International Politics:
Perspectives from Philosophy and Political Science

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Corinna Mieth | Wolfram Cremer (eds.)

Migration, Stability and Solidarity

Nomos

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Preface

This volume on *Migration, Stability and Solidarity* focuses on two neglected questions and their interconnection within migration ethics. It, firstly, is about the relation between migration and political stability. Secondly, it deals with the question how solidarity should be understood when it comes to migration. With respect to the first question, some theorists argue that in the context of immigration, political stability is important in a pragmatic, but not a principled sense (e.g. Carens, Cassee, Pevnick). Others disagree, especially many participants in public discourse. To them, political stability is of utmost importance and can, under certain circumstances, be threatened by migration (e.g. Miller, Walzer). This discursive divide raises several philosophical questions, for instance: What exactly is the normative importance of political stability? How is it possible to determine if and to what extend political stability is threatened by migration? If there is indeed such a threat, how can it be reduced without infringing on the legal and moral rights of migrants? With respect to the second question, it is sometimes argued that migration undermines solidarity within societies (e.g. Miller). At the same time, it can be argued that it establishes and strengthens patterns of global solidarity needed to advance liberal values and human rights globally. As in the case of political stability, the question of different forms of solidarity arises. Related questions concern the proper understanding of solidarity and whether solidarity presupposes some form of perceived similarity or connectedness. It might also be asked how solidarity can be strengthened without damaging the rights of migrants. The topics of stability and solidarity are interconnected, and tensions within and between the concepts led to fundamental discursive conflicts. Whereas some argue that a discussion of these issues would play into the hands of nationalists and illiberal right-wing movements, others claim that avoiding these debates would have the same effect. We think an informed and rational discourse is needed. For this, it is important to get the empirical facts right, but also to map the normative landscape carefully. Urgent tasks are to identify and weigh different moral claims as well as to develop creative policy solutions that address the apparently conflicting claims of residents and migrants.

We have invited contributions from various disciplines and different countries addressing these issues or very similar questions regarding migration, political stability, and solidarity. We are especially grateful to Michael

Blake who provided an introductory essay and a final reply to the contributions of this volume. Blake focuses on democratic decay, especially in the US, where populism is threatening the faith in democratic procedures and values. He introduces five demonic reasons in order to characterize populist discourse. Those who are supporting populism see themselves as deprived of something to which they feel entitled and may perceive less restrictive immigration policies as unjust. Blake is quite skeptical about liberal democracies today, since when being faced with populist threats, they could only realize just migration policies at the expense of stability.

Raissa Wihby Ventura chooses a different perspective. She focuses on "undesired" migrants who are often considered as a threat to stability of the receiving country. She proposes to shift the burden of justification to the receiving society. Bodi Wang also questions the self-understanding of societies when confronted with immigration. She critically examines David Miller´s book *Strangers in Our Midst*. She holds that Miller overemphasizes cultural differences at the expense of the analysis of material conditions that lead to social segregation, structural and institutional racism in the receiving society and a rhetoric that legitimizes exclusion. Susanne Mantel examines the question whether refugee protection requires admission, critically discussing Christopher Wellman's position. Wolfram Cremer focuses on inner European migration and the right to social benefits from a legal perspective. He shows that EU law requires a certain standard of solidarity, namely states the obligation of the EU-Member States for granting existential social benefits to EU-Citizens. Dimitrios Efthymiou focuses on the relation between solidarity and welfare rights. He holds that the concept of solidarity as a rich good would provide access for nationals and migrants to welfare rights. Esma Baycan Herzog critically examines the claim that social cohesion understood as an expression of national identity is incompatible with migration. She shows that within post-immigration societies, i.e. societies in which the common identity is diverse, open border policies are justified. Gottfried Schweiger critically discusses the question whether mandatory value courses for asylum seekers, as required by some countries, can be justified by referring to stability considerations: value courses are supposed to protect the state, reduce costs and improve integration. Alberto Pirni introduces a model of how we could live together in the intercultural age by distinguishing between "place stability" and "identitarian" stability. Costanza Porro and Christine Straehle as well as Thorben Knobloch and Corinna Mieth focus on the threats to stability and solidarity that arise from parts of the native population within western democracies. Porro/Straehle examine the thesis that multicultural societies suffer from a lack of solidarity. They consid-

er populist movements as an expression of lack of recognition by parts of the population. Knobloch/Mieth focus on internal threats to stability caused by anti-immigration backlashes. By understanding liberalism as a historical project between more progressive requirements for open borders and a more particularistic understanding, as well as the introduction of the concept of compromising mindsets, they bring these seemingly opposing perspectives together and distinguish liberal from illiberal backlashes. Finally, Michael Blake comments on the contributions that all tried to show that within the self-understanding of liberal democracies, stability and solidarity with migrants could somehow be combined or that at least excluding notions of stability are misguided. Still, Blake, to his own regret, draws a conclusion that is, again, rather skeptical regarding the realization of justice towards migrants within liberal democracies today. But there is not as much contradiction here as it seems since Blake totally agrees that immigration policies today are unjust, the difference lies in the belief in the resources liberal democracies today have to change this. And if that is the question, some of the authors might also be skeptical.

The idea for that project goes way back to discussions the editors had with many people. We want to thank all the contributors to this volume for their articles and the intense discussions we had at our conference on the topic at Ruhr-University Bochum in 2019 and many other occasions. Special thanks go to Christian Neuhäuser, Anna Goppel and Michael Blake for the ongoing discussion on migration, stability and solidarity. Corinna especially thanks the Institute for Advanced Study in Berlin for support. We are also grateful to Reza Mosayebi for accompanying the project and helping with organizational matters. Finally, we want to thank Beate Bernstein and Joanna Werner from Nomos-Verlag for their patience and the good cooperation.

