

*Academic Privilege and Modern Scholasticism:
Secular Transcendence and Wordly Immanence*



*Privilegio académico y escolasticismo moderno:
trascendencia secular e inmanencia mundana*

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ABSTRACT

This essay explores issues of worldly immanence and secular transcendence by focusing on modern scholasticism. Such scholasticisms intimate pervasive procedures that turn their particular case into the general story while forgetting the conditions that make this possible. It is exactly such spectacular conjuring that the essay refers to as secular transcendence: implicit assumptions of immaculate knowledge that occlude and ignore the traces and tracks of its maculate birth in the world. Against this is contrasted the presence of worldly immanence, which militates against routine assumptions of the disenchantment of – and detachment toward – the world. Seizing upon such worldly immanence, the essay critically explores how modern scholasticism and secular transcendence formidably beget and betoken the cultural privilege of academic arenas, embodied at once in the latter's conceptual conventions as well as their everyday life-worlds.

Key words: Immanence, Scholasticism, Public Sphere, Jürgen Habermas, Academic-Privilege.

The essay ahead is something of a patchwork, one that stitches, layers, and pieces together common motifs of academic life and uncommon shapes of critical questions. Here, I principally focus on considerations of (everyday) immanence and (modern) scholasticism. Yet, in doing so, I necessarily draw in attributes of the analytical and the affective as well as issues of entitlement and enquiry. The bid is at once to affirm the presence in the world of these concepts-entities *and* to unravel their constitution and contention in academic arenas. It is in these ways that I raise questions regarding worldly immanence and secular transcendence, modern scholasticism and academic privilege in our own times.

There are compelling reasons behind my undertaking these tasks. Across more than three decades, my research, writing, and teaching have combined history, anthropology, and social theory, focusing chiefly on subjects of South Asian provenance yet ever drawing them into dialogue with other geo-political terrains, especially Latin America. At the same time, I have always approached such questions in terms of wider considerations of critical thought and theory, prudent method and methodology.¹ In doing so, I have found, again and again, formidable *exceptionalisms* that abound in the academy, particularly in the study of Asia and Africa (but also of Latin America, including Mexico).

On the one hand, these arenas have been frequently cast as innately different and all too distant, bearing an innate exoticism or embodying an inevitable lack (or both at once): envisioned in the likenesses of universal history, reflected in the mirrors of Euro-American modernity, ever reproducing their hierarchical conjunctions of time and space. On the other hand, the challenges to such tendencies, whether rendered as anti-essentialist

¹ These twin tendencies run through my different works cited in this essay. They are acutely embodied in Saurabh Dube, *El archivo y el campo: Antropología, historia, modernidad* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 2019).

thinking or cast as post- and de-colonial criticism, have no less elaborated a distinct species of exceptionalism: now, the force of critique turns power – of empire and nation, colony and modernity, the state and the West – into a dystopic totality against which are pitted the ethics of alterity and subalternity, the innocence of difference and resistance, each articulated as un-recuperated particulars, *a priori* antidotes to authority.² Here, both sides overlook their own claims upon intellectual transcendence and the contrasting presence of radical imaginaries of compelling immanence. To stay with and think through such tendencies is to resolutely eschew exceptionalisms – including of Asia, Africa, and Latin America – in order to enter instead the protocols of distinct traditions of social theory, based not on their meta-geographical origins but their critical possibilities. In other words, there is not getting away from the formative inadequacy, indispensability, and not one-ness of Europe and the West, modernity and their margins – not in merely empirical manners but in imaginatively critical ways.

BEGINNINGS

Facing up to these challenges, this essay explores issues of worldly immanence exactly while querying the incessant clamor of a secular transcendence. Here, it warrants emphasis that transcendence and immanence are usually understood in relation to the divine, based upon the antimony between the religious and the secular, or the opposition between enchantment and disenchantment in/of the world. As should soon become clear, querying such antinomies my emphasis is on a *worldly immanence*, which is *not* predicated

² See especially, Saurabh Dube, *Subjects of Modernity: Time-Space, Disciplines, Margins* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

upon the divine.³ Equally, in speaking of transcendence, ever in relation to scholasticism, my reference is to assumptions of immaculate knowledge that occlude and ignore the traces and tracks of its maculate birth in the world. In a sense, then, the widest question I am asking is the following: In articulating worlds of today and yesterday, can our endeavor rest upon an acceptance of worldly immanence rather than seek requirements of secular transcendence?

At this point it is worth staying a little longer with the terms scholasticism and secular transcendence, which beget each other. Now, scholasticism commonly refers to the system and method of teaching and learning of theology and philosophy that was predominant in Europe from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries. Indeed, the term was invented by sixteenth century Renaissance humanists to pejoratively describe the stylistic verbosity and sterile intellectualism of such tendencies.⁴ At the same time, principally drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu and conjoining this with the emphases of Jacques Rancière, my use of scholasticism has a wider purchase.⁵ Quite simply, it refers to orientations and understandings in the past and the present that turn their

³ See especially the section ahead on “Unravelling Immanence.”

⁴ Here, as Josef Pieper has shown, such ready assessments bear closer scrutiny, yet it is important to track as well, following Orlando Bontancor, how scholastic presumption could be implicated in wider projects of power and meaning, such as those of imperial processes and mercantile capitalism. Josef Pieper, *Scholasticism: Personalities and Problems of Medieval Philosophy* (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine’s Press, 2001); Orlando Bontancor, *The Matter of Empire: Metaphysics and Mining in Colonial Peru* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2017).

⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000); Jacques Rancière, *The Philosopher and His Poor*, trans. Andrew Parker, Corrine Oster, John Drury (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); see also, Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984); Jacques Rancière, *The Nights of Labor: The Workers’ Dream in Nineteenth-Century France*, trans. John Drury (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989); and Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, trans. Kristin Ross (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).

particular case into the general story while forgetting the conditions that make this possible.

