonial countries that, in most cases, saw their interests in line with imperialism. The essay reads, in many respects, as if it were written just yesterday and can be used as a jumping off point for discussions regarding race, class and imperialism.

The politics of the Pan-African Congress movement evolved over time. It was significant that the origins of this movement were largely to be found outside of Africa and particularly in the Western Hemisphere. It was a movement for emancipation on multiple levels. Yet it was only one part of the larger Pan-Africanist movement. As mentioned earlier, Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association represented a multi-class, largely Western Hemispheric expression of a complicated Pan-Africanism that was anti-colonial, emigrationist, but far from anti-capitalist. Indeed, Garvey proposed that Britain and the USA support an emigrationist movement of people of African descent in the Western Hemisphere back to Africa, a sort of Liberia or Sierra Leone on a much larger scale. There was, in addition, the working class-centered Pan-Africanism that was articulated by the Communist International, documented brilliantly by Hakim Adi in his book, *Pan-Africanism and Communism.*

Du Bois' Black Internationalism was complicated in respects other than in his approach to building the Pan-African Congress movement. Du Bois was, like much of the colonial and semi-colonial world (frequently referenced during the early to mid-20th century as the "darker races"), taken with and inspired by the growth of Japan as a major world power. The impact of the Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5) on the "darker races" cannot be overstated. It obliterated the notion of white superiority. And, given that imperial Japan presented itself—ironically—as a people drawing from other people, their racism towards other Asians was frequently obscured.

Du Bois somehow missed the racist and imperialist character of Japan. Much like others who

have fallen into the notion of the "enemy of my enemy is my friend," he failed to see, at least until the early 1940s, the nefarious objectives of Japan. In that sense, Du Bois misread the complicated character of the forces that had an objective interest in opposing Western domination. The reality is that these forces had an assortment of reasons to do so.

The post-World War II environment brought forward both the continuity and expansion of Du Bois' Black Internationalism, while also accompanied by his increased involvement in domestic US politics. His role as a leader of the Council on African Affairs—along with Paul Robeson—represented some of the best of left-wing Black Internationalism. Though the CAA was focused on Africa, it understood the importance of the larger struggle of the "darker races" including, but not limited to, the independence movement on the Indian subcontinent.

The immediate aftermath of World War II also witnessed the 5th Pan African Congress, this one held in Manchester, Britain. Du Bois was a major figure at this Congress, but was not the leading convener, though his leadership was recognized. This Congress, in contrast with the first four, struck a different tone and was very much focused on the question of independence for the colonies, though expressing clear solidarity with people of African descent outside of the Continent.

Adding to the post-war moment, Du Bois' 1947 book, *The World and Africa*, was an exceptional collection of insightful essays on different aspects of the questions of race, colonization and the past and future of Africa.

The Cold War, beginning in 1946, not only repressed Dubois, but was an instrument to suppress progressive social movements—internally and externally—and reshape the way in which the US public saw US foreign policy. One critical angle on this was the matter of colonialism and decolonization. A related point was the manner in which US African Americans understood the continent of Africa.

Though the USA had articulated a politics of democracy and decolonization under President Franklin Roosevelt, the politics of the Cold War reshaped that discussion. The USA held the question of a movement's attitude towards the Soviet Union—and later China—as a litmus test for its legitimacy in the eyes of Washington. Thus, to the extent that individuals, including but certainly not limited to Dubois, took a stand for consistent decolonization and support for the forces leading such struggles, irrespective of whether they were communists or other leftists, such individuals encountered more than a jaundiced eye from the US political establishment. Du Bois was blacklisted, along with Robeson, and placed in the never-never land of internal exile until he was ultimately able to regain his passport and relocate to Ghana.

Du Bois was a Black Internationalist and Pan-Africanist. His internationalism, though highly focused on people of African descent, was never limited to people of African descent. To a great extent that fact is what made him particularly dangerous to the US political establishment since it had been the aim of the US political establishment in the Cold War to refocus US African Americans away from the anti-colonial struggles generally, and *African*

liberation movements in particular. Du Bois continued to draw connections, as part of his internationalism, among other things applauding the Chinese Revolutions and its efforts to not only break from its semi-colonial status, but to embark on an alternative development path. Such an approach was unacceptable to the US political establishment and efforts were undertaken to not only repress Du Bois, but to suppress such discussion. In the 1950s and early 1960s, unless someone was reading a publication from the Communist Party, USA, or reading the *Muhammad Speaks* (of the Nation of Islam), and, perhaps, a few other smaller groups, Africa was largely presented as the land of Tarzan and of backward Black peoples south of the Sahara, and corrupt and scheming Arabs and Azawad (Berbers) in northern Africa. The efforts of Du Bois and his colleagues to break that mold would only bring about success years after Du Bois passed away.

Du Bois not only understood the global nature of the "color line" but undertook continuous efforts to challenge it. Those efforts, over the course of the post-World War I period, increasingly moved him politically leftward, as he articulated an analysis and politics that challenged imperialism, colonialism, and white supremacy. At the same time, Dubois was insufficiently attuned to the class forces at work in the anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist movements, class forces that would in far too many cases, undermine efforts at full and consistent emancipation or, as in the case of pre-1945 Japan, were not beyond wearing a mask in order to disguise their real intentions.

The courage and brilliance of Du Bois make his life and work worth studying and celebrating. Someone who could have taken so many other paths, paths that would have been quite acceptable to the US political establishment, chose the road less traveled. And for that we owe him so much.

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On Liberalism

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Writing in response to a liberal criticism of a bill that "would make illegal the use of any 'diversity, equity, and inclusion [DEI] statements' as part of the hiring, promotion and tenure process," a philosophy professor at Brown, Felicia Nimue Ackerman, argued that "making such statements part of the hiring, promotion and tenure process is also an aggressive effort to politicize higher education. Both sides, while accusing their opponents of subordinating education to partisan ideology, are doing precisely that themselves."

A clearer example of bothsidesism would be hard to invent. But to go into it further requires serious analysis of the background question of liberal tolerance and its limits.

Two decades ago I wrote an article for *The Nation* titled "A Few Kind Words for Liberalism." A "few", not "Many," though presumably more than "Several." I haven't re-read it, and don't intend to: a lot of water has spilled over the dam since then.

Chiefly, both practitioners and critics have appropriated the term "neo-liberalism," as though it were an updated version of the original–say of John Stuart Mill, or FDR, or LBJ. It isn't; not in any way. It's enough to say here that none of them believed in the utility of an unregulated market for either money or commerce.

In any event, but in order to skip all *parti pris* appropriations I'm considering liberalism as an ideology rather than a mode of governance; the former may be steadfast, the latter is subject to the vagaries of history, of necessity. For example, Erdogan is a loathsome autocrat, but it's not his fault that Turkey is having severe earthquakes; nor is it Biden's fault that Russia Invaded Ukraine.

As for "Ideology" the term has many definitions. My own, is that ideology in general is *"the ensemble of beliefs and practices that support a (partially) fictitious sense of community among any organized human group."*

What this definition implies, and is meant to imply, is that all political and moral doctrines are in some sense or another "ideological." The most common response to this assertion is one that I satirized years ago as the title of an essay in *The Massachusetts Review*: "I Have A Philosophy, You Have an Ideology." From world-wide religions to team sports, even including what Terry Eagleton called "The Ideology of the Aesthetic," all assertions of "community" fall under this rubric.

Viewing liberal pluralism as an ideology, at first glance here seems to be something perverse

in the disdain (from the Left) often amounting to hatred (from the Right) that today's liberalism evokes. How, why?

Some comparisons, then. For the first half of the 20th Century, Marxism and versions of Nationalism competed for power in the intellectual world, and among European nations and rebellious colonies of the West (or North, really). Marxism today has virtually no political influence in the U.S. and only minor intellectual influence. Here, only vague references to "socialism" stand in arenas where Marxism was once central; I'm that kind of "socialist" myself.

There are, rather, three ideologies competing for power among us: Christian Nationalism, which is also predominantly racist; familialism, which might be described as old-fashioned conservatism in which women "know their place;"and is particularly strong in the anti-choice movement; and liberalism, which also comprehends the dominant version of feminism, and the identity politics of minorities, or those among them, who feel excluded from the White, straight, majority (or plurality).

Liberalism, unlike the other two seems to comprehend the social order not as a united community, nor as a collection of families that also have their own local affiliations, but as a populace of *individuals* with rights whose central obligation is to " tolerate" each other. (Thus the contrary intention of Ron DeSantis is to subject the rights of teachers to the control of "parents.") Tolerance and inclusion, or as we could also call it "multiculturalism" –what its enemies call "cosmopolitanism," with its barely hidden invocations of anti-Semitism–are, if genuinely practiced under the "equal protection of the law," what hold together what would otherwise seem to be an ungovernable whole–and often is.

Historically, both the theory and practice of liberalism extend and advances until no one, in an ideal world, is left out–all individuals. (Skeptics are fond of joking, or half-joking, that only pedophiles remain to be granted liberal tolerance; it's probably no coincidence that on the Internet Right pedophilia is alleged to be the real heart of present-day liberalism.)

Is this really the case? Thus, "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed with certain inalienable rights, that among these rights are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Men?

But no, anyone today who doesn't immediately acknowledge and insist that "all men" means " all persons–if only in some cases with a certain wryness–is like someone who's missed the last train out of Dodge City; or is wearing ripped jeans and sneakers to a wedding reception at the Ritz-Carlton. Not to mention that slave-holders such as Jefferson who were in on liberalism's founding manifesto, are given a kind of latter-day invitation to the wedding, so long as their descendants renounce their racism on their behalf.

So liberalism, at first glance, is the only one of these ideologies that's egalitarian, and yet is often scathingly criticized by other egalitarians; that is all-inclusive: except that as we shall see it isn't; and that makes almost no demands on its upholders: except that the one demand it

does make is deeply offensive to millions. Are believers who endure attacks from both Left and Right to think, as the cliche goes, that "we mut be doing something right?" Or is that an over-simplification? What's going on here?

I'm going to begin an answer in the standard, indeed irreplaceable manner, by looking at two passages from John Stuart Mill, specifically Ch. 2 of *On Liberty*, "Of Liberty of Thought and Discussion." The most famous passage from that chapter is the one in which he says that if all of mankind minus one were of one opinion, and that one of a contrary opinion, it would have no more right in censoring him than he would have in censoring mankind. Unfortunately, that thought immediately calls to mind the Unibomber, and I'm not going to go into it any further–except to say that it's impossible to imagine a more demanding constraint on any population.

Further on, though, as to the moral order In general, Mill vehemently argues against an early version of prohibition in the U.S. (from Pennsylvania, I believe) in the strongest possible manner. To use his language, any belief that a state should be governed by, or incorporate a punitive religious orthodoxy, is a "monstrous" principle: the worst violation of freedom imaginable.

This is the ultimate argument for liberal tolerance: the Separation of Church and State that incorporates diversity, inclusion, and equal protection of the Law. By this standard the theocrats of today, represented on the Supreme Court by the six Roman Catholics, are thus enemies of liberal rights in Mill's version, because they always subject those individual rights to the demands of their orthodoxy. I absolutely agree. But wait.

Writing a century after Mill, the theocratic political philosopher Willmoore Kendall, in an original contribution to political philosophy, called the liberal attack on the political status of orthodoxy "just another orthodoxy," which blacklists illiberal orthodoxies; and is a subversion of communal life to boot. Does he have a point?

A personal answer: the liberal hero of my teen-age years was an apostate theologian named Paul Blanshard, whose mega-critique of Roman Catholicism– *American Freedom and Catholic Power* (1949)–was serialized in the then spear-carrier of liberalism, *The New York Post. (Yes!)* As he argued it, the two terms were absolutely incompatible: the Church was the sworn enemy of liberal Separation.

Again, I absolutely agree. When I read of another reference by the American Council of Bishops or whatever they call themselves, to abortion as "The holocaust of the Nineties," I want to put them all on a ship that will be scuttled at the North Pole, with the brethren who'd deny communion to Joe Biden and Nancy Peosi tied to the anchor.

The peculiar thing about this conflict of ideologies, however, is that there is also a serious attack on the philosophy of liberal tolerance from the Left; and, even more peculiarly, that the Left and Right critiques are both based on the same claim: that liberals are indifferent to the real roots of inequality in structures of social class… For the Left, the failure is one of

indifference and complacency; for the Right, it's hypocrisy and what Kendall describes as falsity. (He was, by the way, the mentor of William F. Buckley Jr., and therefore to some extent the Godfather of today's Right, but not the extreme Right, that has gone beyond communitarianism into the nihilism of individual "freedom.")

I'm going to consider the Left critique first, in that as the author of "a few kind words for liberalism," as well as essays in favor of socialism, I feel a pang of self-division here and elsewhere.

The classic Left critique of liberal individualism, or the politics of tolerance at its root, is found in the three essays collected under the title of *A Critique of Pure Tolerance* (1965). Robert Paul Wolff, in the introductory essay, asserted that liberal pluralism is actually neither; neither liberal nor pluralist. (That case had been put earlier by Senator Estes Kefauver, who called so-called pluralism "a dance of elephants among the chickens.") That assertion is the central insight of the Left critique

Of these three, though, it is the contribution of Herbert Marcuse, "Repressive Tolerance," which is the most well-known–and notorious. Its simple thesis is that tolerance in the abstract means the toleration of the repressive forces in capitalist society; a free ride for the politics of exploitation.

Rather, Marcuse argues, (with some foreshortening by me) that "the realization of the objective of tolerance" requires "intolerance toward prevailing policies, attitudes, opinions, and the extension of tolerance to policies, attitudes, and opinions which are outlawed or suppressed." He calls this "liberating tolerance", which would consist of intolerance to right-wing movements and toleration of left-wing movements. "

"(…within)) a repressive society,"" he continues, "even progressive movements threaten to turn into their opposite to the degree to which they accept the rules of the game…the exercise of political rights…testifies) to the existence of democratic liberties which, in reality, have changed their content and lost their effectiveness. In such a case, **freedom (of opinion, of assembly, of speech) becomes an instrument for absolving servitude."** (pp. 109-111 My emphasis) .

Thus Mill's version of tolerance, Marcuse allows, would make sense in a truly free society. But in an inegalitarian society marked by repression, it simply hides the truth about the real order of things.

The case that "tolerance" is not what it seems has been more recently updated and restated by the political theorist by Wendy Brown, as in the assertion that "tolerance as a political practice is always conferred by the dominant, it is always a certain expression of domination even as it offers protection or incorporation to the less powerful". (Brown goes on to argue at length that neo-Liberalism has aggravated the worst failures of tolerance in service to the forces of globalization; see my vigorous dissent at the beginning of this essay.)

This then is the Left critique of liberal tolerance. And it is a substantial critique, and certainly applicable in many circumstances: as when corporations start using the language of tolerance to create a picture meant to counter the fuller picture of the way they treat their employees, or the way Black people are truly treated in local law courts.