Bochum, September 2021 *Corinna Mieth and Wolfram Cremer*

Inhalt

1. Public Reason, Humiliation, and Democratic Decay[1]

Michael Blake

Public reason has, as it were, two faces. As a methodology, it is an idealized vision of what democratic states already do; as developed in the later work of John Rawls, it presents itself as offering normative guidance only to those political communities in which democratic ideals already dominate. Public reason is, then, normative, in that it offers advice to practitioners and theorists within those political communities. It is descriptive, however, in that it is explicitly presented as emerging from – and making more precise – what it is that democracies already do.[2]

This is, of course, an appealing aspect of public reason. Its adherents are not called upon to start from first principles, with a defense of liberal democracy itself; neither are they called upon to take sides in complex metaphysical disputes, such as might emerge in a more foundational inquiry into the nature and value of democratic practices. Instead, they are called upon simply to begin with what is already near to hand: with, that is, the existing life of democratic states, and with the perhaps surprising resilience of such states in the face of religious and moral disagreement.

What is appealing, however, can start to seem inadequate, when the stability of the democratic state is placed in question. Rawls presented his most complete vision of public reason in 1993; not coincidentally, this was a year after the publication of Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* – and, of course, four years after the fall of the Berlin Wall.[3] The end of the Cold War brought with it a widespread sense that

1 Versions of this paper have been presented at Princeton University, Universidad Panamericana, and the Ruhr University of Bochum. Many thanks to the audiences at these sites. Particular thanks to Corinna Mieth, for conversations about populism and stability over the past two years.

2 Rawls's vision is presented in its canonical form in *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

3 Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

the triumph of liberal democracy was imminent.[4] The central normative questions were how to understand that triumph – and, in the international realm, the moral constraints on liberal states exporting liberalism abroad. There was very little sense – and, certainly, little discussion in Rawls's work – of the risk that a democratic community might slide into authoritarianism.[5] The arc of the moral universe might be long, it was felt, but it ended with the triumph of the democratic ideal.

The decades since 1989 have shown exactly how misplaced this optimism was. The end of the Cold War did not lead to the triumph of liberal democracy; indeed, liberal democracy has been in steady retreat, throughout the world. Freedom House, which attempts a dispassionate evaluation of which states are rightly to be understood as democracies, recently announced that the number of democratic states has fallen each year for the past fifteen years.[6] Even within nominally democratic states, democratic norms have come under assault from a renewed brand of nationalism and authoritarianism. The United States, for instance, was taken – by itself, at least – as the embodiment of the democratic ideal during the Cold War. Freedom House describes the United States as a "troubled" democracy, whose institutions are rightly described as akin to those of states with "weaker democratic institutions, such as Romania and Panama."[7]

Philosophers are poorly situated to make empirical predictions. I believe, however, that we have not seen the end of democracy's decline, and that populism and authoritarianism will continue to put the democratic ideal under pressure. In this paper, however, I will not talk about these beliefs; I will, instead, talk about the philosophical theories we have built to manage and guide our democratic institutions – and how these theories

4 Hence, Jagdish Bhagwati's description of Fukuyama's triumphalism as "a primal scream of joy by a warrior with a foot astride his fallen prey." Bhagwati, "Anti-globalism: why?" 26 *Journal of Policy Modeling* (2004) 439–463 at 449.

5 Thus, Rawls thought it unlikely that democratic citizens would find anything appealing in authoritarian politics: "[T]hose who grow up under just basic institutions acquire a sense of justice and a reasoned allegiance to those institutions sufficient to render them stable." Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 142.

6 The most recent data are available at https://freedomhouse.org/explore-the-map?type=fiw&year=2020. For a summary of recent trends, see Nate Schenken and Sarah Repucci, "Freedom House Survey for 2018: Democracy in Retreat," 30(2) *Journal of Democracy* (April 2019) 100–114.

7 Freedom House, "The global decline in democracy has accelerated," March 3, 2021. Available at https://freedomhouse.org/article/new-report-global-decline-democracy-has-accelerated

are, in my view, singularly ill-equipped to deal with the decline already underway. Philosophical views such as public reason, regardless of their other attractions, are poorly placed to *respond* to the sorts of democratic decline we are now experiencing. These views use ideas present in the public political culture, as Rawls has it, to explain and justify democratic life; they describe an historic process, of coming to terms with difference while continuing to value democratic justification. They do not, however, have the conceptual tools needed to rebut and reject other, more *demonic* ideas present in the public political culture – ideas that have proven more resilient and attractive than Rawls himself might have imagined. I will discuss these ideas more in the next section, but in the moment we can restrict ourselves to thinking of these ideas as reflecting a vision of *humiliation* – in which the true people, the virtuous inheritors of national community, are humiliated by unrighteous outsiders; and in which that humiliation can only be overcome by a leader strong enough to eliminate the corrupted processes that enabled that humiliation in the first place.[8] This anti-democratic vision, in one form or another, undergirds a great deal of recent political life, in contexts as otherwise diverse as the United States, the Philippines, Brazil, and Hungary; in all of these spaces, the politics of humiliation has been harnessed to license anti-democratic forms of political rule.[9] Humiliation has been too often ignored by theorists of political justice; humiliation is, however, at heart a *normative* idea – one is humiliated when one is, or *believes that one is*, treated in a morally inadequate way. Those who have used humiliation to buttress an anti-democratic politics have demonstrated that the same ideas and methods used by Rawls in his description of a stable liberal democracy can quite easily be deployed by those whose desire is the *elimination* of that democracy.[10]

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8 The most perceptive account of the redemptive role of authoritarianism as a response to perceived humiliation remains, I believe, that of Umberto Eco, who described the fascist ideal as responding to this perception of national humiliation with the necessity of violence against those who use democratic norms to curtail the nation's true strength. See Eco, "Ur-Fascism," *The New York Review of Books*, June 22, 1995.

