
EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: MODES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

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When the theme for this issue of *Catalyst* was conceived, it was imagined that contributions might present both defenses and critiques of liberal justice, that is, one might say, that these contributions would either promote reformist or revolutionary modes of justice. Instead, all of the submissions took a fairly decisive position of critique of liberal modes of justice, though they are not necessarily in agreement about what constitutes a revolutionary mode of social justice, and they do not always adopt the term 'revolution' itself as a description of the critique they present and the direction in which they point.

Not only did the spirit and letter of the submissions for this issue effectively endorse revolutionary modes of social justice, but these works hit the ground running, with most immediately moving into attempts to describe and help create a strategy of practice for a social justice which could be called revolutionary, and which rather decisively rejects liberalism and in some fundamental ways, conveying in spirit a sense of impatience even with justice as it is conceived and carried out by liberal systems. It is this spirit of the authors of these works and the feeling of eagerness to describe and participate in the effectuation of a revolutionary praxis which they convey, and also on the idea of liberalism as an ideology, on which I focus briefly in this introduction.

When we implicate 'liberalism' by placing it in the position of ideologies, discourses, and apparatuses of injustice, we use a term which is "a vague term that embraces many diverse and even incompatible positions."¹ Nevertheless, critics of liberalism as a mode of social justice and strategists of social justice are increasingly aware that even an uncongealed or derivative historical demarcation can still very much be considered the primary locus of injustice, and a valuable framework or ideology for the comprehension of questions of justice as they are playing out in practice, as well as a framework for the development of strategies for the achievement of social justice, even if "liberal theorists attempt to justify an arrogation of liberalism to a political-philosophical position that is superideological."²

A critique of the liberal mode of justice with a focus on strategy, which is in keeping with the directive of *Catalyst* to focus on the *practice* as well as the theory of social justice, and to "push the ideals of social justice to new levels" gives rise in turn to theory, and also makes use of, is nourished by, and improves upon existing theories. Theories that can be understood to speak to the practice of social justice often become the contextual framework within which the practice of social justice occurs. Or is it the reverse? One must suppose that it is both, actually - that, generally speaking, practice and theory are mutually informative and create one another, albeit in different sorts and types of relationships. That said, with the questions that this issue of *Catalyst* raises, we can perhaps be permitted to wonder if we are approaching a change in the way that theory is done by scholars and academicians, a change that is *not* a movement toward theory in the service of the needs of "employers" and capital and markets, but rather one that moves toward practice in a very different way, akin to the way that medicine first detached itself from philosophy as a practical τέχνη.³

One of the larger questions that serves as a foundation for this interaction of theory and practice is the question of whether social justice can best be achieved primarily locally or primarily at some larger level, such as the national or global level. The presentation of local solutions to the problems of social justice is evidenced in the work of Russi and Ferrando, who put forward the food sovereignty movement, which contains within it a critique of large scale plans for food production and distribution, as a potential solution to those problems of production and distribution. Russi and Ferrando wisely use some of the

same analytic tools and mechanisms of evidence and proof that advocates of globalized, state-organized, and market ruled systems use, in order to show that these systems can be irrational and inefficient. The food sovereignty movement and other movements that promote a more localized control and an autonomy that does not seem possible without such localization are really rejecting the larger apparatuses of the administration of life and justice traditionally promoted by both advocates of state-planned economies and by market ideologues. Put in terms of liberalism, the tying of local control to greater social justice can imply the distrust of totalizing critiques and remedies of justice, and this is understandable in an era when communist states, while achieving great levels of economic justice, failed to adequately address the social aspects of justice, and when the state apparatus in liberal states has become little more than an footservant of finance capital. Further, as the work of Yaghi elucidates, the false universality of the tenets and practices of social justice in the liberal polity, and the racist and nationalist distortions and exclusions that are part of the liberal society's actual discourse and practice of justice seem to force those who might otherwise look to more universal ideas of justice to regroup and to practice the politics of forced localization, i.e. an identity politics that is forced to be responsive to the racist or nationalistic delusions of the liberal polity. Yaghi quotes Charles Taylor, who writes that identity in liberal societies is often shaped by the misrecognition of others. Taylor, though, who is among those engaged in the redemption and reform of the liberal state and in its practical mainstay, social-democratic politics, will not likely go where Yaghi takes his thesis, and that is to the advocacy of revolution on the very basis of such "misrecogniton" and what it produces. There is then, an important sense in which a kind of localization is forced on political and social actors by the liberal state and its false universal and democratic idea of justice, and in this forced localization and parochialization can lie incipient revolution.