Put differently, modern scholasticisms cut across different ideological orientations and distinct political practices as part of their apprehending, objectifying, and acting upon the past, present, and future. What is common to all of them is the formative privileging of their own “ought” over the acute contentions, or the exact “is”, of contradictory worlds, assiduously brushing aside also contending historical subjects. It is exactly such spectacular conjuring that I refer to as *secular transcendence*.⁶ Now, scholastic protocols of secular transcendence exist as dispositions and structures – or, as structured dispositions – that are not only academic, merely intellectual, simply philosophical. Actually, these procedures are terribly worldly. They embody and engender entitlement, privilege, and hierarchy – of arguments and analytics, of words and worlds.

Elaborating on these propositions, my endeavor ahead is exactly to unravel such scholasticisms and their implications by exploring at once the conceptual conventions *and* everyday lifeworlds of the academy. It is to take up these tasks in order to track how the heterogeneous yet immaculate “ought” of scholasticism – and its constant claims of secular transcendence – formidably beget and betoken the cultural privilege of academic arenas. Taken together, the essay weaves together motifs, designs, and patterns of the pervasive projections of secular transcendence, the formidable presence of scholastic reasoning, the incessant place of cultural entitlement, and the quiet possibilities of worldly immanence.

⁶Bert van Roermund provides a distinct take on “secular transcendence”, which intriguingly intersects with aspects of my proposal regarding transcendence. Bert van Roermund, “Kelsen, Secular Religion, and the Problem of Transcendence”, *Netherlands Journal of Legal Philosophy*, 44 (2015): 100-115.

PRIMARY STITCHES

Concerning the careful questioning(s) of modern knowledge as bound to imaginative affirmation(s) of social worlds, under issue are the ways in which academic and everyday arenas come together and fall apart. This is to say that rather than bracketing and sheltering intellectual arguments from the wider worlds in which they are embedded, such claims and conceits require being constantly submit to the demanding terms of quotidian terrains, including the mutual intimations of power and meaning, authority and alterity, the dominant and the subaltern in these domains.

Drawing upon such dispositions – while braiding together analytical impulses with hermeneutic sensibilities – my own endeavor has distinguished between historically located “subjects of modernity” as bearers of heterogeneous reasons/understandings, on the one hand, and routine representations of the “modern subject” as insinuating a singular rationality, on the other. Actually the distinction lies at the core of my understanding of modernity, which I approach not merely as an idea, an ideal, an ideology but as historical processes of meaning and power that stretch back over the past five centuries. A minor detour becomes imperative here, for better explicating the arguments of this essay.

For starters, upon my reading, modernity is not the sole product of, say, Cartesian dualities or a singular Enlightenment predicated upon aggrandizing analytics or the imperial endeavors of the British, the French, and the Dutch after the eighteenth century or, indeed, all of the above. Rather, the modernity of the Enlightenment (with its acute interplay between race and reason) came only after the modernity of the Renaissance (with its interleaving of metaphysical instrumentalism and mercantile capitalism), quite as the constitutive violence of modernity of later colonialisms was preceded by modern genocides of the empires of an anterior Spain and a prior Portugal. The point is that – not unlike the innate heterogeneity and formative contentions of the

Enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – the processes of modernity since the sixteenth century need to be approached as being constitutively contradictory.⁷

On the one hand, as part of a familiar picture, making modernity are processes of reason and science, industry and technology, commerce and consumption, science and discovery, nation-state and citizen-subject, public spheres and private spaces, and secularized religion(s) and disenchanting knowledge(s). Here, it warrants emphasis that vigilance is required regarding the endless unfolding of these developments as inexorable, heroic histories. Indeed, such stories require being unraveled as rather more checkered narratives. On the other hand, at the core of modernity lie processes of empires and colonies, race and genocide, literalisms and scholasticisms, resurgent faiths and reified traditions, disciplinary regimes and subaltern subjects, and seductions of the state and enchantments of the modern. These two sides of modernity are not split apart but enmeshed in each other. This is to register that

⁷ It bears emphasis that my own understandings variously access but also exceed recent work on modernity that has charted new directions. Such departures have served to foreground questions of modernity in academic agendas and on intellectual horizons, more broadly. I indicate four critical trends here. First and foremost, there have been works focusing on different expressions of the modern and distinct articulations of modernity as historically grounded and/or culturally expressed, articulations that query *a priori* projections and sociological formalisms underpinning the category-entity. Second, there are the studies that have diversely explored issues of “early” and “colonial” and “multiple” and “alternative” modernity/modernities, including as part of “connected histories”. Third, we find imaginative ethnographic, historical, and theoretical explorations of modernity’s conceptual cognates such as globalization, capitalism, and cosmopolitanism as well as of attendant issues of state, nation, and democracy. Fourth and finally, there have been varied explorations of the enchantments of modernity and of the magic of the modern, understood not as analytical errors but as formative of social worlds. These studies have ranged from the elaborations of the fetish of the state, the sacred character of modern sovereignty, the uncanny of capitalism, and the routine enticements of modernity through to the secular magic of representational practices such as entertainment shows, cinema, and advertising. Such critical questions and these wider tendencies are discussed in the references that follow in the next note, below.

procedures of modernity have been contradictory, contingent, and contested – protocols that are incessantly articulated yet also critically out of joint with themselves.