In fact, the best statement of this argument I've ever encountered came in an episode of a British TV series, "Blind Justice", which was modeled on a notorious and deadly IRA bombing in a Birmingham tavern. The barrister assigned to defend the alleged bombers finds out that the cell leader actually has an unbreakable alibi, and rushes to inform him: "all you have to do is get on the stand and tell the Court, and we've got the documentation to back you up." "No," says the defendant, I will not take the stand!" "What," says the barrister, why not?" "Never," is the reply. "For me to testify on my own behalf would be to acknowledge that an Irishman can get justice in a British Court." No more than an accused Black man can expect justice in a White-dominated court, when striving for exceptions absolves the reality of domination, as Brown incisively puts it.

However, there are two serious difficulties with this as a general statement of principal. The first is its abstraction. It's not clear what exactly is being tolerated by liberal tolerance. What is the subject matter of the Marcuse/Brown complaint? "Liberalism," apparently. But if we are to avoid relying on liberal tolerance, what are we to put in its place?

Marcuse's suggestion that the oppressors should be prosecuted (by whom?) is breathtakingly naive. Brown, and her collaborator on this project, Slavoj Žižek, are more straightforwardly resisters against the status quo, of inequality; but even so, how does non-tolerance hasten that goal: who against whom? What is missing here are the specific needs and interests of real people, who disappear beneath the weighty concepts of "repression"and"domination."

Should members of a truly active Left never invoke the First Amendment for their own protection or that of their comrades? Or conversely, never defend the civil liberties of reactionaries, as the ACLU has done? I have a confession here: I resigned from the ACLU over its position in *Citizens United*, defending the First Amendment rights of big donors as though spending money were an instance of "speech" that liberal principles should protect. That was because their version of "free" speech was "breathtakingly naive," not to mention heartless and obfuscatory.

On the other hand, who dissented from the majority opinion? Every "liberal" on the Court, agreed with the concurring opinion of John Paul Stevens that the decision was an attack on democracy. Does his opinion deserve the strictures of Marcuse and Brown? This question brings up the second and more concrete diffulty with the anti-liberal argument of the Left.

Wendy Brown and I are both members of the Coastal multi-cultural elite, or however today's insult is couched. We are certainly not among the "less powerful." The latter aren't professional academics teaching (or having taught) at high-class institutions of learning.

But at the same time, neither are we, among "the dominant." The second difficulty, then, is

that it's not easy to say at whom this criticism–of complacency about being among the dominant–might be aimed, in that it's understanding of the social order is now, I fear, wholly anachronistic. (Thus the passage about dominance is from *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire,* published in 2006).

Rather, in the United States today liberal democracy is under siege. Equality before the law is under siege. Women generally, but especially poor women and non-White women, are under siege. The concepts of social justice and the Rule of Law are under siege. Persons whose gender or sexuality do not fall under the social or religious vision of the theocratic neo-Fascists are under siege. "Free and fair" voting is under siege. Most of all, people who do not carry deadly weapons around are under daily threat from people who do; what's the economic value or the social class designation of an AR-17?

At this juncture, therefore, those who practice or preach "tolerance" are labeled as hypocrites by the neo-Fascist (or Neo-Nazi) Right precisely because that language implicitly (or explicitly) functions as a critique of autocracy, male hegemony, and the bigotries of orthodoxy. So Kendall was right after all–the liberal tolerance of Mill is indeed incompatible with the orthodoxy, not of "community ", but of exclusion, persecution, and the celebration of violence.

As a socialist and a feminist, I cannot conceive of an approach to social justice that does not condemn, without respect for or tolerance or recognition of, those "monstrous" ideologies and actions. But this stance in no way implies the complacency of satisfaction with the injustices of capitalism or neo-colonialism.

What, though, of the Right's invocation of words like "hypocrisy," and "elitism," to characterize the practice of liberalism? Why do I say that Left and Right seem to share a view of liberalism that's anchored in a conception of class-consciousness, when we and they come from such different positions in the political milieu?

The answer here is given in the third and lesser-known essay of the *Critique,* by the sociologist Barrington Moore. In it he takes exception to Mill's glorification of "free speech," according to which truth will eventually win out in the arena of debate. (This assertion later became the guiding belief of Justice Holmes, in his defense of free speech "for the ideas we hate."). And his response–which has become the major intellectual battleground in today's assault on democracy–is that the moment when "scientists" or other students of empirical reality recognize a "truth" is the moment when it becomes, *pace* Mill, undebatable.

Liberalism, that is, is not neutral on the value of science and its methodologies or historical writing and its documentations. It is not just pro-tolerance, but also and necessarily pro-truth: and thus the scientific approach to the empirical world, when properly applied is *comme il faut.* Creationists, e.g., are wrong: to teach their doctine in any class on biology or statigraphy, etc., is to lie to their students.

When a supposedly religious doctrine becomes inseparable from irrationality and is at war with the status of the rational, what are we to do? Some years ago – at a colloquy on democracy in

fact –I came across a book of essays on creationism, edited by a high-school teacher of biology, who insisted without equivocation that anyone teaching that doctrine in a "science" class (such as her own) should be fired. Indeed.

That is the way I feel, to take a familiar example, about the doctrine that the fetus is "ensouled" at conception and therefore…therefore I consider that anyone who proceeds from that doctrine to the punitive doctrine it supports in today's politics is indeed an enemy of not just of rationality but of human decency, and should never be employed in any institution dedicated to knowledge (as opposed to dogma). A liberal should–and will–defend their right to speak, but nothing more than that; to teach in a place of learning that promotes their views without getting public support, all right; but never voluntarily given a platform in public education.

All in all, the ideology of liberalism depends for its force on the rejection of, intolerance toward, all social and political beliefs that depend for their standing on the falsification of the world. What the Bigot-in-Chief of Florida calls "woke" is nothing more than the truth about race and racism–much of which depends on verifiable truths.

So liberals can give their overt assent to conventionally honored buzzwords such as "family" and "community," and their sympathetic attention to those who live and die by those concepts; but when push comes to shove, liberals cannot give equal respect to patriarchal families that oppress women, or to communities that practice bigotry and exclusion. Liberalism is hopelessly cosmopolitan in a world of parochialisms; tolerant of every deviation imaginable but scornful of intolerance, even when intolerance of one kind or another is the way of life of the ordinary person; respectful of religious diversity but unable to respect dogma or fanaticism. So be it.

To return then to the critiques by Marcuse and Brown: how and whether such actions and messages should be tolerated, whatever that might imply, is a question, to take a much-discussed contemporary issue, that is not in any way illuminated by analyzing the class position of Trump voters in the last two Presidential elections, but rather by returning to the exposition of Barrington Moore, which turns out to be more relevant to current politics..

What we know, in short, is that the usual measures of working-class SES identity (Socio-Economic Status) take a back seat to exposure to higher education as an indicator of political affiliation and the ideas supporting it. This has been true for decades (see the analysis by Lewis Lipsitz in Philip Green and Sanford Levinson, *Power and Community***,** 1970). It marks what is now the familiar specter of "culture" rather than "income" as a perceived mark of social status, and thus the primacy of anger at what has come to be felt as disdain and neglect by less-educated workers.

That outcome is also the a direct statement of Moore's that liberal tolerance ends where knowledge begins, an outcome never imagined by Mill. In this version of social ordering, there's apparently close to a 45 line from education to rationality And that puts an advocate of liberal tolerance such as myself on the spot.

The liberal position now becomes exactly what Kendall said it must be. Tolerance of the

intolerant is a contradiction in terms. It lasts only until the moment when the intolerant one picks up a gun; or passes a law such as the abolition of abortion rights, or promotes deadly weaponry as a social good, or insists on some religious basis that the totally false is what's true. In that sense tolerance in general is a an ideology looking for a subject matter. That is the first conclusion of a critique of pure tolerance.

The second conclusion, that follows from the first, has quite a different salience. Marx and Lenin were wrong about the nature of domination; and so are Marcuse and Brown. "The State" is not merely an ideological superstructure built atop the material reality of an essential or fundamental class struggle. It is condensed power, and how that power is used, and by whom, that often determines the contours of our history.

Thus the neo-Nazis who see contemporary progressivism as a shell game run by the Jew George Soros reveal the nature of politics when a state is in the hands of what is still best described as "The Authoritarian Personality." You put on a MAGA cap, get hold of a semi-automatic rifle and an ammunition belt, run for County Commissioner, and start implementing ways to keep black people from voting. The goal is to destroy the liberal democratic state. It's the long-run goal of wealthy persons devoted to keeping their wealth and not much else: you get the boil of your hatred lanced; they get the policies that they want. Two classes, one goal, one autocracy. Who are the "dominant"or the "repressive" is up for grabs.

Not only does the State matter, but so too does the behavior of institutions. Not every capitalist society impinges on its inhabitants in an identical manner. To return to the letter I opened with, there is nothing in common between the promotion of DEI, and the abolition of DEI. As for the former course of action, who is harmed in any concrete way by inclusion, or equal rights, or diversity; by non-discrimination, in other words.? No one. The latter, though, directly implies an intention to discriminate. An Ivy League Philosopher ought to know better than that.

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On Cities Of Friends And Riots: Between Conflict, Solidarity, And Struggles For Recognition

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Lately, it seems to be everywhere: conflict, and a bit of connection. Yet what do we do about it? How do we learn to cope with it?

“I am amazed the amount of contention there can be in politics in so many countries,” says my friend Karmi, based in Tel Aviv but currently traveling the world. “Seems to be a contagious problem in the world, our next pandemic.”

In a world where cultures intersect and clash, with ever ebbing and flowing intersections and collisions, how do we expand notions of solidarity among those of different classes and cultures? How can we see strangers as ourselves, instead of fighting them, especially as disagreements expand? How do we understand the conflicts and civil wars? What happens when friends turn on friends? Questions follow from city to city, as do conflicts, East vs West, North vs South, ethnic clashes, border disputes, struggles for autonomy, on and on.

Walking Cities, from Berlin to New York

The other day, I found myself walking from the East Village to the West, back in New York for the first time in months during a sabbatical year in Berlin. I had one conversation after another, including a meeting with my PhD advisor, Irwin. Throughout our conversation, we explored our usual topics and gossip, histories of conflicts and possibilities of friendships, the subject of his great new book,[1] unpacking the workings through, the ones that got away, and those that held. Irwin and I have known each other for over two decades, with him supporting my research on play and my current work on friendship and conflict. On we talked about it. Friendship has changed and so have we. Yet, how do we make sense of it, of what happened and what might become of it? What is there to learn from the stories of friendships, of James Joyce and Italo Svevo, who Joyce tutored in English, and their abundant conversations, the history of philosophy that they reveal. Joyce modeled Leopold Bloom after him, building and an entire world around him. Svevo, in turn, asked Joyce question after question about the Irish experience. “A critic once asked Joyce did his Ulysses have to be Jewish? His reply was ‘Yes. Only a foreigner would do. The Jews were foreigners in Dublin at that time. There was no hostility towards them. But contempt, the contempt that people always show towards the unknown.’”[2]

Welcoming the unknown, strangers as friends, this is the stuff of redemption and possibility.

Friends remind us, they shake up the cobwebs, expanding what we can be. Opening things. No friendship is the same. The question is: can we recognize what they bring? Can we see their subjectivities? Such are the questions Axel Honneth and the Third Generation Frankfurt critical theorists ask, wondering about the possibilities of recognition in Germany.[3] How do we reconcile friendship and fighting? What is the nature of conflict and dialogue? What happens when discourse breaks down, when people turn their back on their neighbors or begin to shoot instead of talking to each other? Can urban spaces still be cities of friends built around affinity and solidarity, or are such anarchist ideas ill equipped for the times?

These are the questions I've tried to consider this year in Berlin, as the city has welcomed immigrants, many from Ukraine. "[T]he current war is widely seen as a 'Zeitenwende', a return to the world of the 'cold' war," say Abdou and company.[4] Others see the dovetailing climate, COVID, and Ukraine crisis as a new cleavage point. Regardless of what it is called or compared to, this is a new time of conflict, even among friends.

Irwin tells me about Susan Neiman's article in *The New York Review of Books*, "Longing for Reconciliation."[5] He offers me a copy of the article to explore. "There are a lot of layers for you," he tells me, pointing to the story of a philosophy professor at The Freie Universität, where I'm studying sociology all year. His work was part of a generation of German philosophers wondering what kind of philosophy is even possible after Auschwitz. While Richard Rorty turned to pragmatism, narratives and life stories, Frankfurt theorists concerned themselves with the scent of fascism still in the air after the end of the Second World War. Is redemption possible in Germany? Is it possible in Sarajevo, South Africa or the US South? At least in Germany, the government acknowledges the past. I feel it here. The same cannot be said of much of the US, particularly Florida, where the governor has banned such forms of inquiry from public school curricula.[6] Reckoning is never simple, not historically, not today. Walking the streets of Berlin, one witnesses memorial after memorial for the dead, stolpersteine in the cobblestones to those who perished, the Jews, gypsies, and queers persecuted during the war, where they lived, with names and dates they were murdered. It's not as if we see similar individual memorials for those lynched (although we do have a museum); imagine how many would be necessary for those terrorized, left to hang in trees, in the US South.[7]

"The past continues to seep into and infect the present," writes Susan Neiman. "Forgetting the past isn't helpful.... When pasts fester, they become open wounds."[8] We see that today.

In *Trauma and Recovery,* Judith Herman talks about the need for safety and trust before beginning a story of reconciliation.[9] "There is a need at the bottom of the heart," says Krzysztof Czyżewski, of the Borderland Foundation in Sejny, Poland, during our conversation there last fall. "If you stay with the trauma, there is a slow positive step to show it, to move, for a neighbor's culture is delivered in a different house. The US is all about multiculturalism. But it is an archipelago, separate. We need to find a new space, a new language to celebrate what's between us, new rituals." Can we find ways to address what happened before, the conflicts that repeat themselves, the solidarity that works as an antidote,

a form of recognition?

To do so, Krzysztof and company have looked to rituals and performances. He refers to "August 21, the Day of the Bridge, a mystery at the Bridge," in homage to Stari Most, the rebuilt 16th-century Ottoman bridge in Mostar in Bosnia and Herzegovina, across the the river Neretva, destroyed in 1993 during the civil war in Yugoslavia. "We stage 'Mystery of the Bridge'" says Krzysztof, paraphrasing the words he delivered at the porch of poet Czesław Miłosz's manor house in Krasnogruda before the Mystery of the Bridge, at 8.30 p.m., 22 August 2015: "Hayrudin, who built the Old Bridge in Mostar in 1566, the Ottoman civilization referred to him as the 'architect of the space,' one who had 'absolute pitch' that allowed him to combine various, often contradictory elements into one harmonious whole… One of the children who worked with us, when asked what the greatest mystery of the bridge was, answered: a bridge is a whole, a unity of different parts, it is enough to remove one beam, just remove one part, and the whole structure will collapse. To break a bridge just takes: inattention, inhospitality, ignorance, forgetfulness, lack of understanding, omission, exclusion, maltreatment, neglect, distrust, being blind or hard of listening, indifference, a sense of superiority…."[10] Rebuilding the bridge involves combating the hostility. "Do something together," says Krzysztof. "There is no owner of the day. We all own it… Create a space for something together. Invent a line to cross these borderlands."