Political strategy and strategy for social justice for theoreticians has for many years now in Western thought been bound up with the understanding of power as micropower, in which power is understood as occurring often outside the state, and in the dynamics of a relational subjectivity, with the expression of justice often, within this understanding, taking the form of expressions of justice and power in the interstices of a culture in which loci of power are continually shifting, being recreated, rechanneled, understood. The problematization of this understanding of power, which attempts to render former conceptualizations of power obsolete, is evident in the papers of both Sharif and Ishchenko, with Sharif offering a pointed and sophisticated critique of its shortcomings, which have to do with the fact that "all forms of micropolitics recommend resistance in bits and pieces [and]...fetishize the everyday struggle against the control of power" and Ishchenko designing social science research which helps to illuminate specific problems in the confrontation of state, systemic, and historical power by groups which attempt to evade or confound these systemic problems and injustices with the type of spontaneity and immediacy of the social group format, groups whose self-conception seems to comport with the micropower-micropolitics understanding of power. This problematization of theories and practices of micropower in terms of resistance is, I believe, important to the understanding of how to achieve social justice insofar as the achievement of such involves confrontation of liberal-systemic processes and powers. Anyone who has some knowledge of the operation of political groups who are highly concerned with justice will know this problem. While we who are concerned with social justice have rightly paid obeisance and respect to a reconceptualization of the power with which social justice has had to be concerned, what are we to make of the fact that, in practical experience for example, anarchists, while claiming a greater level of fairness and focusing on internal or prefigurative justice, in my direct experience, have taken over and commanded other organizations thereby, quashing dissent with, for example, rules for internal procedure which allow for tyranny and the silencing of many voices? And, at the superorganizational political level, can we still agree, after the fuller unfolding of neoconservative politics, with Deleuze and Guattari when they write that "the masses are not tricked by ideological lures into submitting to power"?⁴

The understanding of micropolitics through micropower, as a framework within which social justice is studied and pursued, is not only a positive understanding which can concern itself with the development of strategies for social justice, but it can also be, and is in its more original Foucauldian

conception, a phenomenon which acts against social justice, as Russi and Ferrando point up when they "[try] to sketch a picture of the effort aimed at rearranging farming according to the calculative logic of capital" which occurs via "carving spaces of control (assets) on which an investment calculus can subsequently be pegged." More often though, a localized understanding of power, which modulates traditional and micropolitical conceptions of agency, is seen as the best position from which to create resistance to social injustice, as in the participatory approaches to research described by Sitter and Burke, who show consciousness of this localization of power to effectuate social justice: "Change in this context is not necessarily characterized by large-scale alterations to policies and systems", but who incorporate, among other approaches, a Freirian sociopolitical model which, while "stressing community-led learning and praxis" incorporates an awareness and conscious addressing of the problem and reality of larger and systemic power, that power which has the ability to create systematic education. Freire asks, "But if the implementation of a liberating education requires political power and the oppressed have none, how then is it possible to carry out the pedagogy of the oppressed prior to the revolution?"⁵

The papers in this themed issue of *Catalyst* also bring up the question of the position of the social in relation to the political, and of its structure, and its connectedness to justice. The question of this distinction and relationship is partly a question of whether individuals or political or social groups are better vehicles for the achievement of social justice, and under what circumstances. The question of what the social is in relation to the political often plays itself out in the effective or express answers to such questions. Sitter and Burke describe strategies for social justice within groups that primarily see themselves as social, and as operating in the mode of a social movement, and Sharif points the way toward spatiotemporal templates for the comprehension of justice which he finds superior to infrapolitics: "spatial entitlement has much more potential for organizing a social movement". It is the political that is often seen as the locus of the oppressive, and the social as the place where both the pain of political injustice is felt and lived (e.g. in the exclusion and 'othering' of French Muslims [Yaghi]), and also the place where resistance often begins or seems most correct or genuine, despite the existence of well-developed economic and political theories and patterns and avenues to justice. Even though the social is the realm where the pain of injustice is often felt the most, my own essay points up the problem of too much strategic reliance on the social when the political, sometimes in the form of the propaganda which creates and shapes discourses, overpowers this social realm.