Now, it is precisely these procedures that emerge expressed by subjects of modernity. Here, my reference is to historical actors who have been active participants in processes of modernity: social actors who have been both *subject to* these processes but also *subjects shaping* these processes. Over the past few centuries, the subjects of modernity have included, for example, peasants, artisans, and workers in South Asia that have diversely articulated processes of colony and post-colony; indigenous communities in the Americas under colonial and national rule; peoples of African descent not only on that continent but in different Diasporas across the world; and, indeed, subaltern, marginal, middle-class, and elite women and men in non-Western and Western theatres. Unsurprisingly, these subjects have registered within their measures and meanings the formative contradictions, contentions, and contingencies of modernity.⁸

The distinction between the exclusively-rendered modern subject and necessarily-heterogenous subjects of modernity is an important one, at once in historical and theoretical ways.⁹

⁸ Saurabh Dube, *Subjects of Modernity: Time-Space, Disciplines, Margins* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017); and Saurabh Dube, *Stitches on Time: Colonial Textures and Postcolonial Tangles* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004). See also, Saurabh Dube (ed.), *Enchantments of Modernity: Empire, Nation, Globalization* (London: Routledge, 2010); Saurabh Dube and Ishita Banerjee-Dube (eds.), *Unbecoming Modern: Colonialism, Modernity, Colonial Modernities*, Second Edition with New Introduction (London and New Delhi: Routledge and Social Science Press, 2019); and Saurabh Dube (ed.), *Modern Makeovers: Handbook of Modernity in South Asia* (New Delhi and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁹ Indeed, none of this is to the formative plurality, the constitutive not-oneness also of modern subjects who are themselves always equally subjects of modernity. See, for instance, Dube, *Subjects of Modernity* and also the conversation between Carlos Marichal and Saurabh Dube available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2lfYucKbL8Y&feature=emb_logo

Actually, it is specially salient for thinking through a pervasive meaning-legislative, adjudicatory reason that abounds in the academy while also of course extending far beyond. Indeed, such a rationality (and rationale) frames the objects it considers in the image of the commentator-analysts' singular, self-same reason rather than as subjects of other reasons, entailing equally issues of entitlement and privilege, affect and embodiment.¹⁰

The present essay takes forward these concerns by narrating the pervasive presence of distinct scholasticism(s) – involving the substitution of any contentious “is” by their own “ought” – in academic and everyday worlds. Indeed, I explore how these tendencies are tied to formidable conceits of knowledge-making that are variously founded on terms of transcendence, secular yet prophetic, which come to haunt even those bids that seek to escape them. Throughout, I shall seek to unravel, if often implicitly, the place of a worldly immanence – itself tied to textures of affect and embodiment, formations of the sensuous and the political – as a means of approaching and understanding the past and present. At the end, I shall draw together these considerations by articulating anew my prior proposal (first made nearly two decades ago) of a “history without warranty.”

Clearly, running through this essay is a querying of the prerogatives of scholasticisms, especially the immaculate ought they betoken and betray, in academic arenas. Here, I approach the academy as a culturally and politically layered arena, constituted by distinct formations of privilege and hierarchy, entitlements and their interrogations, which turn, for instance, on gender and caste, class and race, status and sexuality. Academic arenas can be thought of, then, as rather in the manner of an *ethnographic fields*, located in space-time, ever part of social worlds with their own

¹⁰ These are all questions that I have discussed in frontal and fledgling ways elsewhere. Dube, *Subjects of Modernity*; Dube, *Stitches on Time*; and Saurabh Dube, *After Conversion: Cultural Histories of Modern India* (New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2010).

quodidian cultures, in which academics work but also live. The utterances and practices of scholarly subjects, especially those of the *observer*, in everyday academic spaces – for example, seminars, cafes, bookshops, and social media – can be enormously revealing here. Such routine words and reflex gestures often reveal wider assumptions and affects, entitlements and experiences of intellectual terrains. Unsurprisingly, too, despite the constant clamor of academic arguments as being unsullied by everyday worlds, the certified statements within academy are also haunted by the mundane, its perversions and possibilities.

Indeed, the point precisely might be to not separate the everyday assumption and the accredited expression of intellectual endeavor. For, taken together, at stake are un-said, under-said, and already-said orientations and arguments undergirding life and understanding within academic cultures. In the pages ahead, I explore at once the quodidian manifestations and the licensed expressions of scholarly domains. It is in these ways that I also intimate, necessarily implicitly, the wider terms of privilege and their questioning in social worlds, which academic arenas embody and in which they are embedded, albeit of course in their own ways.

UNRAVELLING IMMANENCE

My arguments are undergirded by overlapping dispositions to academic categories and social worlds. This brings up the question: What do I mean by immanence? To start off, here is what I pit immanence against: the widespread view of the world as “disenchanted”, such that the place in this world of “the value properties (good or bad, hostile or benign) that make normative demands on us” is sought to be excised, indeed exorcized.¹¹ Needless

¹¹ Akeel Bilgrami, (2010) “Understanding Disenchantment”. Available at <http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2010/09/06/disenchantment/> (accessed 27 February, 2018).

to say, such seeing has played a central role also in the conception of world “as alien to our sensibilities of practical engagement, ... something either to be studied in a detached way or, when practically engaged with, to be engaged with as something alien, to be mastered, conquered, and controlled for our utility and gain”.¹² Now, I query the presumption of such detachment and avow instead being open to “not only the words on our pages and on our lips and not only the images on our canvases, but [to] objects and things in the world, including in nature, [that] are filled with properties of value and meaning”.¹³

At the same time, however, I hold also that the terms and textures of disenchantment bear their own enchantments, which

...extend from the immaculately imagined origins and ends of modernity through to the dense magic of money and markets; and from novel mythologies of nation and empire through to hierarchical oppositions between myth and history, emotion and reason, ritual and rationality, East and West, and tradition and modernity. Intensely spectral but concretely palpable, form-