I remember when it was bombed in 1993, old world animosities reappearing, returning. I recall that feeling as the world turned their backs on the Muslims of Mostar and Sarajevo, former friends attacking each other, solidarity crumbling, people fleeing, the kids without shoes, running from Srebrenica in July of 1995, as some 8,000 Bosniak Muslims perished. In the former Yugoslavia, a non-aligned "Kingdom of Southern Slavs" favoring solidarity over nationalism and religion, being consumed, vulnerable under siege, in a civil war in our own lifetimes. Why? What happened as absolute positions impeded progress or mechanisms for collaboration?

"I saw the destruction of Dresden," recalled Kurk Vonnegut. "I saw the city before and then came out of an air-raid shelter and saw it afterward, and certainly one response was laughter. God knows, that's the soul seeking some relief."[11] God knows, everyone needs it.

Seeing the bridge back up years after it crumbled reminds me we can do something different. It's the same feeling as looking at the rebuilt Cathedral in Dresden, made of the old bricks and new ones, old scars and new foundations, building something new. [12] I feel it in South Africa seeing white and Black people, once segregated, sharing the beach. I sense it, walking over the old bridge in Mostar, through the bazaar and old mosques. We make our way to the station to catch our train for Sarajevo. We love trains. Somehow they are reminders—bodies in motion, moving to freedom or oblivion. I always think this on a European train—that it's the last train to Nuremberg, or in this case to Sarajevo. That trip started it all, connecting the pieces from Cambodia, Hong Kong, and VietNam, where we'd been two summers prior, and Poland, where I talked with Krzysztof, the dots between our modern struggles, from Berlin to Kosovo, Tbilisi to Madrid, California to New York.

During my conversation with Krzysztof, we chatted about poets, his favorite being Czesław Miłosz, who translated my hero, Walt Whitman. Whitman dreamed of living in a city of friends, writing *Leaves of Grass* on the 4th of July, 1855. I have often felt the same way walking down my street to the bike shop and to the wine store and to the bodega not far from where Whitman drafted his poems. Many of my students work at the grocery store nearby. I greet them in the mornings before class. I feel like I'm in a city of friends. I also see conflict, car horns blaring, screams, the sounds of construction, fights over immigrants, race, policing, homelessness, a war on trees, underdevelopment and overdevelopment, who's more pure, who is not, etc. I wonder, was Whitman missing something? Can we create a city of friends? In his lifetime, he saw his city consumed with riots over who would fight in the US Civil War—five days of burning buildings and class resentment over the draft in July of 1863 that seemed to anticipate something. Whitman's view that poetry could help us realize a democratic promise clashed with an ever-expanding war machine. Anarchist ideas, support for affinity, are always contending with global trends. Today, these trends swirl around a seemingly expanding conflict.

There is no mistaking that antagonism, sometimes even between communities and friends, sometimes between nations, is on the rise. Our democracy is riddled with stories of people taking either or positions, instead of finding common ground or room for compromise. The United States experienced a bloody civil war over such conflicts in the mid-19th century. Yet, this is not an isolated problem.

As I write this, Europe is experiencing its first ground war in three decades. The conflict seems to be everywhere. A riot in Washington, DC on January 6th, 2021, aiming to disrupt the peaceful transfer of power, led to the deaths of police on hand. A few weeks after the one year anniversary of the Capital Riot, Russia invaded Ukraine on the 24th of February, 2022. New York City witnessed countless speakouts and rallies in opposition to the conflict, blue and yellow flags hanging everywhere—in storefronts, restaurants, homes and businesses—in solidarity. And new waves of refugees moved West, where they were treated in enormously different ways than the Syrians refugees, exposing a vexing racial bias in reactions to immigration policies.[13]

I started talking to others about these tensions. First in my neighborhood of Brooklyn, NY, where Walt wrote, followed by other boroughs of New York City, with people from everywhere, other places, states and even countries. Each interview considered open-ended questions about friendship, fights, what happens when we want to hurt each other instead of agree to disagree, why neighbors attack each other and what to do about it. I've conducted dozens of semi-structured initial interviews with participants from New York, Peru, Texas, California, Italy, Rotterdam, Brussels, Poland, Prague, Sweden, Cambodia and Berlin, as well as other places coping with historic conflicts including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Serbia, Czech Republic, Ireland, Spain, Italy, South Africa, Hong Kong, Tbilisi, and the United States. Over time, the sample has only expanded, trying to understand the world by seeing it, learning about it firsthand.

Walking the streets of Sarajevo, where Sarajevo Roses, bullet holes and remains of mortar shells from hand grenade explosions, still remain, I wondered about friendship and the reasons people fight, and what to do when friends turn on each other. I thought about Mostar, our divisions, friends and neighbors, as well as conditions of conflict, when neighbors fight, and draft riots seem to vanquish Whitman's City of Friends. From the LA Riots of 1992 to the civil wars which took apart Georgia and then Yugoslavia before the Soviet Union collapsed, twenty new countries took shape. Each born of their own more fragmented history, regional economies, local conflicts and supply chains.[14]

Here in Berlin, we spend a lot of time thinking about history. For many of us, it's thinking about the 1920's and '30's, about the Weimar Republic in Germany, the abundant years of arts and culture, cabarets and sex work, inflation and dread that something horrible was around the corner. Reading about it all, I imagine being there. Going for a walk in 1920's Berlin, Joseph Roth writes about the advertisements he sees on the streets, the capitalist spectacle. They seem to keep us thinking, argues Roth in *What I Saw: Reports from Berlin, 1920-1933*, reporting on the day to day life of the Weimar Republic before darkness obscured the light in 1933.[15] I think about it, looking at the remains of the Wall here, imagining what it was like to run from the police and security guards, trying to elude their glare, tanks rolling over protesters, families separated, some on one side, some on the other, a man shot trying to cross from east west to see his mom again.

I think about it, watching protesters and counterprotesters during Trump's indictment hearing this year in New York, each falling on their mutual antagonisms. That polarization spreads and extends its tentacles. Wherever there's a genocide, a murder by a cop, a war, a piece of brutality, it starts with a feeling, a sense they are wrong, a sense they are less than me, than us. We can step on them.

Thinking of what was becoming of my city of friends, I wondered about Walt Whitman, meeting with friends near his old apartment, reading *Leaves of Grass*. Mark, who teaches Whitman, and I talked about the sage and the civil war. He suggested I look at his poem, "To a Stranger" from 1860. "This is going to be the epitaph for your next book," he said. The poem addresses this unknown figure, the stranger.

Passing stranger! you do not know how longingly I look upon you,

You must be he I was seeking, or she I was seeking, (it comes to me as of a dream,)

I have somewhere surely lived a life of joy with you,

…I am to think of you when I sit alone or wake at night alone,

I am to wait, I do not doubt I am to meet you again,

I am to see to it that I do not lose you.[16]

Over and over we see him and we seem to lose site of him, all of us "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," from place to another, one bridge to another, short to shore, one side to another:

"Just as you feel when *you look* on the *river* and *sky*, *so* I *felt*,.

Just as *any* of *you* is *one* of a *living* crowd, I was *one* of a crowd."[17]

We are all a part of the crowd, a city of friends, if we listen to each other, if we learn from each other, to feel what you feel. I am you and you are me. Yet, somehow we lose sight of the stranger. This city of friends is always facing walls. Today it is a rightward drift in the US electorate opposing support for the immigrants, for the strangers Whitman embraced along with the sailors he met under the piers, the others he saw as a bit of himself. Born on the 31st of May 1819, Whitman's life contended with many of the contractions of our first civil war and struggle for democracy. The simmerings of civil war were there from his earliest days. The Missouri Compromise of 1820, granting simultaneous membership to both Missouri and Maine as slave and non-slave states, came to be the year after his birth. It established that enslaved Americans would be counted as three-fifths of a person for taxation and representation purposes.

By the time of his death in 1892, New York's population had increased exponentially, from 122,000 in 1820 to 2,693,000 in 1890. He embraced the flow of immigrants, welcoming the stranger as someone he knows and needs. "The Civil War changed everything for Whitman," says Ed Folsom and Kenneth M. Price.[18] His poems about the war, Drum Taps, address the conflict. There was conflict and there were friends, ever dueling with each other.

Some saw strangers with fear. Others see them as sources of wonder. Stefan Zweig recalls a friend who learned something from strangers in Paris before the war. "Andre Gide once visited me and, amazed….commented, 'We have to ask foreigners to show us the most beautiful places in our own city.'"[19] Within a generation, everything would change. Conflicts would engulf this space, occupiers taking over.

Berlin sociologist Georg Simmel argued that rather than avoid it, conflict helps integrate a culture; resolving conflict was essential.[20] It could engender mutual self respect and forward social change. He identified four different types of conflict: 1) war, 2) feuds, 3) litigation, and 4) clashes between friends and peers.[21] "Conflict can exclude all personal and subjective factors thus reducing hostility, engendering mutual respect, and producing an understanding on all personal matters, as well as recognition of the fact that both parties are driven by historical necessities," wrote Simmel.[22] Coming to terms with conflicts depends on the level of hostility in question. Some are more manageable than others. That's what Whitman saw, the possibilities and the emotional reactions when conflicts become heated and violent.

Durkheim was less optimistic about conflict. In *The Division of Labor and Society*, Durkheim writes:

"It is to this state of anomie that, as we shall show, must be attributed the continually recurring

conflicts and disorders of every kind of which the economic world affords so sorry a spectacle… they tend to grow beyond all bounds, each clashing with the other, each warding off and weakening the other. To be sure, those forces that are the most vigorous succeed in crushing the weakest or subjecting them to their will." [23]

From Spain to Sarajevo, Brooklyn to Fort Sumter, what is it about humans? We seem to need to clash, over the most petty of differences, small pieces of land or resources. But sometimes we look out for each other, sheltering the vulnerable from political persecution. And sometimes we move backward. That's what it feels like reading about the war in Ukraine. Looking at the Texas trans law and abortion ban, the war on sex, on queer bodies, queer thoughts in motion in the USA. Reading about the clash, it's hard not to see the Florida don't-say-gay-bill, as a way to move us backward, back to retrograde narratives, of teachers as pedophiles, the ghost of Anita Bryant, with the 6-3 conservative majority on the Supreme Court. Doing so, they turn back abortion rights. I recall Lawrence in 2003, but could see us go back to Bowers v Hardwick, or turning over Loving v Virginia. Who knows how retrograde conservative majority in the court may become? The centrists are gone. No Kennedy to swing votes, no Ruth Bader Ginsberg on the court to hold the line.

More and more people in the US are talking about a Cold Civil War, or proxy conflicts. Our family was a part of that first conflict of April 1861-64. Dad used to always say, the South lost the war but won the peace. The US was never close to becoming communist, he followed. But we've come mighty close to becoming fascist. And that was before Trump.

All summer, we watch the January 6th hearings on TV, chatting about the civil wars and our hope for peace,wondering why we continue to refight the Civil War. What if the left had killed the cops, as the rioters did that day in DC?

"Abortion is a mitzvah," said my favorite sign at the annual Dyke march, the last weekend in June 2022.

Waves of civil disobedience follow the Dobbs decision, dozens of us arrested in front of the Supreme Court.

"This is a cold civil war," said Jean Francious. Says a poll. "Over 50 percent of Americans expect a civil war 'in the next few years'," reports Quay.[24] Much of the conflict seems to boil down to a few basic questions and themes: how we deal with difference, with strangers.

Theoretically

For some, recognizing strangers as friends is a matter of principle. Many faiths remind us of the imperative to support strangers in need. Yet not everyone sees the world in this way. Others recoil from this view. "Evangelical Christianity has been hijacked by those who would have given Jesus the boot if he knocked at the door," laments US President Jimmy Carter.[25] Still some political leaders, such as Angela Merkel, see welcoming strangers as good public policy, opening the doors of the country she was leading to some 1.2 million

refugees amidst the 2015-16 migrant crisis, even when doing so became a political liability, igniting political backlash.[26] Sometimes this anger leads to conflict, even war.

“There should be an honest attempt at the reconciliation of differences before resorting to combat,” argues US President Jimmy Carter.[27] Conflict and reconciliation, we hear about these ideas all the time. But what of recognition and solidity? We all breathe the same air. Why not share resources? Expand solidarity instead of conflict?

Debates about conflict, recognition and solidarity involve questions about inclusion and exclusion, war and peace, immigration and citizenship, cosmopolitanism and particularism, migration and border walls, multiculturalism and tolerance, as well as clashes between “fundamentalist or national utopia, and … cosmopolitan liberalism.”[28] Conflicts over multiculturalism follow over “situations in which people who hold ‘different’ habits, customs, traditions, languages and/or religions live alongside each other in the same social space.”[29] In the face of difference, clashes emerge, often over questions of recognition. After all, what is recognition but a plea for acknowledgement of individual intersubjectivity, needs and hopes, rather than condemnation and harm.[30] It involves struggles and aspirations, as well as the inequalities which impede them.[31] Who can be acknowledged and recognized, among differing points of views?

We see these dynamics in debates about rainbow flags and contests over school curriculum, histories of colonizing and decolonizing curriculum, those ideas that can be accommodated and those which inspire backlash, among other questions about democracy. Others wonder if ideas of democracy, understood as “a model for organizing the collective and public exercise of power … among individuals considered as moral and political equals”, has reached its limits.[32] After all, not everyone feel like equal players.[33]

The conflicts is always there. Sometimes we see solidarity. In others, we clash and fight. I thought about this observing a memorial for gay people killed by the Nazis here in Berlin. The war on difference takes countless shapes. As Irwin Epstein puts it:

“Being afraid of the different is a survival mechanism. Every baby fears a new face. But when that new face smiles, or gently sings or coos and makes loving eye contact the fear diminishes. After a while the baby smiles and even laughter may appear. How can we bring that awareness to adult fear or difference?”

That’s the eternal question: How do we learn to embrace the other, to recognize them. For Axel Honneth, there is a parallel between the need for maternal love and social recognition.[34] The question is why do some recognize others and others shoot them? To address this, it is worth unpacking the very nature of the clash, struggles with solidarity, and recognition.

Conflict

German sociologists Max Weber and Karl Marx famously debated conflicts over inequality,

social structure and class.[35] Much of the debate, of course, had to do with power. Weber defines power in terms of asymmetry: “the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance.” Who can control who?[36] “All history has been a history of class struggles between dominated classes,” posits Friedrich Engels.[37] Conflict is often based on distribution of resources, with varying dynamics among social groups: 1) personal, 2) racial, 3) political, 4) class, and 5) international.[38]

Still Georg Simmel seemed to understand our interrelatedness. He saw conflict as a kind of disruption, generally involving contests of ideas and beliefs, often opposing each other, ever evolving, influencing each other, as a sort of “Dialectic of interaction and socialization.”[39] Ideally, such clashes take shape as a sort of dialogue among impacted parties. Yet, inequality impacts who can participate and how.[40]

Built of engagement between clashes of opposing ideas, such dialectical approaches open space for engagement between apparently contradicting points of view. From Hegel to Marx, dialectical analysis grew out of distinct social relations involving interpretation of opposites, internal relations, contradictions, quantity into quality, identity and difference.[41] Ever expanding forms of conflict include: 1) individual and 2) cultural differences, 3) clashes of interest, as well as 4) social change. Some aim at changing societies and culture: 1) social movements, 2) rebellions, 3) civil politics, and 4) revolutions.[42] These conflicts extend in countless directions, from micro toward cultural and economic clashes, to bullets and wars.