9 See Sara Repucci et al., "The Global Implications of Populism on Democracy," Report of 2018 Task Force on Populism, University of Washington. Available at https://jsis.washington.edu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Task-Force_C_2018_Pekkanen_robert.pdf

10 The notion of humiliation is employed in Avishai Margalit's *The Decent Society*, but primarily with reference to impersonal forms of mistreatment premised upon the misrecognition of social equality; he does not, I think, give adequate account to the phenomenology of perceived humiliation – in which a diminution in

What I want to defend, in short, is the idea that public reason is an adequate account of public justification, only under particular circumstances – and that these circumstances may fail, as I think they seem to be doing at present. Public reason, that is, works *as* a political theory only when democratic ideals are taken to be dominant over other, similar but more pernicious ideas; and the relative strength of these two sets of ideas reflects, more than anything else, lucky circumstance. The democratic ideas Rawls took to ground his vision, however, cannot be defended *by* that vision; they are, instead, assumed by it. They are inputs, as it were, rather than outputs, and there is nothing in public reason that can serve to ground the moral uniqueness of democratic politics. This failing might have been inconsequential, were democratic ideals so attractive that democratic states were unlikely to be attracted by the drift into authoritarianism. Recent years, though, have proven that we need exactly what public reason cannot provide – a vision of why liberal democracy is *uniquely* valuable, as a form of political organization.

I will try to defend this in three sections. The first of these describes the Rawlsian vision of stability in more detail, and then compares that vision with an alternative, demonic vision of political life. I will show, or try to show, that the two visions make use of very similar materials; the same normative tools that lead to public reason might just as easily give rise to an authoritarian society, if people find the demonic ideas more attractive than those defended by Rawls himself. The second section will discuss the ways in which this vision of demonic reason represents a problem for public reason. It is not only true, I argue, that there is nothing in Rawls that allows us to respond to the authoritarian populist relying upon this demonic vision of public reason; it is also that we can predict that most people will find the arguments against authoritarianism difficult to reject – or, more moderately, that the appeal of these arguments will depend as much upon luck and virtue as anything else. The final section will offer some tentative thoughts about how political philosophy ought to change – both in theory, and in practice – to adequately respond to these concerns.

One final note seems appropriate here. I express my argument here as a series of worries about public reason; but I think that some version of these worries might have some power against a great many visions of liberal political philosophy. Philosophers have, I think, given too little thought to

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social standing, even if required by justice, is often taken as equivalent to a political form of humiliation. See Margalit, *The Decent Society* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).

the ways in which authoritarian ideals have proven to be attractive; nearly all philosophers, after all, reject authoritarianism, and therefore have spent very little time trying to engage with – and rebut – the arguments given in support of authoritarian politics. The fact that these arguments are bad, though, does not mean that they are *irrelevant*; and we stand in need of more liberal thought explaining, in detail, why these arguments ought to be rejected. I will try, in this paper, to show that public reason is poorly situated to perform this task – but I do not think it is unique in this assessment; much political philosophy might benefit from an engagement with authoritarian politics, if only to help dispel what has seemingly made these politics attractive to so many.

1. *Public Reason and Demonic Reason*

The notion of stability is a central one in Rawls's analysis of political justice. For a political conception of justice to do the job assigned to it in Rawls's theory, it must be capable of generating its own support – and for that support to be persistent, across generations. Rawls's conception of stability takes for granted certain facts about human psychology – in particular, that people are possessed of the two moral powers, including the capacity to be motivated by a sense of justice. Rawls assumed that people, as he understood them, would come to value the political conception of justice, and accept that conception not simply as a *modus vivendi* or compromise, but as a moral vision worked out for the particular domain of the political.[11] Once some such conception were accepted, moreover, the people who grew and were shaped by the community in question would continue to prize and use the political conception in their practices of political argumentation. Rawls called this sort of stability *stability for the right reasons* – to be distinguished from the temporary or totalitarian stabilities that might be produced by power politics.[12] For Rawls, the existence of this sort of stability – in the face of the profound moral disagreement otherwise characteristic of liberal polities – was a lesson to be drawn from history:

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11 These topics are discussed in Lectures 2 ("The Idea of a Political Conception of Justice") and 3 ("The Idea of Society as a Fair System of Cooperation") in *Political Liberalism.* See also Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001) 180–198.

12 Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 388.

> [T]he history of religion and philosophy shows that there are many reasonable ways in which the wider realm of values can be understood so as to be either congruent with, or supportive of, or else not in conflict with, the values appropriate to the special domain of the political as specified by a political conception of justice. History tells of a plurality of not unreasonable comprehensive doctrines and this makes an overlapping consensus possible.[13]

The story here, I imagine, is familiar to most people who are versed in Rawls's thought. What I want to emphasize here, however, is Rawls's profound *optimism* about the sorts of ideas he thought people as he understood them would find motivating. Rawls's conception of stability for the right reasons presupposes that people will continue to rely upon the liberal and democratic values he took to be the focus of an overlapping consensus. One lesson that might be drawn from recent history, though, is the persistence and power of a darker, more demonic set of ideas; political agents choosing between liberalism and authoritarianism cannot always be counted to accept the liberal values Rawls defends – even if those agents grew and were shaped in a society characterized by something like public reason.

To make this case, I want to emphasize five aspects of Rawls's vision of public reason. These aspects, once again, are familiar, but I want to make these explicit as a precursor to demonstrating how the same materials with which Rawls begins can all too easily be warped to defend something closer to authoritarianism.