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Akeel Bilgrami, *Secularism, Identity, and Enchantment* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2014), p. 183. It should soon become clear that while agreeing with Bilgrami on the “value properties” in the world (including, nature) that make normative demands on us, my arguments equally bear distinct emphases. Thus, Bilgrami assumes that “disenchantment” has been the dominant motif of the modern world over the past four centuries. Against this he posits the creative forces of “enchantment” and its recognition – by the seventeenth century English radical sects, the Romantics, and Gandhi, for instance – such that power is opposed/undone by difference. Instead, I focus also on how the terms of disenchantment create their own enchantments, which find form and assume substance as antinomies and enticements, categories and contentions, meanings and practices at the core of social worlds. These come to embody value properties that make claims on subjects and their actions. It only follows that my proposal regarding immanence draws in the affective, the embodied, the experiential, and the extra-analytical as signaling the immanent as a routine part of mundane worlds. Arguably, Bilgrami is not especially concerned with such dimensions of the enchantments of disenchantment and immanence of the everyday.

ing tangible representations and informing forceful practices, the one bound to the other, such enticements stalk the worlds of modernity's doing and undoing. The enchantments of modernity give shape to the past and the present by ordering and orchestrating these terrains, at once temporally and spatially.¹⁴

Such ordering and orchestration also extend far beyond a mere detached observing of the world. Rather, we are in the face of powerful processes, embedded within pervasive projects of meaning and power, which name and objectify worlds in order to rework and remake them. Here, the antinomies and enticements of modernity become structures of sentiment and attributes of experience in the lives of subjects. Being made of the world – that is, as formidably *worlded* – these oppositions and enchantments acutely acquire value properties, which invite and incite action and contention. As we shall soon see, enormous significance is borne here by the affective, the embodied, and the extra-analytical, the everyday and the mundane, all issues/forms of immanence, which unfold on distinct registers/fabrics.

To start off, the claims that I question in this essay are neither treated as ideological aberrations and mistaken practices nor cast as mere objects of knowledge, detached attributes of social worlds, awaiting simple confirmation or ready refutation. Instead, they are approached as stipulating and shoring-up the worlds we inhabit, such that these meanings and practices appear as conditions of knowing, insinuating ways of being, which require careful, critical articulation. This means further to desist from defining such propositions and positions as principally cerebral-cognitive endeavors. It is to register rather their dense worldly dimensions, which not only name the world but work upon the world in order to remake it. Does this possibly put another spin on the need to think through analytical categories of

¹⁴ Dube, *Subjects of Modernity*, p. 64.

an academic provenance by bringing them in conjunction with the quotidian configurations of the terrains they describe, the resolute requirements of immanent worlds? Can this be done by neither privileging the one (the academic or intellectual) nor the other (the everyday or mundane), but vigilantly unraveling both in view of their critical articulation, while keeping in view the insight of the radical Durkheim that it is in routine worlds (arguably of immanence) that the unimaginable is imagined?

There is more to the picture. For, in approaching and understanding academic and everyday arenas, it might be critical to stay longer with corporeal, affective, sensuous ways of experiencing/ knowing/being.¹⁵ These query pervasive, persistent presumptions of fully-fabricated subjects – possessed of an already-intimated reason – yet without being pre-social in any sense, derived as they are from necessarily heterogeneous yet increasingly overlapping immanent life-worlds. Put differently, can apprehensions of social life eschew starting off with the “bounded, intentional subject while at the same foregrounding embodiment and sensuous life”?¹⁶ Here, might “affective circumstances” take experiential precedence over, while being constitutively coeval with, more formal procedures of reason? Indeed, with “subject and sense” shaped by elements of experience,¹⁷ might we also take a cue from Gadamer – who articulates of course a distinct intellectual tradition – in order to ask: How might we open ourselves to the

¹⁵ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004); Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Halley (eds.), *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); see also Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); and W J T Mitchell, *What do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

¹⁶ William Mazzarella, “Affect: What is it Good for?” in Dube (ed.), *Enchantments of Modernity*, p. 291.

¹⁷ John Rajchman, “Introduction” in: Gilles Deleuze (ed.), *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life* (New York: Zone, 2001), p. 15.

awareness of “being exposed to the labors of history” that “precede the objectifications of documentary historiography” and explanatory anthropology.¹⁸ Clearly, I am not speaking of the affective and the extra-analytical, each ever embodied, as a sort of “return of the repressed” under modernity.¹⁹ Rather, I am referring to the affective, the extra-analytical, and the embodied as routinely woven into our everyday and academic modern worlds, each ever announcing, well, immanence.²⁰ How might such immanent attributes of social life – including the place and play of longing and loss, color and smell, the sensitive and the sensuous – be drawn into descriptions, woven into narratives, rather than pursue what has called a “sense-less science?”²¹

MOTIF ONE

Not long after the attacks of 9/11 in New York, the political theorist Craig Calhoun was in Mexico City. At El Colegio de México, Craig focused on “actually existing cosmopolitanism” as a “view from the frequent-flyers lounge”, raising a range of critical questions. Principally, he suggested that:

On September 11 [2001], terrorists crashing jets into the World Trade Center and Pentagon ... precipitated a renewal of state-centered politics and a “war on terrorism” seeking military rather than law enforcement solutions to crime. ... One need be

¹⁸ Hans-Georg Gadamer cited in Zygmunt Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. ix-x.

¹⁹ Mazzarella, “Affect”, p. 293.

²⁰ It should be evident that I am bringing together a range of different arguments derived from distinct traditions of understanding. The overlaps and tension between their assumptions and emphases require further staying with, critical thinking through, which I cannot pursue here.

²¹ Johannes Fabian, *Out of Our Minds: Reason and Madness in the Exploration of Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. ix.

no friend to terrorism to be sorry that the dominant response to the terrorist attacks has been framed as a matter of war rather than crime, an attack on America rather than an attack on humanity ... Militarism gained and civil society lost ... as the US and other administrations moved to sweep aside protections for the rights of citizens and immigrants alike and strengthen the state in pursuit of “security”.²²

Calhoun went to explore the terms of this challenge to cosmopolitanism – through claims on technology, economy, and ideology – whose very anti-Western impulse revealed a contending modern project, a statist anti-modernism formative of modernity and its contradictions.