Insofar as the social realm is comprised, in terms of the practice of social justice, of social movements, we must be aware that "the reality is that, whatever their transformative potential, new social movements have shown a marked incapacity for confronting the imperatives of political power."⁶ Thus, while the social is on the rise in terms of its centrality to human identity,⁷ we as theoreticians of the social cannot slip into delusionality about its current power in relation to the political, a problem illustrated by the 'discourse of hate' propounded by the liberal establishment as a template for the comprehension of anti-gay abuse. Such problems are compounded by the fact that, the more that one accedes to the false discourses of political power, the more power one has to describe the social. These false discourses can have an express layer, such as the liberal constitutional tenet of "freedom of speech" problematized in the work of Yaghi, or less express but equally deleterious assumptions, such as the "ableism" pointed to by Sitter and Burke, which underlies rights discourses and constitutes social movement assumptions. Important questions about the relationship between the social and the political are raised around this question of ableism in their description of the citizenship components of the disability rights movement (D.R.M.), questions such as that of how "social policy" is created by political powers, while in Ishchenko's work, the "value-rational solution" approach to systemic injustice illustrates some of the problems of attempts to effect systemic change from a position that is more that of a social group than a traditional political one.

In the practical mode of social justice, one of the concerns to emerge from these works is what would seem to be a central question for those concerned with social justice, and that is the question of against

whom or against what we are struggling when we struggle for social justice. The answer is, in the main, that it is the liberal political establishment against which we struggle, either in its (performative) entirety (Yaghi) or in its specific elements at the state and international level (Russi and Ferrando). Often though, an accusatory finger is expressly or effectively pointed toward academia itself as an aspect of this liberal state (Sitter and Burke, Sharif, Schamel) or toward specific disciplines within academia, such as social movement studies (Ishchenko). That is, insofar as most of the contributors to and readers of *Catalyst* are, if not full time academicians, persons who have at least dalliances therewith, that accusatory and impatient finger is pointed in some sense toward ourselves.

Various aspects of the liberal polity, and of globalism (transnational liberalism) are often seen by critics in terms of ideology. Louis Althusser, in his theory of ideology,⁸ names the educational system of the liberal state as the most important of what he calls 'ideological state apparatuses'; that is, as an apparatus which, despite its pretensions to criticality and independence, exists primarily to serve the interests of a state-supported system of injustice, and is actually the primary functionary of those interests. Even if, however, academia and the entire education system can and should be considered the primary manifestation of a system of injustice which we might call 'liberal ideology', it is not the only one. Sitter and Burke address the mass media's legitimization and normalization of political ideologies, using the term 'ideology' in an only slightly more limited sense, while, with the same sense of ideology in mind, my own essay points up the problems of religious ideology, and the way it becomes part of (and always was part of) the idiom of liberal politics. Sharif rightly questions the very question of revolution in its contradistinction to reformism, pointing up in so doing the fact that often critical discourses themselves can be misbegotten insofar as they incorporate elements of a hegemonic 'ideology' At the convergence of ideology and strategy, Ishchenko's thesis undertakes, as one of its elements, an examination of prefigurative politics as an ideology of praxis.