1. *Persons.* Rawls begins with a conception of the person, as noted above; people are motivated both by a conception of their own good, and also a sense of justice. They are thus motivated by an intrinsic desire to do justice with others, even as those others do justice with them.[14]
2. *Politics.* Because of their desire to do justice, parties begin with a search for principles that are not parochial or dependent upon controversial metaphysics; they thus rely upon ideas present in the public political culture of a democratic state.[15]

13 Rawls, *Justice as Fairness,* 190.
14 Rawls, *Justice as Fairness,* 14–24; *Political Liberalism*, 29–35.
15 Rawls, *Justice as Fairness,* 18–24; *Political Liberalism*, 29–35.

3. *Methods.* Parties use these ideas as the focus of a political conception of justice, which they take as the focus of an overlapping consensus between reasonably disagreeing comprehensive doctrines.[16]
4. *Emotions.* Living in a society characterized by political justice produces emotions that can be taken to motivate continued participation in that society. In particular, the social bases of self-respect are grounded in the fact that one's society is capable of doing justice.[17]
5. *Stability.* These materials are sufficient to ground stability for the right reasons, as Rawls understands it.[18]

These five aspects, again, are simultaneously descriptive and normative. They are descriptive, in that they reflect the process by which liberal democracy has come to be possible under conditions of profound moral and religious disagreement. They are normative, though, in defending and making more precise the process by which the stability of that liberal democratic state is to be assured.

I want, now, to notice something about the sort of ideas Rawls takes as potentially motivating to parties as he understands them. Rawls thinks that the desire to do justice will tend to create parties who want to do justice, in a reciprocal manner, among all and only the members of that society. What Rawls might have overlooked, however, is the persistent appeal of another set of moral ideas present in the public political culture of every democratic state. These ideas, which we might for simplicity call *populist* ideals, begin with the notion that not all those who are apparently members of the society are *really* members, to be accorded the rights demanded by reciprocity. Some members, instead, are *outsiders*, and what they are doing is not sharing in the process of self-government, but denying the true members of the society what ought to be theirs by right. The populist ideal reaches its limit case, perhaps, in fascism, which combines this notion of a true people with a profound rejection of liberal democratic politics. Umberto Eco describes fascism as not a theory, but as a chaotic

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16 Rawls, *Justice as Fairness,* 24–29; *Political Liberalism,* 15–29.

17 Thus, Rawls specifies that in a well-ordered society, citizens not only *are* cooperating members, "but they further want to be, and to be recognized as, members. This supports their self-respect as citizens." Rawls, *Political Liberalism, 81–82.* Rawls presents these ideas as reflecting a normal moral psychology, but I would like to emphasize that such a psychology includes the *emotions* Rawls anticipates will be felt by citizens in well-ordered societies – including the emotions that undergird the felt desire to cooperate on reasonable terms with others. See also *Justice as Fairness,* 195–198.

18 Rawls, *Justice as Fairness,* 184–188; *Political Liberalism,* 388–389.

and often inconsistent set of moral ideas – to which he gives the name Ur-Fascism, reflecting the notion that fascism itself is never a unified or singular thing.[19] Rawls might have thought these ideas dead, at the end of the Cold War; recent political life, however, has shown them to have more power than we might have hoped. For Eco, the fascist:

1. Represents the *true* people, who are never identical with the population governed by the state. Eco called this a "selective populism;" the people are never to be considered as individuals, but as a People – which is to include some, but not all, of those who are within the state's grasp.
2. Insists that the true people are being wronged by the alien – an alien, moreover, who is simultaneously inside the polity, while remaining alien; who is too weak to share in the grandeur of the People's history, while remaining strong enough to steal what is rightly held by the true people. The Fascist, says Eco, seeks consensus by explaining the gap between the grandness of history and the blandness of reality by means of a plot; the fascist must always insist that there is a plot to steal what is rightly held by the People themselves.
3. Demands that the alien at the heart of this plot be recognized as *humiliating* the true people. "The followers," says Eco, "must feel humiliated by the ostentatious wealth and force of their enemies." A struggling middle class, for the fascist, is not simply wronged by the alien, but mocked, laughed at, and subjected to contempt.
4. Rejects liberal democracy as a corrupt tool by which the voice of the People is ignored in favor of the outside alien. "Whenever a politician casts doubt upon the legitimacy of the Parliament because it no longer represents the Voice of the People," says Eco, "we can smell Ur-Fascism."

These ideas, again, are seen most clearly in fascist forms of governance. But the authoritarian populists of the past decade have deployed ideas strikingly similar to these. Donald Trump, for instance, more or less explicitly echoed the fascist concern with the true people, announcing after his election that "the only thing that matters is the unification of the people, because the other people don't mean anything."[20] The outside world, moreover, is wronging the true people of the United States. Trade regimes with China are unfair; so, too, is the American share of keeping

19 Eco, *Ur-Fascism*.

20 Quoted in Jan-Warner Müller, "Donald Trump's use of the term 'the people' is a warning sign," *The Guardian,* 24 January 2017.

NATO at the ready. The outside world, however, wrongs the true people most profoundly when it takes global interests as having any moral force; tellingly, Trump's most frequent insult during his campaign was *globalist* – and, when he withdrew from the Paris climate accord, insisted that he did so because he cared for Pittsburgh rather than Paris.[21] (The American politicians who signed on to that accord, naturally, were implicitly described as *globalist*, and therefore likely traitorous as well.). These outside forces, moreover, are not simply wronging the true people – they are *humiliating* them. China is described as "laughing at" the United States – as is Iran, Isis, Mexico, and the world itself. Indeed, Trump described himself as uniquely capable of bringing back the dignity of the true people:

> The world is laughing at us. We don't win at the borders. We don't win with taking care of our vets. We don't win anymore. We will start winning again like you've never seen before.[22]

His chosen phrase for how this might be accomplished is through the "draining of the swamp" – which entails the rejection of norms and rules constraining the authority of the President, so that the corruption of the status quo can be replaced by the strength needed to restore the true people to their rightful glory.