All reasonable provocations, one would assume, which bid us to stay with and think through our own taken-for-granted presumptions about images and worlds, especially turning on cosmopolitanism and modernity, state and citizen, the West and the non-West. Yet, what concerns me here is not so much the arguments themselves as a response they elicited. For, in the discussion that followed, a famous Mexican anthropologist cum international cultural bureaucrat, who had looked increasingly unconvinced through the proceedings, had only one question for the speaker, whom she knew very well. “Have you gone over to the other side, Craig?”, she asked with an air of impatient finality.

I was somewhat bewildered at first, but as the conversation continued gradually understood what was at stake in the query. The underlying assumption of the anthropologist interlocutor was that alterity and authority have to conform to the analyst’s vision of difference and power, tradition and modernity, the non-West and the West, the other and the self. Needless to say, such analytical and extra-analytical assumption was profoundly grounded

²² Craig Calhoun, “The Class-consciousness of Frequent Travelers: Toward a Critique of Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism” in: Dube (ed.), *Enchantments of Modernity*, pp. 310-340. Calhoun’s presentation was derived from this text.

in entitlement and privilege – affective and experiential – of institutional and everyday academe, alluded to above. Where was the need to query cosmopolitanism, to register different claims on tradition, to recognize distinct visions of modernity? After all, are not such matters (always) explained and (already) set in place through scholarly presumption of the way the world “ought” to be? Here was/is to be found the formidable conceit of pervasive scholasticisms: an immaculate “ought” of the analyst/observer – academic or/and quotidian – that *trumps* over every contentious “is”. As the “ought” orchestrates and becomes the “is”, those who do not fall in line go over to “the other side.”

UNTANGLING SCHOLASTICISMS

Scholasticisms entail understandings and orientations that present their particular case as the general story while forgetting the conditions that make this possible: they privilege a view from somewhere as the vista for everywhere; underwrite an adjudicatory rationality as overriding all worldly reasons; universalize ethical and aesthetic judgement by suppressing the social-economic-cultural fields in which such judgements are embedded; and secure their “ought” as riding over each “is” that constitutes the world.²³ Needless to say, all this underlies the pervasive proclamations of secular transcendence of modern scholasticisms.

Such scholasticisms and their transcendental claims abound in the academy, as deliberated pieces of scholarship and as rou-

²³ As already indicated, my debts to Bourdieu – alongside my learning from Rancière – are immense here. Given the constraints of space, what I cannot explore are my differences with Bourdieu, especially his frequent formalism and cerebral self-indulgence, which can run counter to my affirmations of the affective, the embodied, and the immanent. Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*; Rancière, *Philosopher and His Poor*; see also, Bourdieu, *Distinction*; Rancière, *Nights of Labor*; and Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*.

tine expressions in its quotidian life, acutely embodying and endorsing, constitutively coining and crafting, entitlement, privilege, and hierarchy – in/as argument, affect, and effect. Indeed, exemplified by the everyday academic encounter that was just recounted, scholasticisms come into play in frontal ways, their arms swinging and their fangs bared, as it were.²⁴

All this is (relatively) easy to establish and (principally) undemanding to upbraid. Therefore, I turn now to a more difficult task. Specifically, my bid is to untangle the ways in which the condition of possibility of salient scholarship can consist of its braiding of scholastic persuasions – including, the presence and triumph of the “ought” – with rather more contending dispositions. Such distinct orientations attempt to approach and explicate subjects and worlds in terms of their mundane mix-ups and murkiness, or the contentious “is” that is the stuff of history and politics, words and worlds, thinking and living. To illustrate this, let me turn – somewhat unconventionally, for a historian-anthropologist who inhabits distinct borderlands – to the work of the European philosopher Jürgen Habermas.

There is method to my madness.

On the one hand, Habermas’s elaborations of reason as “communicative action” and a self-critical modernity have extended the democratic horizons of the “unfinished” Enlightenment project.²⁵ Thus, when the philosopher posits reason as “communicative action”, his protocols of argument at once displace a merely subject-centered rationality and underscore the “counter-discourse” of modernity.²⁶ They announce immanent issues of

²⁴ Nor is this a matter solely of intellectual arenas: academic modes of argument are appropriated, expropriated, and made anew in wider social terrains.

²⁵ Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987).

²⁶ Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, trans. T. McCarthy, 2 vols (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984); Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*; Jürgen Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays*, trans. William Mark Hohengarten (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992); and Thomas

an inter-subjective rationality as well an obligation to the other in deliberation.

On the other hand, these tendencies in Habermas's thought are profoundly worked over and consequently marginalized by distinct, overlapping orientations. First, is the imperative in his schemas of the "ought" that is profoundly tied to a scholastic reason. Second, Habermasian projections of an "idealized history" present the past in terms of modular temporal schemes, involving attenuated stages of succession. Third, the philosopher's assumes a "telos" that is built into language at large. Lastly, his equation of modernity with Europe, I submit, has an extra-analytical, experiential, even affective provenance.

Together, my point concerns the requirements of staying with and thinking through these contrasting dimensions yet conjoint dispositions in the thought of Habermas.²⁷ And I begin appro-

McCarthy, "Introduction" in: Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, pp. vii-xvii.

²⁷I recognize of course that writings on Habermas and discussions of his work are academic industry. Clearly, my effort is not aimed as either exegesis of or commentary on the philosopher's corpus. Rather, I wish to enter the protocols of his thought and reason(s), albeit on my distinct registers, in order to reveal the contradictory stitches that suture his arguments. Such contradictions and contentions are *not* mere mistakes, but arguably the *conditions of possibility* of his assertions, a matter that I had first approached in Dube, *After Conversion*.