Several years ago, before I began boycotting American Political Science Association meetings, at one of these meetings I had the pleasure of taking a short walk with Anne Norton, who had written book on the Straussian political philosophers, who were among those with whom both she and I had studied, and somehow emerged as something more like progressive and revolutionary, respectively, against the natural right conservatism of some of our teachers. Our conversation brought up love and its position in scholarship and the idea of it as a motivation. We both became uncomfortable, or at least, I did. Mention the word 'love' in connection with your research and you will witness an evident unease on the part of scholars, and even perhaps some signs of disapproval. Likewise with anger. I remember when, at the founding of one revolutionary organization, a woman announced, "We found this organization in love and anger." Putting the two together struck me as the motivation for revolution. More precisely, it was the idea that, without anger when it was appropriate, there was no love. But we tend to, with good reason, consider the disinterestedness of social science one of the pillars of its value, even if we are inclined to think that doing social science might require a different approach from that of other sciences. Somehow though, a concern with social justice seems to require a different relationship between emotion and scholarship.

Relatedly, we can ask whether working toward social justice even makes sense in a period during which the old political-philosophical problems of identity and free will are dominated in discourses of the social by 'subjectivity' and 'sites of agency' - that is, whether the relevant repository of love and anger and other feelings is still personal identity. In the pursuit of social justice, we can ask if there is such a thing as an enemy, or as a 'that against which we fight'. For social scientists, the concept of an enemy is problematic. And yet, the past forty years in the U.S. and in the Western World have seen the shortcomings of social scientific practice when faced with such forces as globalism and neoconservatism. And how do we fight for social justice if causation no longer finds a home in the traditional view of individual actors as forces who can be considered responsible for deleterious actions? Can a stand still then be taken in the premises of social science questions, as I believe Russi and Ferrando and Ishchenko so valuably attempt to do? In the prioritization and formulation of research agendas? In the naming of

problems? Is not objectivity a part of the procedure of science, *after* one has a hypothesis? And does not the problem always occur at the point of formulation of the hypothesis, that is, in that under-region -'Υπό'- of the scientific process? Are we permitted to be angry, and to incorporate that anger into our theory and action? And, perhaps more importantly, if our work, if our research, and if we as scholars who stand on this work are to endorse revolution, are we really willing to back that endorsement up with effective action, or is it the case with us that, as Robespierre said, we "want revolution without a revolution" - revolution with no harm, suffering, or punishment; or, as Slavoj Zizek formulates it, "revolution deprived of the excess in which democracy and terror coincide?"⁹

Or are we merely slipping into a sentimentality that is unproductive of actual social justice when we raise these questions?

... I am now thinking of Eve K. Sedgwick's call to redeem sentimentality.¹⁰ I am thinking of the Greek people's attempts to fight back as they are clubbed to death by the bankers and their footservants. Of the image of the chador, maliciously overlain with the idea of evil. Of the gay-iconic image of Marsha P. Johnson's dead body floating in the Hudson River.....

To the extent that, when we indict liberalism and reformism from the perspective of social justice, it is *we* as social scientists and scholars who are the indicted, perhaps any evidence we might find of our willingness to traffic in these kinds of thoughts and to let them motivate and even change the nature of our scholarship, is one thing we can call to our defense.

¹Bernstein, Richard J. *The New Constellation. The Ethical-Political Horizons of Modernity/Postmodernity*. Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1995, 239.

²*Ibid.*, 243.

³Zeller, Eduard. *Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy*. Trans. L.R. Palmer. New York: Dover, 1980, 24.

⁴Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota Press, 1987, 215.

⁵Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum Books, 1993, Chapter 1. Accessed online at webster.edu (<http://www2.webster.edu/~corbetre/philosophy/education/freire/freire-1.html>).

⁶Boggs, Carl. *Social Movements and Political Power*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986, 75.

⁷As evidenced by, for example, the development of the discipline of social history and by the interest in Hannah Arendt's problematization of the social. With regard to the latter, see Pitkin, Hanna. *The Attack of the Blob. Hannah Arendt's Concept of the Social*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998

⁸Althusser, Louis. 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses. (Notes Toward an Investigation)', in Zizek, Slavoj, ed., *Mapping Ideology*. London: Verso, 2012, 100-140.

⁹Zizek, Slavoj. 'Robespierre, or The Divine Violence of Terror'. *lacan.com* (<http://www.lacan.com/zizrob.htm>).

¹⁰Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. 'Some Binarisms (II): Wilde, Nietzsche, and the Sentimental Relations of the Male Body', *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 131-182.