I use Donald Trump, here, primarily because I live in the United States – but I imagine similar stories could be told in Germany, or Hungary, or any number of other places in which these populist ideas have been used to ground a resurgent right-wing politics. In all of these places, previously marginal parties and candidates have gained power by using a notion of stolen glory strongly akin to the fascism described by Eco. Svetlana Boym has termed this sort of politics as *restorative nostalgia* – in which the primary appeal of the right-wing autocrat is their promise to restore a perceived, sometimes fictional, golden age.[23] It is not, we might think, an accident that Donald Trump used the slogan *Make America Great Again* – nor why the successful Brexit slogan demanded the right to *Take Back Control*.[24] The use of history, and the perception of humiliation as regards that history and its grandeur, is a powerful tool.

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21 Ishaan Tharoor, "After Clinton, Trump's real enemy is globalism," *The Washington Post*, 3 November 2016.

22 Quoted in David A. Graham, "The World Just Laughed at Donald Trump." *The Atlantic*, 25 September 2018.

23 Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2008).

24 The use of narratives of deprivation from past glory is discussed in Justin Gest, Tyler Reny, and Jeremy Mayer, "Roots of the Radical Right: Nostalgic Deprivca-

These messages become more powerful at a time of dislocation and lowered economic expectations; the rise of Donald Trump, for example, can be explained in part with reference to lowered economic outcomes in the manufacturing sector of the United States, along with profound racial anxiety in face of changing demographics. The core of the populist message – *the outsider is humiliating you, ordinary politics helps them do it, grant me great powers so that I might restore you to greatness* – is an attractive one for many people, and can be expected to be particularly attractive to those who perceive themselves as being left behind by globalized production chains and by multicultural cities. Richard Rorty, in a much-discussed passage from his 1998 *Achieving Our Country,* predicted this phenomenon well:

> Members of labor unions, and unorganized unskilled workers, will sooner or later realize that their government is not even trying to prevent wages from sinking or to prevent jobs from being exported. Around the same time, they will realize that suburban white-collar workers — themselves desperately afraid of being downsized — are not going to let themselves be taxed to provide social benefits for anyone else... At that point, something will crack. The nonsuburban electorate will decide that the system has failed and start looking for a strongman to vote for — someone willing to assure them that, once he is elected, the smug bureaucrats, tricky lawyers, overpaid bond salesmen, and postmodernist professors will no longer be calling the shots.[25]

What, though, is the relevance of all this for public reason? The problem, I think, is simply this: the same materials that Rawls insists will ground a stable consensus about liberal politics can be just as easily diverted to ground something entirely different – towards, instead, the need for a resurgent authoritarian politics. We might imagine that this sort of reasoning – which I have termed *demonic reason* – going in a manner strikingly like the process of public reason, as given above:

1. *Persons.* Rawls begins with a conception of the person, as noted above; people are motivated both by a conception of their own good, and also a sense of justice. The sense of justice, however, is first of all a sense

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tion in the United States and Britain," 51(13) *Comparative Political Studies* (2018) 1694–1719.

25 Richard Rorty, *Achieving Our Country* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998) at 90.

of *injustice* – and our sense of injustice can be activated by comparing ourselves to what others have, or what our parents had, or what we might have had. Injustice, after all, is a comparative notion, and we first and foremost compare ourselves with what is close at hand. If the jobs that provided security to our parents are eliminated, we might be willing to hear the ideas of those who say that we have been wronged – that these jobs did not simply disappear, but were stolen by the outsiders who are being unjustly preferred by globalist politicians.

2. *Politics.* The ideas present in the public political culture, once again, will contain ideas that can be used to shape and hone this sense of injustice. The outsider, once again, is not simply wronging the person, but *humiliating* them. Global political changes are, in fact, orchestrated by powerful outsiders, with the intention of depriving the people of what is rightly theirs. The citizens must be told that it is only through a thorough rejection of the outsider and his wiles that the former grandeur of the true people can be restored.
3. *Methods.* Instead of seeking an overlapping consensus that abstracts away from difference, the sense of difference with that outsider must be valorized and emphasized. Within the chosen borders of the true people, difference may be overcome; we might recall that the catastrophic demonstration of the alt-Right at Charlottesville was termed by its organizers as intended to "unite the Right" – so that the differences between them might be overcome.[26] But the agreement here is not to do politics with all those governed by the state – but with those others who accept the need for the outsider's influence to be rejected.
4. *Emotion.* Where Rawls sought to ground the social bases of self-respect in the administration of political justice, the authoritarian populist promises meaning through the rejection of the domain of the political. Instead, the self-respect of the individual is grounded on their recognition of their historic destiny; the individual gains meaning precisely from their rejection of the conventional rules of political and social discourse. To look, once more, at Charlottesville: the marchers chanted *you will not replace us* – identifying, thereby, the *us* with which they identified as a source of power and self-respect for those marchers.[27]

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26 See Joe Heim, "Recounting a day of rage, hate, violence and death," *The Washington Post*, August 14, 2017.