This registered, it bears pointing out that my emphasis on the simultaneous possibilities and problems in the work of Habermas intersects with feminist engagement with his writings. Such engagements underscore at once the democratic horizons suggested and yet the gendered exclusions performed by the following: Habermas's account of the public sphere; his theory of communicative action; his dualistic theory of society; and his discussions of deliberative democracy. Of these, I discuss ahead the first two themes, and shall refer there to feminist criticism on these questions. Here, I would like to acknowledge the astute mapping of this literature provided by Mojca Pajnik in an essay that I have read with some effort in imperfect translation. Mojca Pajnik, "Feminist Interpretations of the Public in Habermas's Theory (FEMINISTICNE INTERPRETACIJE JAVNOSTI V HABERMASOVI TEORIJI)", *Javnost – The Public, Slovene Supplement* 13 (2006): 21-36. See also, Mojca Pajnik, "Feminist Reflections on Habermas's Communicative Action: The Need for an Inclusive Political Theory", *European Journal of Social Theory* 9 (2006): 385-404; and Marie Fle-

privately with the philosopher's proposal of the counter-discourse of modernity. As is generally known, at least to the initiated, Habermas explores the primary crossroads of this counter-discourse to point toward a "path open but not taken: the construal of reason in terms of a non-coercive intersubjectivity of mutual understanding and reciprocal recognition".²⁸ Here are to be found formulations that see reason as ineluctably situated, that is to say "as concretized in history, society, body, and language"; view its potential as requiring realization in the "communicative practice of ordinary, everyday life"; and, against totalized critiques of reason, emphasize its capacity to be critical.²⁹

At the same time, we need to ask if such moves by Habermas possibly reduce political power matrices to relations of communication,³⁰ which "surreptitiously throws the political back onto the terrain of ethics".³¹ Likewise, do such measures suppress visceral registers of being and difference to a *telos* of language that provides the model for practical, rational discourse, one that ever tends toward consensus?³² Further, what are we to make of the feminist critique that Habermas's understanding of communicative action emphasizes a technical understanding of rationality, which abstracts from as well as delegitimizes particularities of nonlinguistic forms of communicative action?³³ Finally, are Habermas's proposals not fused together with his ethnocentric framing of

ming, "Women and the "Public Use of Reason"" in Johanna Meehan (ed.), *Feminists Read Habermas: Gendering the Subject of Discourse* (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 117-137.

²⁸ McCarthy, "Introduction", p. xvi.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. xvi-xvii.

³⁰ Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971); and Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*.

³¹ Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*; see also, Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).

³² Stephen K. White, *Sustaining Affirmation: The Strengths of Weak Ontology in Political Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 36 and 138.

³³ Pajnik, "Feminist Interpretations of the Public in Habermas's Theory."

rationality, which itself arguably rests upon his prior, experiential elision of modernity with Europe? Is this what underlie his framing of modernity as an entirely internally self-generated, European phenomenon, occluding any linkages with empire or non-Western worlds?

The point is that to register Habermas's avowal of the situated and critical nature of rationality is to affirm how his thought might be made to address issues of immanence, at least when expressed upon distinct registers of the mundane, the theoretical, and their interplay. Yet, in order to recognize such horizons, the task of careful affirmation must attend to the philosopher's *a priori* presumptions that reveal a transcendent "ought", a formative scholasticism, as well as the extra-analytical elision of modernity with Europe: these measures circumscribe the exact "is" that his thought avows regarding the situated attributes of rationality. Such simultaneous measures are critical for articulating immanence (yet without turning it into an antidotal, utopian horizon) while tracking scholasticism (but without treating it as a distant, dystopic enemy), since the scholastic and the immanent are ever of the world, which is never innocent.

This brings me to Habermas's emphasis on a community of dialogue. Here, the philosopher endorses how in deliberation the utterance of the other places an obligation on/to the self, while insightfully acknowledging also the unpredictable, potentially disruptive attributes of the utterance in everyday life.³⁴ Indeed, Habermas argues further for the disclosure of particularity that makes it possible for the (now [?] de-centered) subject to "bear witness to the possibility of no-saying" to the identity s/he has projected on the other, despite the subject's investments in the latter's identity.³⁵

³⁴ Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, pp. 321-26; White, *Sustaining Affirmation*, p. 37.

³⁵ Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, p. 399.

All this is important accomplishment, pointing to the commitment to conversation – as a matter of understanding and living – in contentious worlds formed by heterogeneous subjects, subjects that militate against being indolently contained within safe boundaries of self and other. Approached in this way, Habermas’s formulations might even aid our own avowal of immanence. An avowal of immanence rather than the triumph of a transcendental meaning-legislating rationality, one which subjugates all actors, each world, and every other to the sovereign subject’s self-same adjudicatory reason. Once again, the possibilities at stake have to be culled from the way that the philosopher’s thought inhabits the world – or, is made to do so – as announcing immanence.

Yet, at the very moment of acknowledging such possibilities, let us consider also the other side of Habermas’s reasoning on deliberation and dialogue, involving utterance and other. Foremost is the concern that the philosopher’s considerations of such issues appear as “typically overshadowed by the excessively precise normative character of the obligation” that Habermas finds the self as incurring.³⁶ This is a move that is itself connected to his belief in eventual consensus.³⁷ Indeed Habermas’s wider proposals regarding the other and/in argument cannot remain untouched by his “underlying claim that an orientation to consensus is built into the *telos* of language.”³⁸ This leads to the often exclusive, uneasily *a priori*, and unsteadily depoliticizing cast of the philosopher’s promulgations on communication and consensus, the

³⁶ White, *Sustaining Affirmation*, p. 36.

³⁷ Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, p. 314; Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 311.

³⁸ White, *Sustaining Affirmation*, p. 36. Consider now another statement of Habermas: “...the use of language with an orientation to reaching understanding is the *original mode* of language use, upon which indirect understanding, giving something to understand or letting something be understood, and the instrumental use of language in general, are parasitic.” Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, p. 288 ” (emphasis in the original).

inter-subjective and the non-coercive, and language and reason. Scholasticism strikes yet again.