Following Marx and Engels, and later Simmel, German philosophers within the Frankfurt School helped frame a critical theory to help us situate questions of conflict and inequality within a larger sociology and philosophy of history.[43] The school helped reframe questions and debates from these thinkers, who wanted socialism and ended up with National Socialism, or how we live in periods of capitalism when the whiff of fascism is not quite out of the air and our culture absorbs efforts aimed at social change. The first generation of Frankfurt School theorists included Herbert Marcuse, Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin, followed by a second generation, including Jürgen Habermas, and a third, with Axel Honneth and his critical theory of recognition.[44] Questions about differences run throughout the work. More than an academic debate, Walter Benjamin perished on his way to Spain on the 26th of September, 1940, fearing for his life as a Jew denied citizenship, feeling a sense of difference that could be deadly in a war over tolerance for difference, individual rights conflicting with the state. An absence of social solidarity, compounded within a global conflict, left him profoundly alone.[45]

Building on this, Honneth worried about the wounds, the “moral injuries, arising from the deeply human need for mutual recognition”.[46] Workers “seek and deserve mutual recognition,” argued Honneth; thus “class conflicts and other such social conflicts must remain central to a critical social theory”.[47] Such struggles serve a purpose if they open space for new forms of consciousness and awareness, built around respect, love and self esteem.[48] Difference and recognition, the two concepts dance throughout discussions of conflict and solidarity.

The Search for Recognition

How do we see each other, when some of us are invisible? How do we reconcile differences or recognize each other, when some of us are more visible, some of us enjoy more access to debate and participation than others?[49] At a conference after the fall of the Wall, American philosopher Nancy Fraser famously challenged Jürgen Habermas: "If, as you have argued, 'markets and state bureaucracies are a necessary feature of life in complex societies' must we not ask whether capitalism is compatible with a 'non-exclusionary and genuinely democratic public sphere?"[50] For Fraser, much of the challenge involves questions of recognition. Fraser's "Rethinking Recognition" was published in June 2000, before the US crisis of democracy, with two out of the next four presidents, elected without the popular vote, a first Black president, followed by a cultural backlash and the ascent of an immigrant bashing, mogul, advocating for white lives and resentment. Identity is not destiny. Yet how do we support democratic living, open to different opinions and subjectivities, wondered Angela Davis, speaking in Oranienplatz in Berlin about the refugee crisis.

After all, we live in a diverse, multicultural world. At least that's how it feels on the subway, with accents from the Caribbean, Russia, Latin American, Eastern Europe and Brooklyn co mingling, sharing jays and beach chairs on the way to Rockaway Beach in the summer, each contending with our own questions about recognition and interconnection in the public sphere.

Fraser helps us consider the plea for recognition:

"Claims for the recognition of difference now drive many of the world's social conflicts, from campaigns for…autonomy, to battles around multiculturalism, to…movements for…human rights, which seek to promote both universal respect for shared humanity and esteem for cultural distinctiveness. Why today, after…the acceleration of globalization, do so many conflicts take this form? Why…so many movements [over] recognition?"[51]

For many years, calls for recognition took place among leftist movements, "under the banners of sexuality, gender, ethnicity and 'race'… to bring a richer, lateral dimension to battles over the redistribution of wealth and power as well."By the end of the century, "issues of recognition and identity have become even more central, yet many now bear a different charge: from Rwanda to the Balkans, questions of 'identity' have fuelled campaigns for ethnic cleansing and even genocide" as well as opposition. The result, "a new constellation in the grammar of political claims-making—and one that is disturbing on two counts," says Fraser. "First, this move from redistribution to recognition…" takes place, "when an aggressively expanding capitalism is radically exacerbating economic inequality…" Fraser worries, "questions of recognition are serving less to supplement, complicate and enrich redistributive struggles than to marginalize, eclipse and displace them." For Fraser, this is "*the problem of displacement*…" All the while, communication flows have expanded exponentially. Unfortunately, such discourses "serve not to promote respectful interaction within increasingly multicultural contexts, but to drastically simplify and reify group identities… encourag[ing] separatism, intolerance and chauvinism." This is a "*problem of*

reification." In this way, concepts become things, dead and inanimate, "reifi[ng]group identities," claims about groups are transformed into simplified categories, "sanctioning violations of human rights." Not unsurprisingly, many have turned away from, "'identity politics'" and "cultural struggles altogether." Others are "reprioritizing class over gender, sexuality, 'race' and ethnicity" thereby "rejecting all 'minoritarian' claims…."[52]Back to the old arguments that class trumps race or economics determines all.

The trend is understandable, but misguided. "Culture is a legitimate, even necessary, terrain of struggle," says Fraser. "Properly conceived, struggles for recognition can aid the redistribution of power and wealth and can promote interaction and cooperation across…difference." But it "depends on how recognition is approached." Thus, Fraser callsfor a new "way of rethinking the politics of recognition in a way that can help to solve, or at least mitigate, the problems of displacement and reification." Ideally this is a space where social actors reframe movements for recognition in terms of redistribution.[53] In this way, recognition takes shapes as a sort of "reciprocal relation between subjects, in which each sees the other." Redistribution flows through reciprocity, within the complexity of our experiences, rather than the one-dimensional thinking Herbert Marcuse lamented.[54] Identity is constructed dialogically, with mutual recognition of our relations, histories and subjectivities. After all, we are shaped in relation to others, notes George Herbert Mead.[55] Yet all too often, we witness distorted claims of recognition, fueled by resentment, propelling conflict. Think Trump. Think populism. This may have been what I saw last fall on Prenzlauer Allee, a drunk guy yelling at a rally of some dozen reactionary protesters, surrounded by cops, screaming, "down with NATO," "no more masks," "no more fake energy crisis." The drunk man was screaming "Nazis fuck off." If Fraser were there, I imagine her saying this frame rejects dialogical interaction in favor of monologue, turning complexity into a hegemonic narrative. The clash is everywhere.

Is this a problem with recognition or good old fashioned know nothingism, a new version of the paranoid style of politics we've seen all these years?[56] How do you have dialogue with people who do not want to talk? In a period of flux, what comes of status? Who is seen and who is not? Who is perceived as valuable and who is not? In many ways, this is one of the roots of grievances around multiculturalism, with poor white people feeling that without supremacy, they were left with very little after desegregation in the South in the US. Without hierarchies, poor whites felt lost. And they turned rightward. Calls for walls, restrictions on immigrants, and penal solutions followed. Misrecognition leads to institutional subordination. Jim Crow laws fell only to be replaced by a New Jim Crow in the US, with a school-to-prison pipeline.[57]

It all leaves me wondering, can we build a politics of recognition that fosters participation, built around recognition of difference.[58] Is there room for an alternative politics of recognition, that addresses maldistribution of resources, fostering dialogue, seeing ourselves in others, recognizing our interconnections in a city of friends, rather than an identity-based framing? Is this possible? Or will the clash become a chasm? Martin Luther King called for such a framing. Not long after, he was shot.[59] What of solidarity?

Solidarity?

For Jürgen Habermas, notions of solidarity are essential for democratic living. So are difference, interdependence and commonality; each are "critical standard[s]" for modern living and "political life".[60] Yet, all too often, people are isolated from the process, left bowling alone.[61] Along the way, questions about difference and solidarity become complicated. "Ethnic diversity is increasing in most advanced countries," writes Robert Putnam, "driven mostly by sharp increases in immigration. In the long run immigration and diversity are likely to have important cultural, economic, fiscal, and developmental benefits. In the short run, however, immigration and ethnic diversity tend to reduce social solidarity and social capital." Many: "'hunker down'. Trust (even of one's own race) is lower, altruism and community cooperation rarer, friends fewer."[62] Yet, why are friends fewer, solidarity breaking down? Cycles of connection and separation ebb and flow. During Superstorm Sandy in Brooklyn, people came together. In other times, they are more separated, friends harder to find. Yet solidarity extends in countless directions, expanding and contracting. I see it in the streets, from Brooklyn to Berlin, where students from a seminar and I met to march in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and Georgia, struggling for freedom and autonomy, instead of conflict. I see it in women's marches calling for solidarity between movements for women in Afghanistan, Iran and the United States.

Many of us long for, and recognize a sense of mutual interconnection, a sense that our fates intertwine.[63] Yet, what creates solidarity in a Hobbesian world? For Craig Calhoun, mutual interdependence, common culture, social relations, communication and material culture are all ingredients. Still, "social solidarity— and its individual manifestation in a sense of belonging—is marginalized and…stigmatized."[64] Is there "is any place for culture or ethnicity in such theory except as the stigmatized other."[65]

There have been times when the answer was affirmative, when we feel solidarity across borders. "…there is no East, no West, no North, no South, but one great fellowship of love throughout the whole, wide world," said Nobel Laureate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr in his Sermon at the Marienkirche, East Berlin, September 13, 1964.[66] His was an expansive idea of interconnection and social solidarity. Today, "liberal theory" is "impoverished (despite repeated efforts to integrate more attention to participation and difference, both, in part, issues of social solidarity)."[67] Still, one could suggest King was trying to do just that.[68]

North, South, East, West, the struggles between intolerance and solidarity are many. Rich vs poor, wars and refugees, create continuous interacting dynamics.[69] Add to them problems of climate and inequality and tension increases.[70] What happened to Solidarity, Lech Walesa wondered, on the 30th anniversary of the Fall of the Wall in 2019. He reflected on the shifting legacy of the revolution in which he took part as a union organizer.

"We succeeded in eliminating this old division in the world. But then the question arose: What should happen next? How should the world develop?… We have not truly constructed anything new in the world…. One era has come to an end, and another one has not fully emerged. And we are in between…. The point is, we still don't trust each other after the old era…. [W]e need to be constructing something completely different. The question is, what?[71]

Still, gestures of solidarity can be found in countless places, in discos, shop windows, street signs, lit candles, even art galleries. Take the show in Berlin in January at Zionskirche:

"You Know That You Are Human" began as an exhibition of Ukrainian photographers…depicting human likeness in a diversity…. They remind us once again that despite the elusive monstrosity of war, every life counts."

Conclusion

What creates solidarity instead of conflict? It's a question for our times, for all times. Throughout this essay, we've explored ideas of reconciliation and recognition. How can we broaden notions of solidarity among those of different classes and cultures? Faced with difference, why isn't there more solidarity? The barriers are many, so are the contradictions. We see stories of displacement and community building.[72] We see cities of friends as well as riots. We struggle to see each other when facing expanding inequality and displacement? How can we see strangers as ourselves, instead of clashing and fighting? "Who keep us safe? We keep us safe," chant activists from Brooklyn to Berlin. We look out for each other, recognizing our interconnected, ever-differing needs and histories.[73] Still problems around climate, inequality, and refugees complicate the task, crisis after crisis.[74] We see "high energy prices in the name of solidarity," in Germany's sanctions with Russia.[75] Notions of solidarity as interconnection have long been with us; is it possible for these old ideas to be expanded into broader engagement between bodies and communities? After all, solidarity takes place in countless forms, from policies to poetry and protest. Looking at the streets from Brooklyn to Berlin, I see a lot of it. But I also see barriers. Solidarity, conflict and recognition—each are interlocked in a dialectic, ever connected and separate, independent and interdependent.[76] Our economic and social worlds require a closer recognition of each other; the planet compels it. Unfortunately, others feel separated from this, still bowling alone, resentment building, ever clashing with their friends and neighbors.

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REVIEW ESSAY: Dostoevsky as Political Agitator: Alex Chistofi, Dostoevsky in Love: An Intimate Life (London: Bloomsbury, 2022)

By | 2023: Vol. 22, No. 2

The notion of Fyodor Dostoevsky in familial life, as it were, is wonderfully explored in Christofi's book, published just about in time for his 200th anniversary of his birth, but, however entertaining, there really is little to be said definitively of the likely effects of his notions of kinship or even romance in his literary works. Nothing could be more secondary among his concerns. More to the bicentenarian point of reappraisal, Dostoevsky as a young man joined the radical Petrashevsky Circle whose founder was a follower of utopian socialist Charles Fourier. In 1849 Circle members were arrested and imprisonmmed. A large group, including Dostoevsky, were sentenced to death. As they stood waiting to be shot, a messenger interrupted proceedings with a reprieve. As part of a pre-planned and taunting deception, the Tsar prepared a letter commuting the death sentences to incarceration. Dostoevsky's eight-year sentence was later reduced to four. He returned from Siberia having abandoned the radical ideas of his youth, scornful of the Western enlightenment philosophies of rationalism and socialism. He became committed to the mystic populism of the Russian Orthodox church and to a reactionary Slavic nationalism, or so the familiar tale goes.

So why should radical leftists be interested in Dostoevsky, let alone his love life? The Marxist tradition, for one, stressed that authentic art can and does rise above the class standpoint of the artist. Whatever a talented writer's conscious beliefs, their work often contradicts their intent by revealing willy-nilly the true social reality. In 1888 Engels notably observed,

'Balzac, whom I consider a far greater master of realism than all the Zolas *passés présents et a venir*, in 'La Comédie Humaine' gives us a most wonderfully realistic history of French 'Society', especially of *le monde parisien*, describing… the progressive inroads of the rising bourgeoisie upon the society of nobles… the last remnants of this, to him, model society gradually succumbed before the intrusion of the vulgar monied upstart, or were corrupted by him… Balzac was politically a Legitimist; [and] his sympathies are all with the class doomed to extinction. But for all that, his satire is never keener, his irony ever bitterer, than when he sets in motion the very men and women with whom he sympathies most deeply – the nobles." [Engels, 1888, pp.479-480].

Dostoevsky's early work, with its dense, tense style, is heavily marked by the influence of Gogol's satirical realism. *Poor Folk* (1846) and *The Double* (1846) – also influenced by the sterner realism of Stendhal and Pushkin – are infused with denunciations against the plight of the poor. Dostoevsky's second novel, *The Double* (1846), still indebted to Gogol. recounts in an engaging expressive rhythm the story of Golyadkin, a government clerk obsessed with the suspicion that a fellow clerk has stolen his identity. An element of relished cruelty is clear in the humour poked at paranoid Golyadkin. [Mirsky, 1949, p.175]. That same year Dostoevsky published *Mr. Prokharchin*, closely related to *The Double,* a Dickensian story (without redemption) of a miser who accumulated a fortune while insistently living in a miserable slum.

Dostoevsky's middle period (1857-1863) features *The Manor of Stepanchikovo and its Inhabitants*, (*The Friend of the Family* in Constance Garnett's translation), (1859), *The Insulted and Injured* (1861) and *The House of the Dead* (1860-2). This batch ditches Gogol. Mirsky suggests, I think correctly, that *The Insulted and Injured* is "closely connected in style and tone with the French romantic novel of social compassion and with the later and less humorous novels of Dickens." T*he House of the Dead,* by contrast*,* recounts his debilitating Siberian servitude, with an underlying message of sympathy for fellow (and often unsympathetic) sufferers. The heartfelt theme is a tragic estrangement between the educated protagonist and the mass of uneducated convicts. Although sharing identical torments, he is rejected, an outcast by the fact of his social origin. Despite the immense cavalcade of cruelties recounted, the novel somehow manages to radiate an optimistic, idealistic spirit.