27 The chant referred to a theory in which white Europeans are being deliberately targeted for "replacement" by a mass of non-white migrants, whose movement is coordinated by a shadowy group of globalists. The theory often includes anti-Semitic accounts of this supposed conspiracy; some of those who marched at

5. *Stability.* As Eco notes, fascism is a doctrine of conflict; it has no place for stability, but insists instead that conflict is the natural state for humanity. Authoritarian populism shares something much like this, in a more moderated space; the goal for the populist is the draining of the swamp – which requires the *existence* of a swamp, or something like it, as a means by which the authoritarian leader justifies his political might.

I describe the above not to defend it; I am not an authoritarian populist, and have no interest in defending authoritarian policies nor their methodologies. What I want to say, instead, is simply this: citizens, as Rawls understands them, are possessed of both a conception of the good and a sense of justice. They will face, in political life, appeals from politicians who phrase their programs as interpretations of something like Rawls's political liberalism. They will also face, we have seen, appeals from other sorts of political entrepreneur – from agents who insist that an outsider is wronging the citizen in question, that liberal democracy has become a tool through which this humiliation is perpetuated, and that only extraordinary powers can restore that which is that citizen's by right. Rawls explains, and explains well, how it is possible for a citizen to come to value the political conception of justice, and to overcome her own parochial comprehensive doctrine in the name of reciprocity and fairness. But Rawls has nothing to offer us when we ask why, or how, that citizen should resist the siren call of authoritarian populism. The parties, as he describes them, are at least as likely to be moved by perceived injustice towards themselves as they are towards the more abstract needs of social justice within the liberal political community. The same toolkit that gives rise to public reason, in short, can just as easily give rise to demonic reason; and, just as public reason gives rise to political liberalism, so too can demonic reason give rise to fascism, or to something very much like it. It is, I think, precisely because Rawls grounded his normative theory in a descriptive account of political discourse, that he is unable to provide – from within his theory – the tools needed to tell the individual why she should listen to the liberal, and not to the authoritarian. Public reason and demonic reason can both be grounded on the description Rawls provides of people as he

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Charlottesville changed "you will not replace us" to "Jews will not replace us" midway through the march. For a discussion of the impact of this theory on right-wing violence, see Thomas Chatterton Williams, "The French Origins of 'You Will Not Replace Us'," *The New Yorker*, November 27, 2017.

understands them; and the stability over time of the liberal democratic project is, on this account, much less certain than Rawls himself thought.

2. *Bad philosophy in bad times*

When I have presented these ideas, or their antecendents, many philosophers have had the same reaction: the people who are attracted to the authoritarian populist vision are *bad reasoners* – and who, exactly, should care about the political philosophy of those who can't reason clearly? The populists make philosophical and empirical errors in the reasoning described above. The one who feels aggrieved because he makes less money than his parents, for instance, might as easily be facing the elimination of a privilege as the imposition of an injustice. (White Americans have, in a similar vein, sometimes cast their anxieties over demographic change in terms of injustice; many observers have taken the Trump slogan *Make America Great Again* as a dog-whistle version of such a view.). The one who thinks of refugees, or Mexican-Americans, as outsiders to the process of justification – as beyond, in Rawlsian terms, the set of people bound by liability to the basic structure of society – makes an error in the application of the Rawlsian project. The one who attributes his relative impoverishment to the devious intervention of an outside race, too, makes an empirical error about the best explanation for his economic expectations. The one attracted to the demonic vision described above, in short, is bad at the task of doing (and applying) political philosophy. So why should political philosophers care about such a reasoner?[28]

The answer, in short, is that it isn't enough for us to know that demonic reason is wrong; we have to be able to *show* that it is wrong – and, most crucially, there is very little to be found in Rawls himself that gives us the tools to do that. What matters here isn't that the liberal-democratic vision of public reason is better – it is – but how we can get to that conclusion; and Rawls's attempt to ground his normative theory in a descriptive one provides us with very few resources with which to ground that conclusion. In particular, what we can't say is that the demonic version of public reason doesn't meet (say) the distributive test of the difference principle. That's true, of course – but remember that this test only counts as an important one because it is taken to be a liberal principle that emerges from

28 My discussion here parallels my discussion of authoritarian populism in *Justice, Migration, and Mercy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020) at 137–142.

the overlapping consensus regarding a political conception of justice. For those who have the moral capacities ascribed to them by Rawls, but who have not (yet) accepted his own particular vision of public reason, there is nothing in the difference principle that is capable of commanding respect. The difference principle is an *outcome* of the process of public reason as Rawls describes it; it cannot be taken as an independent reason to *begin* that process, or to accept its outcomes as obligatory. We cannot argue someone towards liberalism by showing that liberalism is compatible with itself.

Instead, to demonstrate that the demonic vision is in error, we must rely upon norms and skills that are exogenous to Rawls's own theory. Demonstrating the superiority of public reason here requires the use of philosophical resources that are not themselves discussed in Rawls's vision of public reason. This is, of course, comprehensible; Rawls, in the years after 1989, was writing in a context in which the resurgence of anti-democratic forms of populism seemed rather unlikely. Rawls therefore took the task of liberal political philosopher to be explaining *how* liberal political justice was possible – and not the broader task of explaining *why* we ought to persist in our liberalism. It is this broader task, however, which seems now to be the most crucial one of all.

This might be thought unfair to Rawls in at least two ways. He was, first, writing prior to the rise of right-wing populism; expecting him to anticipate it would be to demand him to be excellent not only at philosophy but at prediction. He would be, moreover, quite likely to retort that he had enough to do in his own chosen task, of demonstrating how a liberal society might be stable over time in face of the disagreement of reasonable people; he should not be expected to also provide those wavering in their liberalism with the tools needed to preserve their faith.