All this has implications, finally, for Habermas's call for a self-critical modernity, whose value in our times of raging authoritarian, governmental, muscular nationalist-populisms we would be churlish to ignore. At the same time, however, the philosophers' proposals are upheld and upbraided by his *a priori* elision of modernity with Europe, such that both these entities-concepts appear as historical fact, theoretical metaphor, and analytical abstraction. Here, it is not only that the West is rehearsed as modernity but that modernity is staged "*as the West*".³⁹

At the same time, far from merely pigeonholing Habermas's writing as Eurocentric, such recognition importantly entails entering related protocols of the philosopher's thought. In such procedures, it is not simply an excision of the non-West but rather a patterned, attenuated, idealized history of Europe that itself shores up Habermas's critical theory of modernity. Such idealization marks Habermas's history of the (Western) nation, as ably unraveled by – the self-admittedly "critical Habermasian" – Craig Calhoun.⁴⁰ They extend to the ways in which Habermas's conception of the liberal public sphere presents an *idealized* history of liberal bourgeois public spheres, refusing to admit to the *plural* traditions of reasoned exchanged that marked eighteenth-century Western Europe. Thereby, it ignores how the bourgeois public appropriated and marginalized such more inclusive notions of public participation and discussion by strategically closing off from the arena the range of possible discussants.⁴¹ Particularly poignant here are feminist critiques of how the occlusion of

³⁹ Timothy Mitchell, "The Stage of Modernity" in Timothy Mitchell (ed.), *Questions of Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 15 (emphasis in the original).

⁴⁰ Calhoun, "Class-consciousness of Frequent Travelers", pp. 319-320.

⁴¹ Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, pp. 65-66; Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992).

women from the bourgeois public sphere was not a mere accident, but that these public spheres, as recounted by Habermas (and others), were acutely constituted by, premised upon, such gendered exclusions.⁴²

Building on these discussions, I would like to suggest that at stake here are not mere errors of understanding, analytical and empirical. Rather, such idealized projections of history and society have a deep provenance, wide implications. Consider now Habermas's proposition that under modernity the notion of the "new" or the "modern" world loses a "merely chronological meaning" to take on instead "the oppositional significance of an emphatically 'new' age."⁴³ This means further that for the philosopher the normative order of modernity has to be ground out of itself, rather than drawing its dispositions from models offered by other, obviously prior, epochs.

Now, as I have argued earlier, on offer is an idealized representation that is at once persuasive and acutely representative.⁴⁴ Indeed, despite their own distinctions, Habermas's formulations are part of wider delineations of modernity that have each entailed a ceaseless interplay between the ideal attributes and the actual manifestations of the phenomenon. This has meant not only that the actual has been apprehended in terms of the ideal, but that even when a gap is recognized between the two the actual (of modernity) is seen as tending toward the ideal (of modernity)

⁴²Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy" in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), pp. 109-142; Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993); and Pajnik, "Feminist Interpretations of the Public in Habermas's Theory". See also, Fleming, "Women and the 'Public Use of Reason'"; Johanna Meehan (ed.), *Feminists Read Habermas: Gendering the Subject of Discourse* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Dena Goodman, "Public Sphere and Public Life: Toward a Synthesis of Current Historiographical Approaches to the Old Regime" *History and Theory*, 32 (1992): 1-20.

⁴³Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 5.

⁴⁴Dube, *Subjects of Modernity*, pp. 70-73.

with each shoring up the other. Here, it is exactly the admixtures of the actual articulations and the idealized projections of modernity that have defined its worldly dimensions. Taken together, these procedures, announcing hierarchical mappings of time and space, not only order the world but actually constitute it, such that Habermas's propositions participate in the worlding of modernity – as part of an (ultimately) adjudicatory bid to redeem, bring to a close, the unfinished Enlightenment project.⁴⁵

Under discussion are key questions. What is at stake in critically yet carefully entering the protocols of Habermas's thinking? Might such measure reveal the limits of principally lamenting and readily rebutting the absence in "classical" Eurocentric theory of the non-West and empire? Do our assertions and critiques of this kind variously circumscribe critical readings of European thought, its problems and potentialities as betokening each other? Might we trace instead the pervasive subordination of the immanent, the affective, the everyday, the extra-analytical, the mundane to the imperatives of a scholastic reason, an adjudicatory rationality? Should not such querying be conducted in the widest worlds – non-Western and Western, quotidian and scholarly, subaltern and elite? Is there not a certain poignancy, pathos even, which is encountered when thinking through scholarly protocols – such as those of Habermas – that attempt to acknowledge and avow difference yet can only do by returning to a resolutely singular scholastic "ought"? Is it not a matter of foreboding that we are in the face of the legislation of meaning and the ordering of life that remake the world – not only through modular grids but in an exclusive image?

⁴⁵ I have further discussed such questions in relation to the work of intellectual historians of Europe such as Reinhart Koselleck and Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht in Dube, *After Conversion*. See also, Dube, *Subjects of Modernity*.

MOTIF TWO

Two decades ago, at a workshop on modern historiography in Mexico City, a graduate student raised a question about the necessity of specifying what exactly is at stake in discussing history as always appearing in the image of modernity. The speaker, an upcoming academic star, simply looked away. In the midst of the studied silence, the condescension was palpable. As many of the student's cohort and various certified scholars snickered, even those sympathetic to the query and its spirit looked toward their toes in embarrassment. Here was a public lesson on the unstated requirement to never doubt *doxas*, which beget themselves, as effect and affect of analytical entitlements, everyday hierarchies, and their routine reproduction in academic arenas.