During Dostoevsky's first trip to Western Europe in 1863 he published *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*. There Dostoevsky exhorts Russians to reject the frilly enticements of European culture, asking pointedly what has become of the ideals of the French Revolution – liberte, egalite, fraternite? "…in the European nature, brotherhood is not present. Instead we find… a vigorous …self-assertion…" [Frank, 2010, p.372/*pisma*, 5,79 in Frank, 2010, pp. 379]. Dostoevsky here unfurls his Pan-Slavism, describing true (if geographically limited) brotherhood as found in the peasant *obshchina* (commune)*,* in which the land was administered democratically. The lauded individual does not, as in the West, demand exclusive rights but hands them over to the community, which reciprocates by granting him rights to protection and status. [Frank, 2010, p.380].

Dostoevsky's final period (1864-1880) consists of four great novels offering extraordinary combinations of psychological insight and, no less so, social critique. The memorable characters radiate quirky personal vitalities but are also supercharged with the electricity of subversive social ideas. Dostoevsky was said to have 'felt ideas' as others feel cold, heat and pain. *Notes From Underground* (1864), for instance, which is by no means purely imaginative literature, is on the face of it permeated with his ostensibly regressive vision of a messianic Slavophilism yet, in however crimped a fashion, conveys faith in the ultimate value of the human personality.

Several keynote concerns, adumbrating the ones above, run through his early works, *Poor Folk* and *The* Double, and continue through *Notes from Underground*, *Crime and*

Punishment (1866), *The Idiot* (1868-69), *The Possessed/The Demons* ((1871-72) and *The Brothers Karamazov* (1879-80): alienation from society, urban misery, the alluring compensatory idea of a superman, the power of 'goodness' linked to redemption through suffering, doubt wrestling with faith, the burden of free will, and finally his rather welcome rejection of nihilism. In his first masterpiece Dostoevsky introduces us to his anti-hero thus: "I am a sick man… I am an angry man. I am an unattractive man. I think there's something wrong with my liver." [*Notes from Underground*, 1972, p. 15]. The unnamed figure refuses to be noble or admirable or likeable – he is one of those oppressed, poverty-stricken, orphaned Bartleby-like clerks of mid-nineteenth century fiction. He is forty, a former government official, who inherited a small legacy and "withdrawn into a seedy 'corner', a poor apartment in the suburbs. He defiantly addresses us from 'beneath the floorboards'." Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment* embodies the aimless ambition and stark egoism at the heart of bourgeois ideology. He is the obvious heir of Rastignac in Balzac's *Pere Goriot* (1835) or Sorel in Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir* (1830), characters striving for social advancement in a world dominated by the mouldering slogan of the French Revolution – 'A Career Open to the Talents'. But he, like they, cannot help but overstep the mark. Raskolnikov eventually conducts what amounts to a self-incriminating experiment, and returns to the pawnbroker to listen again to the sound of the doorbell which terrified him after the murders. Similarly, in *Notes from Underground*, the protagonist confronts the prostitute Liza in order to test his will versus her feelings, but alienation and loneliness in both cases reduce the characters to a gratuitous and pointless struggle for superiority. [Lukacs, 1949, in Wellek, 1962, pp.150-1].

Here Balzac's conservative critique of capitalism via the paradigmatic figure of the miser was a striking influence too. Dostoevsky's novels are intense portraits of distorted individualism, with profoundly unappetizing characters pursuing objectives that only widen the already yawning gap separating them from their fellows. Smetona accurately argues that Dostoevsky deepens Balzac's materialist analysis with an acute psychological dimension. *Eugenie Grandet* was Balzac's unwitting description of reification, whereby the commodity form permeates social relations, becoming for members of society their "second nature." Lukacs indeed comments that so-called "freedom … of the egoist, of the man who cuts himself off from others, a freedom for which solidarity and community exist at best only as ineffectual 'regulative ideas' (hypothetical ideas). To wish to breathe life into this freedom means in practice the renunciation of real freedom." [Lukacs, 1968/1971, p.315].

In *Notes from Underground* a vivid and abrupt instance of reification occurs when the scruffy narrator unknowingly blocks the way of an imperious officer: "He took me by the shoulders and silently – with no warning or explanation – moved me from the place where I stood to another; then he walked past as if he hadn't even seen me." Raskolnikov does give money to others whom he perceives as poorer than he (as he might well have viewed the *Notes from Underground* narrator) so he retained the saving grace to relate to some others in a non-commodified spirit. This modest trait distinguishes him markedly from Rastignac and from Luzhin, his sister's miserly and narrow-minded fiancé. Dostoevsky is dissecting a society in the process of dissolution, recording the distortion of human relations in a decaying semi-feudal despotism, mostly within Saint Petersburg

In the epistolary novel *Poor Folk*, Devushkin, an indigent clerk, fantasises idly about becoming a writer and yearns for a young seamstress Varvara. A wealthy merchant proposes to Varvara and dispatches her to a distant manor while the spurned clerk sedates his misery with alcohol. Straitened circumstances and lack of self-esteem leads both Devushkin and Varvara into a fatal dependence on unconcerned authorities, which causes their destructions – hardly an anodyne or apolitical theme. *Crime and Punishment* saturates us the dark streets of Saint Petersburg, its bars, squalid tenements, paper-thin walls, unlit stoves, fetid stairwells. It is a diseased place afflicted by fevers, suicides, street accidents and random violence – altogether an external nightmare matching the worst internal one. The once genteel Marmeladov family are brought to grief by the father's alcoholism. His daughter becomes a prostitute in order to feed the family. Raskolnikov, the egotistical isolate, is drawn into their world, imagining he can redress their wrongs. Not for nothing, Lukacs described Dostoevsky as "the first and greatest poet of the modern capitalist metropolis… in drawing the mental deformations that are brought about as a social necessity by life in a modern city." [Lukacs, 1943, in Wellek (ed.), 1962, p.153].

Raskolnikov considers himself well above this world of dementing degradation, separated from it by his haughty Napoleonic qualities. He is angry, bored, rootless and has no social role, but he believes in his right to defy conventional law and morality and to live by a superior private morality. His own family is heavily in debt and, in order to save the family his sister Dunya is considering a loveless marriage to a vicious employer. Raskolnikov decides to murder an old woman moneylender whose existence seems worthless. The pawnbroker also is the (extremely petty) bourgeois enemy who symbolises upper class greed. However, his inability to follow through with his Nietzschean 'will to power' makes him a failed 'Ubermensch' who succumbs to a simpering Christian redemption. [Sanacore, 2015, p.3].

In *The Possessed*/*The Devils*, by contrast, Stavrogin is a charismatic but narcissistic imposter who aspires to great heights. He commits an 'outrage' against Pyotr Gagnov, an elderly man of high rank and also passionately kisses the wife of Liputin, a steward at a literary matinee. Summoned by a distant relative, a provincial governor, he bites the governor's ear. "All these incidents exemplify Stavrogin's rejection of any internal or external restraints on the absolute autonomy of his self-will" – a clear affinity with the character of Raskolnikov. However, whereas Raskolnikov achieved redemption, "everything that stems from Stavrogin is… marked with the seal of supreme falsity and deception and leads to death." [Frank, 2010, pp. 651,652].

Dostoevsky provides us with antidotes to the foregoing obnoxious protagonists in Prince Myshkin in *The Idiot*, and in Alyosha in *The Brothers Karamazov*. The title of *The Idiot* is an ironic reference to Prince Myshkin, a young man whose goodness, open-hearted simplicity and guilelessness lead more worldly characters to mistakenly assume that he lacks intelligence and insight, that he is an idiot. Whereas Raskolnikov is the individualistic rebel who rationalizes his right to be a 'superman', Myshkin represents an ardent surrender to non-rational, supra-individual values. His naïve, child-like wisdom transcends ordinary intelligence. He obeys certain higher intuitions and is of such goodness that even those who laugh at him are compelled to admire him as a superior if unfathomable being.

Myshkin's saintly character nevertheless causes interesting ructions. He is always ready to take the blame for the sins of others, a traditional saintly service. The result is to drive his sinful fellow-creatures to more desperate crimes, and so in effect but not intention he becomes a horrid moral hazard. Myshkin's destructive quality emerges precisely from his meekness: others constantly feel judged, given that he doesn't miss their slightest failings. He arouses aggression by appearing morally above them, thus intensifying their guilt while depriving them of the opportunity to expiate their own sins. Rogozhin, inheritor of a vast fortune, at first likes Myshkin but soon feels hatred and jealousy towards him. Nastasya Filippovna, the main female protagonist, is beautiful and intelligent but fierce and mocking. Of noble birth, but orphaned at seven, she was manipulated into sexual servitude by her guardian Totsky. Her 'broken innocence', her cynicism and feelings of disgrace have produced a highly emotional and destructive personality. Myshkin is moved by her beauty and suffering, and, despite sensing that she is a bit mad, is devoted to her. She is torn between Myshkin's compassion and Rogozhin's obsession with her. Myshkin fully realises that she degrades herself in order to avenge herself on him for setting himself up in his saintliness. The distraught Nastasya runs away and is murdered by Rogozhin, Myshkin's friend. Myshkin's sanity is now at risk. Dostoevsky with brutal human logic poses the question 'what is goodness?' The not so tidy answer, as Rossanda put it, "to give oneself totally to the other. To put the other first. The prince … feels an infinite compassion" [NLR 84, Nov/Dec 2002, pp.103-4].

Raskolnikov's inner world, on the other hand, is a maelstrom of doubts, delirium, fear and despair. His guilt hits a point where punishment is less terrible than the stress of avoiding it. The detective sizes up Raskolnikov as the killer and, reckoning that guilt-ridden criminals undergo mental tortures, is sure he will confess or go mad. Raskolnikov confesses is committed instead to eight years' hard labour. Sonya moves to the nearest town, visiting him regularly. Sonya is one of Dostoevsky's fundamental characters, "the 'meek' witness to the need for confession and redemption." [Bradbury, 1988, p. 50]. Raskolnikov wants to convince her of his ideology of domination, but it is to her that he fesses up that in killing the moneylender he has killed himself. Raskolnikov realises that he truly loves Sonya and expresses real remorse.

The Brothers Karamazov is Dostoevsky's last and perhaps greatest work, roiling with free will, God, and morality, and is a wiser continuation of the Raskolnikov versus Myshkin counterpoints. The action takes place in the provinces, in the Karamazov household, whose head is a libidinous old rake who lives to satisfy his animal lust. His crude personality assumes in three sons different, more complex and refined aspects. Dimitri, the eldest, is as irresponsibly impulsive as his father but his emotional chaos covers a warm and generous heart. Ivan is another Raskolnikov, in whom passion has been channelled into a one-sidedly intellectual or ultra-rationalist route. Alyosha is a Myshkin, concerned, as he is, to benefit his fellow-creatures. An 'illegitimate' half-brother, Smerdyakov is a servant of the elder Karamazov.

The plot revolves the rivalry between the father and his eldest son Dimitri who threatened to kill him because of his advances to Grushenka with whom he is in love. Ivan too hates his father and wishes him dead for his own reasons. So does Smerdyakov who covets the old man's

secret money hoard. On the surface Ivan and Smerdyakov are as different as can be, yet at an unconscious level they have much in common. Ivan, only half-aware of what he's doing, entices Smerdyakov to murder their father with which Raskolnikovian view that 'everything is permitted, all things are lawful.' Smerdyakov murders old Karamazov so cunningly that suspicion falls on Dimitri who is jailed and there undergoes a radical transformation (as does his capricious girl-friend Grushenka). Ivan denounces himself as the instigator of the crime. Like Raskolnikov, he must see 'the devil in his own soul' before he could be reborn. Smerdyakov's vacuous justification 'all things are permitted' ultimately terrifies him and he commits suicide. At the other end of the spectrum of 'good and evil', of individualism versus solidarity, is youngest brother Alyosha, a novice monk, and his father figure mentor, Father Zossima who recalls his youth before he entered the monastery: "Why, the isolation that prevails everywhere, above all in our age – it has not… reached its limit yet. For everyone strives to keep his individuality as apart as possible, wishes to secure the greatest possible fullness of life for himself; but meantime all his efforts result not in attaining fullness of life but in self-destruction, for instead of self-realisation he ends by arriving at complete solitude… each one holds aloof… and he ends by being repelled by others and repelling them. He heaps up riches by himself and thinks, 'How strong I am now and how secure', and in his madness he does not understand that the more he heaps up, the more he sinks into self-destructive impotence… in these days, men have, in their mockery, ceased to understand that the true security is to be found in social solidarity rather than in isolated individual effort." [Dostoevsky, 1912, pp. 314-5]. Can one think of a stronger indictment of capitalist society?

In their psychic interiors Freud pointed out that three masterpieces of world literature involved parricide: *Oedipus Rex*, *Hamlet* (step-paricide?) and *Brothers Karamazov*. Moreover, the motive for the crime is rivalry for a woman. In the Russian novel the murderer has the same relationship to the murdered man as the hero, Dimitri, and it is noteworthy that Dostoevsky conferred on Smeryakov his own illness, epilepsy. [Freud in Wellek, 1962, p.107]. Freud argues it is unimportant who actually committed the crime, "psychology is only concerned to know who desired it emotionally and who welcomed it when it was done." Father Zossima realises that Dimitri is prepared to commit parricide and he bows to him. The holy man rejects the temptation to despise the murderer and, therefore, humbles himself. For Dostoevsky, a criminal is almost a Redeemer, someone who has "taken on the guilt which must else have been borne by others." [Freud in Wellek, 1962, p. 108]. Freud argues that any murderer has boundless egoism and a strong destructive urge, which share one necessary condition – the absence of love and a lack of emotional appreciation of human objects. Dostoevsky in his own conduct evidenced "his great need of love and his enormous capacity for love… seen in manifestations of exaggerated kindness and caused him to love and to help where he had a right to hate and to be revengeful, as, for example, in his relations with his first wife and her lover." [Freud in Wellek, 1962, p.99].

In *The Possessed/The Demons,* Dostoevsky explores atheism as the root of Russia's deepening social and moral problems. The Russian has lost their true national identity, inextricably bound up for Dostoevsky with Orthodox Christianity. They attempt to fill the void vainly with Western modes of thought: atheism, Catholicism, rationalism, socialism, etc. In 1870 Dostoevsky wrote

to the poet Apollon Maikov: “a man who loses his people and his national roots also loses the faith of his fathers and his God.” [in Frank, 2010, p.607]. He also compares the ‘Russian Man’, referring to the sophisticated aristocratic Nikolai Stavrogin as well as Stavrogin’s tutor, to the man healed by Jesus in the parable of the Gadarene swine. Stavrogin is riven by contradictions. He had inspired the engineer Kirillov with an atheistic humanism and, on the other hand, he inspired Shatov with Slavophilism. Dostoevsky depicts the struggle between his worldly self-possession on the one hand and the self-revelation of the suffering soul on the other. He molests the ten-year old daughter of neighbours who subsequently hanged herself. [Dostoevsky, trans. Cockrell, 2017, pp.427-428, 433]. He is afflicted with a vision of the girl “shaking her head and brandishing her tiny little fist at me.” Stavrogin “is a victim of the famous *mal de siecle,* the all-engulfing *ennui* that haunts the literature of the first half of the nineteenth century and is invariably depicted as resulting from the loss of religious faith.” [Frank, 2010, pp. 660-1].