These responses, of course, are quite right; and nothing I say here ought to be taken as a reason to think Rawls was guilty of any particular philosophical sin. (I say this, of course, as someone raised – philosophically speaking – as a political liberal, and as someone who still tends to think about politics through a Rawlsian lens.). Nonetheless, it can still be true that the world throws new political problems at us, which might require us to modify or supplement the theories with which we have traditionally approached the political world.

Take, for instance, the first bad response discussed above: the confusion between the withdrawal of racial privilege and the introduction of racial injustice. A study from the Pew Charitable Trust found that more white Evangelical Christians think that the United States discriminates against

whites (50 % agreement) than Blacks (31 % agreement).[29] This is, I think, a fairly difficult belief to ground in the empirical evidence. Looking at the evidence – from life expectancy, social mobility, educational access, physical security, and so on – would suggest that it is (to put it somewhat mildly) rather easier to be white than Black in the United States. The question, though, is how to vindicate this thought, in the face of someone who simply rejects the thought. The white Republicans are, we might assume, simply insisting that any reduction in their previously-held social advantages are tantamount to pernicious discrimination. They have, moreover, some well-trodden methods by which they might seek to avoid any pattern of reasoning that leads them away from that insistence. There are any number of ways, after all, of doing philosophy badly – and humans may be tempted to *want* it to be done badly, when that failure helps us justify our privilege.[30]

We might, first, simply do the philosophy badly, because doing philosophy well is hard. It is hard, of course, simply because doing it well requires me to take a position on what sorts of things count and why – and there are any number of ways in which one can go awry in the process of marking out that position. Most of us, after all, take our own pain to be rather more intense than that of other people, if only because that pain is *ours*. I know my pain; I cannot know yours. Indeed, sometimes I cannot even know what your pain is *like*; I do not think I can, even in principle, arrive at an adequate first-person understanding of anti-Black racism, by reasoning myself towards what it's like to be a Black person facing racist oppression. But things are worse, here, because I am often *motivated* to do the philosophy badly. As Upton Sinclair noted, long ago, it is hard to get a man to understand a thing, when his job depends upon his not understanding it; so, too, the comparative advantages of being (say) white in the United States. Stephen Gardiner noted, in connection with climate change, the tremendous power of moral corruption, in ensuring

29 The study is available at https://www.pewforum.org/2014/09/22/section-1-religion-in-public-life/

30 Stephen Gardiner's account of moral corruption in climate mitigation is useful here; Gardiner notes that otherwise respectable moral agents may be tempted by the worse argument, when that argument allows them to continue climate advantages (and to avoid painful collective sacrifices, relative to the status quo.). See Stephen Gardiner, *A Perfect Moral Storm: The Ethical Tragedy of Climate Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) at 301–338. We might also note the maxim attributed to Upton Sinclair: it is difficult to get a man to understand something, when his salary depends upon his not understanding it.

that those who enjoy lives made possible by carbon emissions will justify those emissions. The same point, however, generalizes to all forms of advantage. Nothing makes bad reasoning as attractive as its promise to let one's advantages persist. We might, finally, come to understand that our reasoning is faulty, while still finding it difficult if not impossible for us to *act* upon that reasoning. I have spent a great many years now teaching Peter Singer's "Famine, Affluence, and Morality," and have watched any number of undergraduates insist themselves convinced by his reasoning; the number who changed their habits as a result, however, can be counted on the fingers of one hand.

What is the relevance of all this, though, to public reason? It emerges, I think, when one imagines the following. Take a citizen who embodies the two moral powers, as described by Rawls; she is imperfect in altruism, but capable of being motivated by justice. One political party – motivated by Rawls's own justice as fairness – proposes that the society work to develop a basic structure that embodies the two principles of justice, and argues that an overlapping consensus on a political conception of justice would be capable of justifying these two principles. Another party, however, comes along and says: you are capable of being motivated by a sense of justice – and the worst injustices are those committed against *you*! You and yours were once rightly dominant, and now you are not; you no longer have what your parents' generations could expect – and that, itself, is the greatest injustice of all. This latter party, in short, deploys the entire toolkit of the demonic vision of public reason. If this party is unsuccessful – and recent evidence suggests it won't be, at least in the short run – then that lack of success must depend upon people being both intellectually and morally virtuous. They must be intellectually virtuous, of course, in that they must deploy the philosophical skills needed to say why the arguments given by the populist aren't good ones. They must be morally virtuous, as well, in that they must resist these arguments even when they promise particular advantages. And – what is most important, in our present discussion – nothing in Rawls's vision of public reason provides any help, to that citizen, in her imperfect and tenuous virtue. Rawls's vision of public reason simply asserts that she will make the rightful decision. Nothing in his own theory here provides her with any resources to understand *why* it is right – or how to resist the siren song of self-serving bullshit.

This might, once again, be felt unfair to Rawls. We should not expect Rawls – or anyone – to offer reasons capable of convincing committed authoritarians of the moral benefits of liberal democracy. If is, however, equally true that we might have some reason to demand that our best theories of democracy offer us some reasoning about why democracy *matters* –

and why we ought to continue the difficult task of building liberal justice with others. It is especially ironic that Rawls is vulnerable to this charge, since his earlier work – in particular, his presentation of his views in *A Theory of Justice* – can be read as a defense of liberal democracy, by showing how weak and widely-shared premises can lead to robust liberal and democratic principles of justification. Rawls's later work, however, made it clear that he did not want his theory read in this robust way. Liberal democracy was compatible with a reasonable diversity of comprehensive doctrines; but it was hard to say much more for it than that. Certainly, Rawls himself never wavered in his belief that liberal democracy was special; but there was nothing in his later theory that required others to think the same. There were, in particular, no arguments about why those who were not motivated to play the game of liberal democracy were wrong. Rawls's thought on this subject began with a concern for diversity, in *Political Liberalism,* and then continued into an account of international toleration, in *The Law of Peoples*; in both books, he was keen to avoid a liberalism that had pretenses to universality, or to metaphysical truth of the sort asserted by comprehensive doctrines. The past decade has shown, however, that we have as much to fear from liberal modesty as we do from liberal arrogance. A theory that has nothing in it to offend the theocrat or the authoritarian populist is a theory that is incapable of *speaking back* to such agents; and it seems now that we might benefit enormously from the tools needed to do just that.

