

The politics of philosophical intervention

On how philosophy could be
unbearably political

Epistemology is political

- How we think and conceive of things is crucial to action and further thinking. There is politics in the way theories and conceptions of the world are accepted or rejected.
- Politics here is connected to normativity; to what is intelligible and to what has to do with the organization of our systems of the world.
- Knowledge is political, the way we approach and relate to the external world. Maybe the external world can be made into something political itself through some major form of anti-realism but the political relation between us and the world is one of how we conceive of it.
- Politics is at most in the sphere of thought. Noopolitics: the way our thoughts produce power and resistance.
- By thinking, we can refurbish our worldview – thinking is a central political activity. Philosophy is a political intervention because it deals in thinking.

The Hume-Quine take on epistemology is political

- Hume: the world is accessible through experience and that is of singular items only. Those items are organized by us. The humean predicament is the human predicament: we cannot go beyond experience without the help of elements of our own.
- All necessity is up to us. All order too. The world is minimal, composed of objects, properties are non-modal and causally inefficacious – inanimate. (Compare with D. H. Lawrence's image)
- Quine: without fixed points, experience (and the world) reveals nothing. Those fixed points can be seen as political options – in any case, there lies the room for politics.
- We cannot get messages from experience without a politics that does more than organize it - it renders experience intelligible.
- In both cases, experience itself – no matter how meager is its content - is politically neutral. The meaning attached to it could be under political dispute, but not experience as such. Analogously, the world is not politically at stake.

The Hegel-Wittgenstein take on epistemology is political

- Here the intelligibility of experience itself is called into question. Immediacy is not a safeguard for the pre-political. Empirical content is already laden with politics.
- There is no part of our access of the world that is immune to political variables. Intelligibility of any thinking content is a political act. Semantics is full of (micro-)political choices: the way we speak is a visible part of our politics. To have something to say (and to think) is the primary political act
- Normativity has a broad scope – this scope is the scope of politics. Whenever normativity reaches an end, politics has no place (often, one tends to argue that everything is subject to norms). Those norms are the ultimate image of our political landscape.
- There is a great room for politics – and for our choices – as there is less room for nature. The formula could be: less ontology, more politics. Here, whenever the world is mentioned, there is politics – because it needs to be accessed and rendered intelligible.

The intermediate Foucaudian take

- Foucault emphasizes what we can call aletopolitics. Regimes of truth are essential for political structures. Truth itself is political. Not only the will of truth but also the production, distribution and consumption of truth.
- The regimes of truth make impossible to understand ideology as any kind of falsification to be uncovered. Truth itself works within a political machinery.
- A (Davidsonian) tripod constituted of the socius, the speaker and the world is postulated to account for truth within a political sphere. We can also think of Guattari's three intertwined ecologies
- So far as truth is a human construction, there is no politics beyond the socius, beyond the limits of our thought. Aletopolitics does not dramatically expand the scope of noopolitics. But it introduces politics among truths about the world.

Ontology is political

- Often the views presented before (associated to an epistemological conception of why philosophy is political) take the world to be beyond the reach of politics. It is a world full of determinations. It is often, to some extent, a Humean world of regularities, laws or inanimate singulars.
- We can come to see such a world as a world of submission, obedience and passivity. We can start by considering the politics that guides our metaphysical postulations (or the erotics that guides them).
- Our conception can be understood as having an effect on how things are as we allow singulars to have powers to resist and escape the otherwise established order. When we switch to an ontology of powers and potencies instead of properties and laws we uncover the political potential of things in nature, beyond our thoughts.
- Ontology could have to be preceded by politics: by the polemos, by the powers in conflict, by immanent becomings, by a Lévinasian attitude towards the other etc. Placing politics before ontology (or together with it) can lead us beyond what placing politics before epistemology can lead us: it can give us paleopolitics (the politics of the constitution of individuals, like in Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morals), phisiopolitics (the politics of the driving forces in the evolution of the species), ontopolitics.
- The furniture of the universe is itself called into question. Well, there is a political struggle going on in the interaction of things, in the evolution of the species, in the friction of parts of desires, in the ecology of beliefs being spread etc. and thought is no more than a part of it (part of politics, part of ontology).

Non-fascist politics

- Free political action from all unitary and totalizing paranoia.
- Develop action, thought, and desires by proliferation, juxtaposition, and disjunction, and not by subdivision and hierarchization.
- Withdraw allegiance from the old categories of the Negative (law limit, castration, lack, lacuna), which Western thought has long held sacred as a form of power and access to reality. Prefer what is positive and multiple: difference over uniformity, flows over unities, mobile arrangements over systems. Believe that what is productive is not sedentary but nomadic.
- Do not think that one has to be sad in order to be militant, even though the thing one is fighting is abominable. It is the connection of desire to reality (and not its retreat into the forms of representation) that possesses revolutionary force.
- Do not use thought to ground a political practice in Truth; nor political action to discredit, as mere speculation, a line of thought. Use political practice as an intensifier of thought, and analysis as a multiplier of the forms and domains for the intervention of political action.
- Do not demand of politics that it restore the "rights" of the individual, as philosophy has defined them. The individual is the product of power. What is needed is to "de-individualize" by means of multiplication and displacement, diverse combinations. The group must not be the organic bond uniting hierarchized individuals, but a constant generator of de-individualization.
- Do not become enamored of power.

Non-fascist ontology

- Free ontology from all unitary and totalizing paranoia.
- Ontology has room for proliferation, juxtaposition, and disjunction, it is composed by relations between forces rather than by a hierarchy of realms
- Withdraw allegiance from the old categories of the Negative (law limit, castration, lack, lacuna, parsimony, reduction, irrelevance), which Western thought has long held sacred as a form of access to reality. Prefer what is positive and multiple: difference over uniformity, flows over unities, mobile arrangements over systems. Believe that what is in your ontology is to be productive and not sedentary but nomadic. The Ockham's razor can cut one's head off: the superfluous is the mark of powers to come.
- Do not think that the world has to be grey to be understood, even though there are grey and bleak parts of the world. They should not be what is there to be matched. It is the connection of desire to reality (and not its retreat into the forms of representation) that possesses revolutionary force.
- Do not use thought to shepherd ontology – thought is part of it.
- Do not demand of individuals out of your ontology. Any singularity could become an established order; they are all passing singularities. Wholes are constantly dissolving and recreating singularities.
- Don't think of the world as made of dominions, with borders that could be controlled.

Politics is ontology?

- A world of excesses and exceptions: view the world as movement and singularities as powers take us to consider politics and ontology very close together. Maybe the question of what comes first is therefore dissolved.
- Maybe ontology should have room for experience, for encounters of different potentialities that would lead to what is open.
- But what is an ontology that incorporate politics - and the polemos - like? What then does it mean to do ontology? To intervene?