Stepan Trofimovitch Verkhovensky and his son Pyotr Stepanovitch Verkhovensky exemplify successive generations of radical opposition to Tsarist autocracy – Stepan representing the liberals of the 1840s, Pyotr the nihilists or anarchists of the 1860s. Dosteovsky’s portrayal of the conspirators depicts them as idealistic but incompetent revolutionary dilettantes. The nihilist Pyotr relishes Stavrogin’s amoral, power-seeking cynicism while Shatov, the son of a wealthy landowner’s valet, abandoned his former socialist convictions and turned to Russia’s Christian heritage. In one scene Pyotr pleads with Stavrogin to join his cause, which aims at destroying the existing order and seizing power. “You treat everyone as an equal, and yet everyone is afraid of you – that’s good… An aristocrat is irresistible when he goes in for democracy! To sacrifice life, your own or another’s, is nothing to you. You are just the man that’s needed… I am a scoundrel, of course, and not a socialist.” [Dostoevsky, Garnett translation, 2014, pp. 380-1]. Verkhovensky compares himself to Columbus and Stavrogin to America. “…the whole gimcrack show will fall to the ground, and then we shall consider how to build up an edifice of stone…We are going to build it, we, and only we.” [Dostoevsky, Garnett translation, 1914, p.384].

Interestingly, workers from the nearby factory mount a protest about pay and working conditions, but the ‘radicals’ pay no attention. Earlier, Stavrogin inanely complained: “What a pity there’s no proletariat! But there will be…” [Dostoevsky Garnett translation, 1914, pp 381-2]. The novel presents a self-appointed elite bent on destroying the existing power without a vision of a genuine democratic alternative. As Trotsky famously put it: “an anarchist is a liberal with a bomb in his hand.” If the alternatives to the existing order were Stepan, Pyotr and Stavrogin, it is no wonder Dostoevsky had scant faith in their capacity to build an alternative society. When Dostoevsky died in 1881, the Russian working class was nowhere near the point of representing a potential alternative ruling class.

The contemporaneous reign of Alexander II (1855–81), it is worth noting, was marked by significant reforms, the most important being the emancipation of the serfs in 1861. The measure was part of a strategy to modernise Russia and catch up with Western Europe in the aftermath of Russia’s disastrous military performance in the Crimean War. Towards the Jews

he adopted a milder policy to achieve assimilation. Alexander II repealed the severest of his father's antisemitic decrees, granting various rights — importantly, the right of residence — to 'useful' Jews, including wealthy merchants and medical personnel. Their growing influence in Russian society aroused a sharp reaction, including among distinguished intellectuals, such as Dostoevsky. The Jews were accused of maintaining 'a state within a state' and of 'exploiting' Russian masses. Even the blood libel was rolled out again. The anti-Jewish movement strengthened, especially after the Balkan War (1877–78), when Slavophile nationalism swept Russian society. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, the father travels to Odessa where he meets "a lot of low Jews, Jewesses and Jewkins… he developed a peculiar faculty for making and hoarding money." [Dostoevsky, 1912, p.17]. In *The Devils*, Shatov tells Stavrogin that "A nation can only be a nation so long as it has its own special God and ruthlessly excludes all other gods on this earth… The Jews lived only in expectation of their true God, and left the true God to the world." Dostoevsky seems, therefore, to suggest that Russia's messianic idea owes a debt to Judaism. [Dostoevsky, Cockrell translation, 2017, p.243, in Carver, 1996]. Dostoevsky denied that he was antisemitic, for what that's worth.

George Steiner suggested that the nineteenth century brought forth in Dostoevsky 'one of the great masters of tragic drama'. Steiner quotes Vyacheslav Ivanov who declared Dostoevsky the Russian Shakespeare. [Steiner, 1959, p. 133]. Irving Howe argued that part of Dostoevsky's greatness lay in the fact that no character is allowed undisputed domination of the novel. For him, Dostoevsky is "the greatest of all ideological novelists because he always distributes his feeling of identification among all his characters." [Howe in Wellek, 1962, p. 70]. For Bakhtin the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels is a "plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices." [Bakhtin, 1984, pp. 6-7]. Dostoevsky's novels were bound to no preconceived frameworkh. Rather, the latter's function is to highlight the self-consciousness of the characters, each participating in their own voice, according to their own ideas about themselves and the world. [Bakhtin, 1929/1984, pp.6-7, 34]. Bakhtin also argues that polyphony is an epiphenomenon of capitalist modernity. "The polyphonic novel could indeed have been realised only in the capitalist era. The most favourable soil for it was moreover precisely in Russia, where capitalism set in almost catastrophically, and where it came upon an untouched multitude of diverse worlds and social groups which had not been weakened in their individual isolation, as in the West, by the gradual encroachment of capitalism." [Bakhtin, 1929/1984, p.19-20].[1]

One is reminded of Trotsky's theory of 'combined and uneven development' as applied to Tsarist society: an older and less developed society would adopt parts of the culture of a more developed, or more modern society; also, cultural practices, institutions, traditions and ways of life belonging to both old and new epochs and phases of human history were combined, juxtaposed and linked together in a rather unusual way within a single, especially a less-developed country. Sarah Young analysed the manner in which Dostoevsky's narrators create aambiguity and uncertainty through the use of 'as if' phrases. These create an atmosphere of unreality and 'introduce the imaginative dimension that underlies all fiction'. [Young, Modern Languages Open, 2018].

Mirsky notes that however imbued Dostoevsky's novels are with philosophical ideas, they are also works of mystery and suspense. His readers are familiar with the protracted mystery of the murder of old Karamazov and the magisistrate's cat-and-mouse game with Raskolnikov. In *The Idiot*, there is a deliberate absence of description of the lives of Prince Myshkin, Rogozhin and Nastasya Filipovna between parts one and two, and to be exposed at a key moment. Through such devices Dostoevsky creates dramatic tension. As Young puts it: "the coexistence of radical opposites within man forms the foundation for Dostoevsky's dramatization of the 'accursed questions' of faith and doubt." His work bypasses the 'normal', favouring "the extremes of human experience and behaviour, and develops an experimental style that contrasts sharply with the realism of his contemporaries Leo Tolstoy and Ivan Turgenev" [Young, 2012, p.2]. Similarly, abject poverty and obscene wealth co-exist side by side and "the socially disadvantaged rub shoulders with their exploiters in taverns and slums, monasteries and society salons." [Young, 2012, p.2].

Like Andy Merrifield, I contend that Dostoevsky illuminates an important aspect of contemporary politics: the revival of the kind of demagogic chauvinism. Unscrupulous political leaders are stoking nationalism. "Borders are getting staked out, walls set to go up, closing in on us, keeping people in as well as out." The Tory claim that Brexit would save the NHS £350 a year or Trump's pledge to make America great again became 'mood-music' for millions of people. Politicians have no doubt always lied, 'post-truth' has always been their bread and butter, but what appears to be new is our willingness to believe them. Merrifield argues *Brothers Karamazov* has the strongest contemporary ring. The crucial scene is 'The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor,' harking back to sixteenth century Seville during the Inquisition, when a humanistic Jesus inadvisedly returns. His concern is freedom of conscience and he is therefore regarded as a subversive, a dangerous threat to the social order. He is condemned to be burnt the following day. At midnight, the Inquisitor visits him. "Now, today," he says, "people are persuaded that they are freer than ever before, yet they have brought their freedom to us and laid it humbly at our feet. We don't need somebody like You here, he says, promising them real freedom. It doesn't take much to control people's consciences, the Inquisitor says. Promise them bread and they'll gladly give up their freedom. They'll throw themselves to the mercy of 'three powers that are able to hold them captive, a reactionary trinity of 'miracle, mystery and authority'. Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor emerges as a prophet of fascist and totalitarian movements. The parable resonates and is no longer religious but secular. The main source of the trinity is not the church but the state. Our leaders promise seduce the people by offering them a particular national identity which turns out to be nothing but 'manufactured bigotry'. At the end of the parable, Alyosha wonders if the parable is just a sick joke, but, says Merrifield, "with Nigel Farage lurking… it's no laughing matter." [Merrifield, *Marx at His Limits*, posted 22nd May, 2019].

Conclusion

Is Dostoevsky an irredeemable Slavophile nationalist? Decidedly not. One detects at a deeper level than the skin a pressing universal call for liberation. In his valedictory speech at the unveiling of a Pushkin monument, Dostoevsky tellingly declared: "the destiny of a Russian is

pan-European and universal. To become a true Russian… means only to become the brother of all men, to become, if you will, *a universal man*… our destiny is universality, won not by the sword, but by the strength of brotherhood and our fraternal aspiration to reunite mankind."

Dostoevsky, almost despite himself, pleads for liberation from the alienation of then nascent Russian capitalism. Humankind's unhappiness and 'divided soul', our pride, and also our shame flow from a lack of faith, but this overtly reactionary diagnosis ultimately stems from the absence of a society based on human solidarity. Capitalist modernity has driven individualism to the point where unbridled desires threaten an utter social breakdown. Dostoevsky's overt solution is a subordination to religious authority, to reject modernity, and to recover the traditions of the misty and supposedly golden Slavic past. Nevertheless, what is important for Dostoevsky is to reassert humankind's social nature. However backward his expressed political beliefs, the world of his characters dissolves everything objectionable into chaos and "this chaos itself is great in Dostoevsky: his powerful protest against everything false and distorting in modern bourgeois society." [Lukacs, 1943/1962, p. 158]. In the end, the artist trumps the reactionary thinker – and then some. Dostoevsky identifies with the woeful underdog, never the overlord, and steadfastly believes human beings of all classes, despite immense obstacles, can overcome their dark, destructive sides. Dostoevsky remains a revolutionary novelist, one capable of inspiring democratic socialists fighting today to rid the world of racism, misogyny, class exploitation, climate change and other cumulative crises that late capitalism heaps upon us. Christofi must be thanked nonetheless for reminding us of the intimate family currents that ran through his life and writing.

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[1] I am grateful to Professor Galin Tihanov for pointing this out. His book *The Master and the Slave: Lukács, Bakhtin, and the Ideas of Their Time* contains a highly interesting analysis of Lukacs and Bakhtin.

Susan Neiman, Left Is Not Woke. New York: Polity Press, 2023

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The philosopher Susan Neiman, after professorships at Yale University and Tel Aviv University, has been director of the Einstein Forum in Potsdam for 23 years. At the beginning of her new book, “Left Is Not Woke”, she makes it clear where she is coming from and what her concern is: “I was raised in Georgia during the Civil Rights Movement and turned left from there. At a time when even ‘liberal’ is often a slur in American culture, it’s easy to forget that ‘socialist’ was once a perfectly respectable political position in the land of the free. None other than Albert Einstein wrote a proud defense of socialism at the height of the Cold War. Like Einstein and so many others, I’m happy to be called leftist and socialist.”[1] These sentences open a brilliant philosophical manifesto that not only invites intellectual reflection; even more importantly, it calls for a renewal of leftist thought and action. This wake-up call for the left includes, after an introduction, three thought-provoking chapters on “Universalism and Tribalism”, “Justice and Power” and “Progress and Doom” and a conclusion. In a moving word of thanks, the author remembers her longtime friend and dialogue partner, Todd Gitlin, who died in 2022, one of the leading minds of the intellectual New Left. Like all of Susan Neiman’s books, “Left Is Not Woke” is written in clear, gripping language that engages the reader, yet never descends to agitprop.

In accordance with trends that Susan Neiman critiques here, only those who are “woke” may count themselves on the left. But the author is not prepared to leave the word “left” to those who call themselves “woke” and derive their political position primarily from what they are and not from what they want. Yet many who define themselves as “woke” pursue goals that she herself also shares, as Neiman points out. These include the struggle for social equality, against racial and sexual oppression, the struggle against colonialism, and a distinction between justice and power. However, these values – and this is the central thesis of her book – can only be preserved and defended if they are waged with the right theoretical assumptions.

“Woke” thinking, Susan Neiman argues, has abandoned the core ideas that all leftists should hold. At a time when authoritarian nationalist movements are on the rise on every continent, don’t we have more pressing problems than worrying about the right theory? she asks. “But it’s not small differences that separate me from those who are woke. These are not only matters of style or tone; they go to the very heart of what it means to stand on the left. The right may be more dangerous, but today’s left has deprived itself of the ideas we need if we hope to resist the lurch of the right.” (p. 3)

This requires a solidarity of people that opposes pessimism about history as well as the philosophically dressed up justification of an unrestrained individualism. The author, who has been studying the thought and the history of Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment for decades, makes it clear that her political opponents are not the followers of woke ideology, whom she hopes to reach, but the well-organized radical right. She emphasizes that the intellectual roots and resources of "Wokism" are at odds with the ideas that have guided the left for more than 200 years: a commitment to universalism, a hard distinction between justice and power, and a firm belief in the possibility – albeit not the inevitability – of progress.

Neiman shows this in the reinterpretation of the term "woke." It was first used by the blues singer Leadbelly (Huddie Ledbetter) in 1938 in a song dedicated to the support of nine African Americans jailed and threatened with execution under flimsy pretexts, the so-called "Scottsboro Boys". However, the original solidarity between Blacks and Whites, that had marked the early civil rights movement, began to fray in the mid-1960s. There were many reasons for this to which both sides contributed. Decades later Stokely Carmichael regretted his exclusion of white civil right workers from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC – the reference to nonviolence was then deleted) as his greatest political mistake. Today Neiman fears that the Woke movement is making similar mistakes.

What seems important to this reviewer is the world-historical caesura of 1989-1991. After the collapse of Soviet communism, the right proclaimed the end of all forms of socialism, and even of history. Leftists who had become ideologically homeless sought new ideas. The most important of these ideas, "Wokism", emerged in the following decades as a form of identity politics that emphasized ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation as the most important – and increasingly the only – central features of individual and collective self-understanding. Susan Neiman calls such an attitude tribalism – and points out that tribalism is central to the increasingly radical right policies of the Israeli government (see p. 19).

Recognizing that the Western working class failed to fulfill so far the historical mission attributed to them by Marxists and overthrow capitalism by revolution, many adherents of "woke" ideology have concluded that the working class is the problem. Dismissively referred to as "old white men", these working people were hostile to women and minorities, did not understand that one could choose one's own gender, and clung to old ideas of labor and class struggles now denounced as outmoded and patriarchal. But the "Wokists", in their radical and other-exclusionary rhetoric, do not understand, as Neiman argues, that historical tasks do not disappear simply because the class that seemed called to solve them was unable to do so up to now.