3. *Hope and philosophy*

As I noted above, it is usually a bad idea to get one's predictions from a philosopher. We have no training in empirical methods, and a disciplinary tendency to overstate the bounds of our knowledge. (We also have – or, at least, too many of us seem to have – a rather unjustified view of our own wisdom.). Nonetheless, I want to end this chapter with some predictions here that seem not unduly outlandish to me – and a few thoughts about how the discipline of philosophy might respond to these changing circumstances.

I want, in particular, to say one simple truth: I think things are going to get worse. Worse, in particular, in that the power of *humiliation* is not going away – and because global changes will continue to make that humiliation potent, and explosive, in the near future.

Take, for instance, global distributive justice. There is an unprecedented gap between the wealth of the global elite and the global poor – and,

now, an unprecedented amount of *knowledge* by the global rich and the global poor *about each other.* This is fertile ground for populism. If the gap continues to widen, then democratic institutions in the global South will face authoritarian pressures from those keen to sacrifice democracy in the name of global justice. (As Louise Arbour, the former U.N. Commissioner for Human Rights, once put it: the most dangerous substance in the world isn't nuclear weaponry – it's unemployed young men.)[31]. If, on the other hand, we ever come close to achieving global economic justice, it will only be because people in wealthy states moderate their consumption of resources like air travel, fossil fuels, and any number of other goods. We will overcome global economic inequality, in short, if a new generation of Americans consumes less than their parents did – and it seems eminently predictable that a great many of those Americans won't be too happy about that fact. Similar conclusions hold true even if we ignore distributive justice, and focus instead on the sustainability of ecological resources. Restorative nostalgia is an explosive force; and the evidence suggests that even young Americans are likely as susceptible to bad reasoning as the older citizens generally blamed for the election of President Trump.

So: what, if anything, can, be done, if all this is true?

I think the only answers I can offer here are tentative and partial – and, certainly, none of them come close to an adequate response to the rise of authoritarian populism in the present (and its possible continued ascendance in the future.). I will focus, here, on what philosophy can do – while acknowledging, of course, that philosophy can't do much. But I think there are some changes we might usefully make, in both the content and the craft of political philosophy.

We can start with the content. As I have argued, I think the modesty of Rawls's vision of liberal political philosophy comes with some significant costs. In seeking to ground liberal political philosophy in the descriptive – in the *facts* of liberal political societies – it has very little to tell us when those facts change. It has been so focused on the moral wrong of imposing liberalism on unwilling foreign societies, that it has few resources left with which a society might perpetuate liberalism for itself. I think philosophy might have to return to an older vision of what the liberal political philosopher ought to do; she ought to, I think, do something to reinvigo-

31 Arbour made the remark in the course of a CBC/Munk School panel on global institutions with myself, Catherine Dauvergne, and Stephen Toope. A recording of the event is at https://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/global-justice-part-1-justice-across-borders-1.3368968

rate the power and appeal of liberalism itself – to remind us of why liberal democracy is worth fighting for. Liberalism is a fragile plant, at the best of times; and these are not the best of times. Liberalism can be expected to face increasing pressures from within – and, although I have not discussed it here, increasing pressures from outside authoritarian agents as well. John Rawls, once again, was primarily worried about an imperial liberalism imposing democratic norms upon unwilling outside countries. He never anticipated those outside countries actively working *against* democracy – as the Russian state apparently did in 2016.[32] Philosophy isn't much use against the power of the GRU; but it might be good for us to do what we can, where we are, to speak back against the decay of the democratic ideal.

We ought also focus, I think, on the *craft* of political philosophy. There are, here, some things that might be worth changing – in the structure of this profession, and how it allocates its rewards. We tend to focus on *hard* problems – by which we often mean, I think, problems for which there are some strong answers on either side. We get promotion and tenure, after all, for being both clever and inventive, and coming up with arguments that haven't been made before. It might be time to reconsider this problem-based vision of how philosophy is done. Some of the things done by authoritarians – ranging from the Trump administration's policy of family separation, to the extra-judicial killings of the Duterte regime in the Philippines – seem so starkly evil as to be philosophically uninteresting. But we might want to put some of our training to work on reminding ourselves – and those who might be tempted by authoritarianism – of why they *are* evil. This might mean changing how we allocate money, and prestige, and publications, and promotions – but it might be a good idea for us to start speaking more openly about that nonetheless. We might want also to recognize the ways in which philosophy has not always been open to all ideas – in particular, the ideas that animated conservative thinkers in previous generations. Recent surveys show that professors in general are overwhelmingly – in the United States, at least – partisans of the left-wing party. A recent survey found that there were ten Democratic professors for every Republic professor – and that almost eighty percent of all academic departments studied had *no* registered Republicans on faculty.[33] This

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32 Shaun Walker, "The Russian troll farm at the heart of the meddling allegations," *The Guardian*, 2 April 2015.

33 Mitchell Langbert, "Homogeneous: The Political Affiliations of Elite Liberal Arts College Faculty," *Academic Questions* (Summer 2018). Available at https://www.nas.org/academic-questions/31/2/homogenous_the_political_affiliations_of_elite_liberal_arts_college_faculty. It should be noted that research about the politics