Susan Neiman exposes this view as ultimately historical fatalism and counters it with a perspective that leads to action. It is necessary to forge a new community of solidarity, to counter the right-wing offensive through the unity of all who are committed for progressive changes.

As the foundation of this thinking, Susan Neiman highlights the intellectual heritage of the

classical Enlightenment. She draws on thoughts from her earlier books, such as “Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy” (2002) or “Moral Clarity: A Guide for Grown-Up Idealists” (2008), not at least “Learning from the Germans” (2019). In its struggle against religious dogma, the Enlightenment sought to encourage people to self-determination. Among the supporters of woke ideology, it has instead become common to denounce the Enlightenment as racist, Eurocentric, and colonialist. In fact, Neiman shows how they – from Diderot to Kant – advocated the dignity and liberation of colonially oppressed peoples. Enlightenment thinkers were the first to formulate a critique of Eurocentrism as well as colonialism, to establish the idea of universalism and the state guarantee of human rights. Susan Neiman’s expositions, rich in ideas and material, are a treasure trove for anyone interested in philosophy and the history of ideas.

The rejection of ideas of the Enlightenment as well as the ignorance of socialism’s history leads, as the author shows, to the relativization of the rights of each individual and to the worship of power. She shows this by discussing two counter-Enlightenment thinkers who are still very influential today: Carl Schmitt and Michel Foucault. As different as the works of the legal theorist and the philosopher were from each other, both sought to undermine the ideas of justice and progress.All progress is power-centered and obeys the categories of friend and foe (Schmitt) or is merely illusory, leading to more subtle forms of domination (Foucault). Neiman shows that both Schmitt and Foucault consider power as the only basis and guarantee of success of human action. Supported by the pseudo-scientific claims of evolutionary psychology, these views combine to create a suspicion of the very notion of value – the default position of culture today.

With its attention to the rights of minorities and its righteous anger against their disadvantages, Wokism, according to Neiman, has focused attention on crucial problems. But its tribalism with its ethnicization of social issues undermines the foundations of solidarity needed to guide left-wing politics and comes alarmingly close to Social Darwinism.

The problem arises precisely in the context of the Black Lives Matter movement. “What interest led millions of white people into plague-threatened streets to shout, ‘Black Lives Matter’? This was no alliance but a commitment to universal justice. To divide members of a movement into allies and others undermines the bases of deep solidarity, and destroys what standing left means.” (p. 31) Soon, however, many declared that this was about black identity politics, with whites being allies at best. “I’m not an ally,” Neiman pointed out. (ibid.) An ally represents interests that temporarily coincide with his or her own, but does not fundamentally advocate the same principles. Tribalism, however, as it did in the 1960s, is destroying the foundations of common struggle among Blacks, Whites, and other groups. Unconditional solidarity, regardless of the origin of all those involved, is incompatible with any identity politics. Of course, reflection on one’s identity in the name of freedom, equality and justice can help the struggle for a better future for all people. Thus, Jewish underground fighters in Poland, Tito’s People’s Liberation Army, the German Socialists and Communists in the concentration camps or Soviet, French and Italian partisans gave their lives for the liberation struggle of their own peoples – and how many at the same time represented and defended the

idea of socialist internationalism! This is equally true of Africans and Arabs who served in the army of Free France against fascism – and who were then excluded from the victory parade on the Champs-Élysées.

The problems dealt with in the book came to light with frightening topicality in early 2023. On January 7 of the year, five police officers in Memphis, Tennessee beat young Tyre Nichols so badly that he died in the hospital as a result of the violence. It was another tragic low point in an endless series of police killings.

All five police officers, like their victim, were African American. This suggests that, like every other social evil under capitalism, police violence is at its core a class issue. The number of Blacks and Hispanics killed by police is disproportionately high, but overall, more Whites than Blacks or Hispanics die today from police violence. As oppressive as the problem of racism is in this regard, it nevertheless plays a secondary role compared to the class issue. Police are recruited primarily from the poorest, most backward segments of the population; White Supremacists often call the shots in police departments. Most victims of police violence, on the other hand, are members of the working class. Racism has always been a tool used by the rulers to divide and pit workers against each other. Unwittingly, the "woke" intelligentsia plays into this game. What changes in the conditions of social inequality when capitalists experienced in power applaud the hoisting of the rainbow color flag? As the philosopher Olúfémi O. Táíwò has pointed out in "Elite Capture", such gestures get far more media attention than arguments of those leftists concerned with the nature of power and its mechanisms (see pp. 51-52).

Susan Neiman's book, written in forceful language, leads the reviewer to such questions. It is the passionate plea for an agenda that brings together people of diverse backgrounds and experience in the struggle for the universal values of the Enlightenment. Today, the conclusion of her work suggests, a democratic socialism stands for these values (after Stalinism sought to realize a pseudo-socialism without freedom). However, Neiman's implicit message is that it is also important to win over people to the struggle for these supra-temporal values who do not or do only hesitantly see themselves as socialists. The right cultivates its own pseudo-internationalism: it is very effectively creating networks across countries and continents, from Donald Trump and his ilk to the "Alternative for Germany", the AfD. For this very reason, Susan Neiman writes, it is necessary to learn lessons from history, not least lessons from what Brecht called the resistible rise of German fascism: "Had the left-wing parties been willing to form a united front, as thinkers from Einstein to Trotsky urged, the world could have been spared the worst war." (p. 143) The contradictions between the hostile Communists and Social Democrats had been all too real and even marked by bloody conflicts between them. "But though the Stalinist Communist Party couldn't see it, those differences paled next to the difference between universalist leftist movements and the tribal vision of fascism. We cannot afford a similar mistake." (ibid.)

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Bob Dylan, The Philosophy of Modern Song (New York: Simon & Schuster 2022)

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Somewhere in the yawning archives of WFMT Radio in Chicago is an ancient tape recording of a Bob Zimmerman/Dylan interview with the estimable Studs Terkel, which is utterly, inevitably, charmingly and teasingly fabricated. The encounter with the unfailingly genial Studs disclosed a rich fantasy life as told by Dylan's painstakingly constructed imaginary persona, flourishing all the folk and hipster themes he carefully absorbed in his early years. Ever after, he was to refine this tendency, defining himself archetypally as a footloose "jokerman," ever eluding the enveloping forces of conformity. The hot dusty road was not just a way out of the old Midwestern home town, it served as dramatic backdrop for the man's endless self-mythologizing.

Dylan was born in Hibbing, Minnesota, a tough working town, and the vicinity of one of the largest open-pit iron ore mines anywhere. He hails from Turkish Jews who somehow wound up in the wilderness of Northern Minnesota. His father sold repurposed goods to the good working people of the town. Dylan in his childhood was spurred on – nay, obsessed with – the music he heard on the radio, signals from another and more alluring world. He washes out at the University of Minnesota after a year and hitchhikes on a bohemian mission to New York. Arriving in the ferment of the Village, he was, as the song says, a complete unknown, but he was not altogether without a direction home.

He devours Kerouac's *On the Road* in 1957 and soon seeks out and encounters some of the Beats, Ginsberg chief among them. While at college he meets Paul Nelson of *The Little Sandy Review*, who possessed one of the great folk record collections, and he absorbs much of it. This cache sparks his Woody Guthrie obsession, which in turn adds a bit of heft to his nonstop legend-building exercise as an heir apparent to the Dust Bowl bard. Yet, at the same time, there has always been something rather gnome-like about Dylan. Early black-and-white photos disclose the face of a born Hasidic scholar, cheerfully "chained to the Torah." He later does read Martin Buber's magnificent Hasidic tales, which so fascinated Kafka, and quotes from the Hasidic parable, "The Seven Things You Can Learn from a Thief." The Hasidic tendency puts him squarely in the tradition of rabbinical commentary, giving shape to the spiritual urges which improbably lead to evangelical Christianity at one point, which he seems to have abandoned or gone quiet about.

Mr. Dylan in his professional musician persona- a performer on an "endless" tour-will end with his demise (with his boots on.) Such an exit would be happily consistent with the myth Dylan

created and continues to nurture. Our Nobel Prize winner prophet, who protests too much that he never wanted to be one, has written another book- though the word “written” may be stretching things a bit: *The Philosophy of Modern Song* comes in at a cool 45 dollars, and for the incorrigible fan there was a first purchase edition featuring Dylan’s autograph, initially using a mechanical signature device until people paying hundreds of dollars for a bogus autographed book complained, and the book’s were withdrawn and returned and Dylan may have actually been forced to sign them, for real. Woody Guthrie, that Okie Stalinist, who died in a State Hospital penniless must be spinning in his hero’s grave.

The book opens with a vague tribute to Doc Pomus the producer-lyricist-record business legend. The author then obligatorily thanks those “who did the right things at the right time” so that he could hear their works. Here is a man long acclimated to receiving paid help of the best kind. The songs covered, ad commented upon, range from *Detroit City* to *Viva Las Vegas* to the Fugs *CIA man*. It’s a decidedly mixed bag but at various points the book waxes mystical, spiritual, and sometimes just purely banal and bored takes on lyrics and music. Mention is made of Ricky Nelson, who died touring, having migrated from family TV (his entire family were the show) to Rock sainthood, and whose songs were aided and abetted by the legendary James Burton on guitar. Even Vic Damone, the heart-throb crooner of decades back, gets treated to some appreciative words.

If you were to be uninspired by Dylan’s prose on all and sundry, the book is interlaced and larded over with a tremendous array of photos and graphic images. The pix range from old sheet music covers to FSA style photos to graphic ad man fodder, to a glossy of Pete Seeger’s “Knee Deep in the Big Muddy” (a song angrily lamenting abuse based on a boot camp tragedy in which recruits ill-led, and dead that also was infamously applied in time to characterize LBJ’s plight regarding Vietnam)

Dylan quotes some wag saying, “Sinatra was a thug transformed into a poet” but also himself opines sensibly enough that Johnny Cash had higher lyrical stakes to deal with, “life and death.” Yes much of this is hyperbole, but who can wrestle with the fact that all that radio, all that rock, all that showbiz, all that advertised myth got the kid out of Hibbing, long, long ago. He never looked back, and when it comes to this big heaping piece of celebrity bling – fobbed off as a toe of insights – neither should you.

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John Nichols, I Got Mine: Confessions of a Midlist Writer (Albuquerque: High Road Books, 2022)

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Novelist and screenwriter John Nichols, a staunch but wonderfully wry leftist, is best known for the comedic laid-back subversive prose style of *The Milagro Bean Field War*, later made into Robert Redford's second film (after *Ordinary Peop*le) as director. But even that illustrious novel only forms the opening salvo of what became the "New Mexico trilogy", including what I regard as a 20th Century American masterpiece *The Magic Journey* – a gringo magical surrealist rendition of the implacable coming of capitalism for the "Betterment" of Northern New Mexico's fictional stand-in for Taos, Chamisaville – and the ferociously anti-Yuppie 1980s era finale *The Nirvana Blues*. That's only the start, for those who think of this migrant New Yorker (and Waspy offspring of a signer of the Declaration of Independence) only as a regional Southwestern writer. Throw into the heady brew his first novel *The Sterile Cuckoo* (made into an Alan Pakula movie boosting Liza Minelli toward stardom), the childhood wartime evocations of *The Wizard of Loneliness* (made into another fine flick), a gripping and gruesome Vietnam novel *American Blood*, family memoirs, environmental odes, an uncredited but widely known re-write of the Costa-Garvas Oscar-winning film *Missing,* and many further errant scripting adventures in Hollywood's crazy climes. Here is a memoir to do literary justice to all those and many more wayward feats.

Nichols is the son (and grandson) of devout naturalists and it shows everywhere in his literary escapades as well as in half a dozen of so ecological nonfiction works ranging from *If Mountains Die* to *The Sky's The Limit*. You won't find a sunnier muckraker – his investigative reporting as editor of the *New Mexico Review* undergirded the trilogy – or a funnier professed Marxist-Leninist anywhere. How he manages to retain either trait whilst bashing out at least 35 drafts of everything he undertakes before publication is a transcendental mystery. The autobiography"s title is drawn not from cynical British 1950s cinema comedy (though it draws on the burlesque echoes of *I'm All Right, Jack*) but rather from an suitably ironic Pink Anderson blues song. Had Nichols played along with the Hollywood and publishing games one suspects he'd be walking around with Pulitzers and Oscars in his pocket and, who knows, a fatwa on his famous head. Still, he brings back alive a host of fascinating and hilarious stories from his glancing contacts with the high and mighty and scurrilous.

Born in 1940 Nichol's grew up on the East Coast, usually at loggerheads and ultimately making an uneasy truce, with his privileged heritage. The family owned a Long Island estate – virtually

a private wildlife preserve – where Nichols summered as a youth, which later was deeded over to the government as a public preserve. His first and lasting love was nature, as taught by his grandfather, a curator at Manhattan's Museum of Natural History and by his naturalist (and ex-Marine) father and his French wife Monique, John's mother who died when he was very young. The rebellious youth tried everything and went everywhere – from a teenage cross-country hitchhiking trip to, later, his grandmother's Basque village to Greenwich Village to scribble in a garret and pick up blues guitar tips, recounted in *The Empanada Brotherhood*. In Guatemala he met and was impressed by Diana Oughton when she was a Peace Corps worker (and died later in 1970 in a New York Townhouse explosion from botched Weatherman faction bomb-making). His "college novel" *Sterile Cuckoo* actually was, the rarest of things, a genuinely good and poignant effort that hit the bestseller list and reaped a movie deal. "I loved being a student at Hamilton," he admits. "Yet now [on returning for the filming of *Sterile Cuckoo*] my interaction with students and academic friends and teachers revealed how deeply conservative and reactionary the College was. A safe little repository for white American elitists."

The budding star nonetheless was hurtling on his way – ah, but not so fast. The young man was afflicted with a bad case of scruples. His second novel *The Wizard of Loneliness* did OK, but his fascination with capturing in prose the "macroscopic overview", and with the actual cruel functioning of a predatory and ever-expanding economic system constantly got in the way of a smooth ascent. Why not? Vietnam, anti-imperialism and domestic Civil Rights movements over-spilled and saturated everything for anyone culturally sensitive enough to acknowledge what was going on and being flushed into the open at the time. As Manhattan got nastier and grimmer, Nichols and his first wife opted in 1969 to move to Taos in New Mexico and make their stand there where he soon was conducting investigations into the seamy water rights antics, rigged electricity deals, and real estate shenanigans that became the basis for his next three utterly memorable novels.

Hollywood, that ostensibly amiable conman/woman capitol, came knocking. His serendipitous rewrite of the Oscar-winning screenplay for the controversial film about the 1973 Chilean coup *Missing* became known in the right circles despite being arbitrated out of a formal credit, and reaped more scripting opportunities that he either rejected – passing on hundred grand or more deals for what he deemed pointless frivolities – or did take up but which mostly wound up in fabled turnaround purgatory, working along the way with directors ranging from Redford (renowned for his unpunctuality) to Karel Reisz to Louis Malle to Ridley Scott (including on embryonic versions of what became *Avatar*). One wishes dearly, for just one lamentable example, his slaved-over script of Pancho Villa and the Mexican revolution, such as it was, had gotten made, but Nichols' radical take on the event – or anything else – was not calculated to excite the beady-eyed money guys. There also clearly is a glorious and ghastly "fish out of water" novel here about Marxist writer-meets-Moguls that Nichols has as yet to transport from the realm of nonfiction mordant commentary (of which there is plenty in this tome) into uninhibited fiction. Maybe it's only in its 29th draft.

That Nichols at 82 remains alive at all (touch wood), apart from mostly broke, is fairly

miraculous given the congenital heart problems that killed his mother. He reacted with colossal vigor as an athlete, a sportsman, an indefatigable hiker and a all-around nature explorer, which no doubt kept him going. His love of the outdoors yielded a variety of often poetic volumes on the beauties of the natural world, that became a welcome sideline to his novels and scripts. Anyone in New Mexico knew he could be also counted on to support every progressive cause as well. After three marriages, and several children, his own residence today is a ramshackle one story plot very much like one imagines was inhabited by the protagonists of *The Milagro Bean Field War*. In the last decade or two Nichols has scribbled a number of smaller, affecting and comic reminiscence novels of his sprightlier days: *Conjugal Bliss*, *Elegy for Sep*tember, *On Top of Spoon Mountain* and *The Annual Arsenic Big Fishing Contest* along with his splendid Ed Abbey-esque short novel *The Voice of The Butterfl*y – many of them spiced and leavened by fictionalized bittersweet traces of his long and somewhat erratic love life. And what women he knew! His memoir is hilarious, frank, tender and entrancing. Give this extraordinary man's book(s) a try, if you haven't already, and you won't go wrong. I got mine.

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Jo Guidi, The Long Land War: The Global Struggle for Occupancy Rights (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022)

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The period from 1878 to about 1882 is usually known as “The Land War” in Irish history. Under the guidance of the recently released Fenian prisoner, Michael Davitt, Irish tenant farmers took on their landlords. For the more moderate, the goal was to secure the “Three Fs” – Fair Rent, Free Sale and Fixity of Tenure. At its most radical, those fighting the Land War aimed at a wholesale restructuring of land ownership throughout the island, whether a nationalist reclaiming of the soil of Ireland or a quasi-socialist eradication of private property. Davitt spoke vaguely, but threateningly, about nationalizing the entirety of Irish agricultural land.

Westminster’s response moved between a coercive crackdown on rural “disturbances” as well as something subtler and more paternalist; in a serious of Land Acts passed in the years after the Land War, the British Government essentially bought out the holdings of Irish landlords and resold the farms to former tenants on relatively generous mortgage terms. From the perspective of the status quo, it was a win-win result; landlords could sell off their estates, which were generally unprofitable, at above market rates, while previously troublesome tenants could now hopefully be pacified into economically responsible owner-occupiers. It probably worked. By the start of the twentieth century, the west of Ireland had become a far quieter place. The fighting of the Irish War of Independence (1919-21) was mainly confined to Munster, in the south, and the greater Dublin area on the east coast. Places like Galway and Mayo, the epicenter of the Land War, did not really feature.

Both the agrarian radicalism of the Land War, as well as the framing of Anglo-Irish landlords as cruel villains, have since become key planks in the canon of Irish nationalism. But there is more here than meets the eye. As historians like Anne Kane have shown, the Land War was never really a revolt of the poorest peasants against their cruel overlords; those at the heart of the “War” were more likely to be slightly further up the social scale, more aspirant in their status and in their politico-economic goals. The British plan to convert the island into a nation of pliant, small-scale rural capitalists would find many Irish supporters. As Friedrich Engels predicted in 1869, after visiting Ireland, “The worst about the Irish is that they become corruptible as soon as they stop being peasants and turn bourgeois. True, this is the case with most peasant nations. But in Ireland it is particularly bad.” By 1888, he was telling the *New Yorker Volkszeitung* “A purely socialist movement cannot be expected in Ireland for a

considerable time" because "People there want first of all to become peasants owning a plot of land, and after they have achieved that mortgages will appear on the scene and they will be ruined once more." The story of the Irish Land War and its aftermath is defined by these tensions and contradictions, with seemingly radical movements transmogrifying into conservative status quos.

Jo Guldi's *The Long Land War*, as its title telegraphs, takes this specific Irish case study as a starting point for a much larger and more global story about agrarian disturbances, top-down reforms and the intellectual and conceptual history of private property, from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards. But quickly moving away from Ireland, Guldi's main focus is on the sprawling work of the United Nations' Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO). She traces the intellectual history of the FAO, its roots in earlier thinking about Third World peasants, in Ireland and elsewhere, and the FAO's various endeavors in the 1950s and '60s, from education and information distribution, to huge map-making efforts and the writing of incredibly detailed bibliographies.

Guldi's range is vast and undeniably impressive. And she writes with both a sympathy for the work of the FAO as well as a kind of mournfulness that their more visionary and far-reaching projects failed to be implemented. It is this latter perspective that perhaps lead's Guldi's analysis to sometimes slip into too much of a willingness to accept her interlocutors at face value, to accept that their seemingly radical goal of creating a world of owner-occupiers was indeed as radical as it simply seemed.

The FAO's goal was to make every farm laborer an entrepreneur, or at least give them the opportunity to transform themselves thusly. It remained an essentially capitalist project. It was also an anti-Soviet project, large-scale land redistribution being pegged as a mass antidote to communism. The Soviet Union is oddly absent from the book. China prior to 1949 is discussed extensively, as a source of global thinking about peasants and land reform. That Mao had much to say and do about such topics, less so. These are odd omissions for a book about the politics of peasants and land redistribution in the twentieth century.

Early in the book, Guldi says that the post-1878 Irish-style land reforms, "coordinated, legalized, typified by compensation", set out a course of action "that no one could disagree with." But of course, many people in Ireland continuously disagreed. One apposite example is Peadar O'Donnell, a brilliant agitator who moonlighted as a journalist and novelist. O'Donnell fomented a major campaign against the land reform status quo in Ireland in the later 1920s, focusing, as a socialist, on those landless people who had been left behind, and as a nationalist on the incongruity that Irish farmers should repay mortgages to the British government for the use of their own land. His campaign picked at all the issues of legal ownership, co-ordinated state action and compensation to previous landlords that Guldi says had been settled. Into the 1930s, O'Donnell's campaign was a serious headache for the first de Valera government.

The Long Land War, in one sense, is a history of failures: the FAO produced a massive informational infrastructure to allow its staff understand global patterns of land-ownership, but

desires to put this knowledge into practice crashed against multiple Cold War-era beachheads. Just as the Land War of 1878 provided a model for how to calmly redistribute land, people like Peadar O'Donnell can provide a parallel history of peaceful land redistribution's ideological blindspots, of how even "successful" land reform programs left some people behind and those people continued to (mostly failingly) resist. And what Guldi says of the Mexican Revolution's agrarian policies is true of top-down agrarian movements in many parts of the world; "not a war to overturn property rights, but rather a war to uphold property rights in the name of the peasant." The global project of creating entire nations of owner-occupiers was always defined by those ideological twists and turns.

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Eben Kirksey, The Mutant Project: Inside the Global Race to Genetically Modify Humans Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2021.

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We cannot choose the life into which we are born. Part of our human trajectory involves coming to terms with our biological and social legacies. It is poignant, then, to witness the efforts of parents risking everything to imbue choice into the genetic lives of their offspring. It is this human desire, this wish for future generations to have a better life, which is the pivot in Eben Kirksey's *The Mutant Project: Inside the Global Race to Genetically Modify Humans*, a sprawling ethnographic case study of the first successful use of CRISPR technology to bring genetically modified human embryos to term.

I heard about the birth of CRISPR-modified Chinese twin babies in 2018 as many did, in a media report heavy with censure and anxiety. The birth was a scientific milestone quickly buried in the news onslaught of a turbulent time. Kirksey's book begins with the moment the story breaks, as prominent scientists gather for the Second International Summit on Human Genome Editing in Hong Kong. He quickly complicates what appears to be a publicity stunt and foreshadows what the rest of the book reveals: that the events of that night are the culmination of events spinning out of control for the doctor, He Jiankui, who is at the center of the controversy. The shock of the night is captured in ripples of reaction in the scientific community and public at large, then the event is enlarged, layered, rooted and tentacled in its origins and impact, contextualized, and humanized as Kirksey follows genome-related entrepreneurial, artistic, medical, and activist endeavors across the United States, China, and Indonesia.

The moral stakes in the messy, too-human world of human genetics are where Kirksey plays to his strengths. The book backtracks to look at He Jiankui's early life, we meet his relatives, and we learn about the shadowy nationalist, commercial, and intellectual powerbrokers propelling He to his fraught experiment only to leave him twisting in the wind when outrage erupts. The book jumps to the parallel and precursor story of HIV activists in the US risking their lives, becoming the world's first geneticallymodified humans to find a cure for AIDS. Their sacrifices, Kirksey points out, have paved the way for a biomedical technique for HIV positive adults available only to millionaires (Dr. He's team then applied similar principles to embryos). A thoughtful discussion around the first test tube baby historically setting off a moral panic

before achieving its current banality in IVF centres offers further context for Frankenbaby controversy. Gradually, Orientalist notions of the amoral wily Easterner, the Yellow Peril, fade as we understand He Jiankui the man, and see him in the context of fizzling biomedical hype, the 'disruptive innovations' of Silicon Valley, barely regulated 'special medical zones' where experiments are encouraged, and other scientists happy to continue in his wake, without the heat of being first.

In the process, we also shift temporally and in our imaginary from one moment of a renegade's portrayal in the global spotlight, to a detailed description of the team working with him, the months of plodding effort that went into their experiment, the plight of the volunteers they recruit. How did they choose which gene to edit, to which principles of medical ethics did they adhere, and what did their eventual choice of enabling HIV resistance mean in the heavy HIV stigma and often closeted gay culture of China? We confront China's unevenness and contradictions, with skyscrapers and dizzying innovation prioritized over potable drinking water in Shenzhen, the *Blade Runner*-esque financial, industrial, and technological hub in the south of China. Like a film negative reverse of the US, in China, financial constraints are not the main barrier to HIV treatment: social pressure instead looms large. HIV treatment is free, but stigma from being HIV positive can mean losing one's job. We also see that Dr. He dips into personal funds to support the nonelite volunteers recruited to his clinical trials, unlike the white-privilege-accessible-only HIV experiments in the US. The tension between the profit motive and accessibility of medical innovation is central to Kirksey's perspective.

His project begs a number of questions. The future is here, but are we ready? What will unleashing CRISPR technology on human genetics mean? Kirksey spotlights Indonesian artist Tamara Pertamina, whose provocative CRISPR sperm bank art installation (made out of a borrowed coconut milk dessert cart) spurs conversation on the imagined deracialized designer babies gene editing technology could herald. He also interviews and tracks scientists. Instead of exhibiting Merton-esque disinterestedness, scientists at the cutting edge of genetic experimentation adjudicate sweetheart deals and nationalist fervor. Science is seemingly poised to play God, intent on intrusive needlespuncturing human eggs for a laundry list of "unmet medical needs" despite CRISPR technology's disturbing lack of precision – more akin to a drone strike with occasional wedding party collateral damage than its vaunted surgical accuracy1 – and despite not knowing long term consequences of shifts in permutation of the nucleotide bases G, A, C, and T. How much of the spur to medical innovation arises from the desire to ease pain and suffering, how much from the calling of fame and fortune?

It is unclear, and perhaps such questions are moot now that genetically modified humans roam the earth. In one chapter we glimpse the cut-throat globalization of medical innovation, where medical tourism could create a plethora of options for the well-heeled and desperate, subsuming 'safety first science' under market forces. In another chapter, a scientist Kirksey interviews argues that our concerns are overwrought: genetically modifying human embryos is invasive and unlikely to be done frivolously, becoming an adjunct option instead in already expensive and risky IVF treatments. And as the concluding chapter with Donna Haraway's reflections on her call to 'make kin, not babies' suggests, perhaps we are better served when

we view genetic mutations with a playful and creative eye rather than an anxious one, as a way to enlarge our instinctive, biological, species-based constructions of clan. Kirksey weaves human stories and their social worlds in ways that suggest different spaces of immovability and opportunity in life conditions across the globe, suggesting a commonality in struggle despite cultural and governmental difference. His humane and empathic writing offers understanding and relationship rather than othering, making his book a satisfying read beyond the intellectual content.

As minor notes, I thought it might be useful to acknowledge that the US' profit-driven healthcare paradigm is an outlier in the developed world. And while many of his readers following US elections would likely know debates over the US healthcare system, I wondered if more could have been said about the Chinese approach to healthcare and if and how China would be likely to instrumentalize the procedures Dr. He used. I was also unsure why he or perhaps his publisher reversed the surname-first name order of Chinese names, and anglicized the pseudonyms of the Chinese volunteers. A final nitpicking comment: Kirksey expressed concern that Dr. He's volunteer pool were all Han Chinese, but I would have thought that some contextual explanation that China is over 90% ethnically Han, and that only the Han were subject to China's one-child (now two-child) policy and hence conceivably more desperate for a healthy child would have been appropriate. It seems to me the lack of ethnic diversity in the Chinese experiment is not equivalent to that of the US HIV experiments against which it was contrast. These are minor points, however, in an otherwise engrossing, readable, multi-sited hybrid of ethnography and journalism.

Dr. He's experiment was shut down before he was able to determine if the twins he ushered into the world were HIV resistant. So we do not, in Kirksey's account, learn if his project succeeded. What we do discover, however, is that Dr. He's story has moved from rags to riches to infamy, and with his three year jail term soon to be completed, his trajectory as a young CRISPR specialist is far from over. We also gain a fascinating glimpse into the forming of the genetic mutant entrepreneurial industry and its dreams of enabling escape from the ties that bind mortals to their genetic forebears. These dreams frame the human aspect of the mutant project, where the volunteer couples fearing HIV stigma in Dr. He's study fight to have modified embryos implanted, at risk to mother and child, in the mother's womb, and their babies in turn become forever marked, to be observed and chronicled as lone living landmarks in what had been until now a forbidden medico-genetic frontier.

I found I both wanted to know more about the feelings and thoughts of the volunteer parents blown about by the CRISPR controversy (Kirksey hints that their consent may not have been fully informed), and preferred that they live on in peace, with the hard-won joy and heartache of raising precious children. Will their children be allowed to procreate, I wondered, and to pass on their mutant genes? I also found myself thinking that, whatever the creative possibilities of genetic modification, whatever the medical benefits to future generations, Kirksey's insistence on weighing ethics, access,and profit is justified. As burgeoning overseas surrogacy industries in areas rich in poor women's bodies offer cheap pregnancy labour, it is easy to imagine CRISPR technology being wielded at will at existing baby-making hubs,

offsetting the risks of genetic manipulation onto global underclasses and making the dystopian vision of Margaret Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale* inch uncomfortably closer. Using his lens, it becomes clear that it is not mutant babies but our continued elision over extreme inequality that is monstrous, making us as complicit as Shenzhen in drywalling over the crooked and inadequate infrastructure of our world.

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