Unable to contain myself, I rephrased the salience of the student's question, emphasizing the need to address at least the coupling of history-writing and the nation under regimes of modernity and their imaginaries. The speaker looked unsettled, yet was about to answer when a very senior historian, a venerable mandarin, seized the microphone. As not only the esteemed chair of the session but the presiding deity of workshop – and patron of several historians across generations – this don and doyen among scholars, magisterially addressed the audience. To query modernity, nation, and history-writing, he pronounced, was the stuff of new-fangled “postmodern” and “postcolonial” theories. The true historian diligently worked in the archives, far away from such speculation. Yet all that the esteemed historian said about the single-minded purpose of value-free research in the state archives reproduced commonplace assumption regarding the modern nation and its historiography as the incessant march of progress. Here, the more scholasticism drew sharp boundaries between itself and the mundane as well as the theoretical, the more it tripped itself up in its disorderliness, its complicity with routine statist-developmental imaginaries.

Two weeks later, I was speaking at the weekly colloquia of a distinguished department in a famous university. A little apprehensive, I drew upon my wider construction of an ethnographic history of an “untouchable” community in order to raise issues of the interplay between caste and power, myth and history, and the enchantments of symbols of governance of the modern state and the fabrications of religious legalities by subaltern communities. At the end, I also cast my net somewhat wider. Seizing on ethnographic and historical materials, I spelled out the implications of my analysis for the persistence of routine antinomies – of modernity and tradition, state and community, rationality and ritual, and reason and emotion – within influential strands of social and political theory in western and non-western contexts.

During the discussion, an avant-garde scholar, a bearer of cutting-edge anthropology, put a question to me in the kindest of ways. I was asked about the manner in which my work related to the study of lower-caste and untouchable groups, which the academic stressed was the *real area*, *the actual field* of my research. In response, I outlined some of the continuities and differences between my work and other studies of Dalit communities. Yet, I also stressed that critical issues of myths and the making of modernity, orality and the construction of histories, and writing and the fashioning of traditions were equally the area(s)/field(s) of my research.⁴⁶ It was a wholly civil exchange. Yet, the to and fro has stayed with me in the years after.

At stake was a key distinction, based upon academic entitlement and scholarly hierarchy, between the “is” and an “ought.” Here, a study of Dalit, subaltern groups undertaken by a younger historian appeared as an inherent condition of limits for wider

⁴⁶ Saurabh Dube, *Untouchable Pasts: Religion, Identity, and Power among a Central Indian Community, 1780-1950* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998).

theoretical enquiry – the inescapable “is” of academic endeavor. In contrast, a higher status was occupied by the intellectual labor of accomplished analysts, conducting research across multi-sited ethnographic sites, initiated into theory, and unconstrained by stifling “areas”, which is what (we were being told) critical reflection “ought” to be. Scholasticism has many stripes.

FINAL SUTURES

Despite the able efforts of the two distinguished professors (alongside the endeavors of others), I have been unable to give up my habits, which turn on conjunctions of narrative and theory. Around a decade and half ago, articulating everyday legalities/illegalities, colonial cultures, and an evangelical modernity – and issues of meaning, power, and difference, very broadly – I made a case for a history without warranty.⁴⁷ Here are to be found procedures that participate in wider, ongoing critical efforts that intimate a “recent ontological shift” in contemporary theory, “the result of a growing propensity to interrogate more carefully those ‘entities’ presupposed by our typical ways of seeing and doing in the modern world”.⁴⁸ Drawing on such dispositions, a history without warranty thinks through the guarantee of progress under modernity, carefully querying the scandals of the West *and* the nation, undertaking such tasks in overlapping ways.

On the one hand, the conceptions, propositions, and outrages queried by a history without warranty are understood as acutely intimating conditions of knowing, entities and co-ordinates shoring up the worlds we inhabit, demanding critical articulation. On the other hand, precisely such recognition learns yet differs from

⁴⁷ Dube, *Stitches on Time*; see also, Dube, *After Conversion*; and Dube, *Subjects of Modernity*.

⁴⁸ White, *Sustaining Affirmation*, pp. 4-5.

anti- and post-foundational perspectives such that there is a certain shift of “intellectual burden from the preoccupation with what is opposed and deconstructed”, to equally engaging “what must be articulated, cultivated, and affirmed in its wake”.⁴⁹ Taken together, the dispositions of a history without warranty are intimately tied to the terms of a “weak ontology”, acknowledging at once the contestable, contingent character *and* the unavoidable, necessary nature of constitutive conceptions of self, other, and world.

First, the procedures of a history without warranty approach the “universal” and the “particular” through close attention to their shared entailments and mutual productions as well as their founding exclusions and constitutive contradictions. Second, here are to be found dispositions toward prudent interrogation and critical affirmation, which are each ever open to revision. Third, these protocols permit careful considerations of conceptual categories of an academic provenance by bringing them in conjunction with the quotidian configurations of these entities. Finally, in these ways, a history without warranty attends to the assumptions, categories, and entities that shore up worlds and subjects, making palpable a thinking through of modernity and its margins, ever staying with the scandals of the West and nation.⁵⁰


I would like to suggest now that my emphases on immanence shift the terms of a history without warranty in a specific manner. Indeed, the explicit acknowledgement and articulation, in work as in life, of the affective and the embodied, the experiential and the extra-analytical, the quotidian and the mundane – that is to say, of the immanent – as coursing through social worlds has critical consequences. First, despite its avowal of the ontological, the prior somewhat cerebral cast of a history without warranty is now made flesh, blood, and spirit. Second, categories (academic and

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁵⁰ White, *Sustaining Affirmation*, p. 8. Dube, *Stitches on Time*; Dube, *After Conversion*; and Dube, *Subjects of Modernity*.

social) are themselves rendered even less as principally instrumental explanatory devices and much more as constitutive attributes of social worlds, which often, variously bear value properties, inviting and inciting meaningful practices. Finally, the earlier emphases of a history without warranty concerning prudent querying and critical affirmation of social worlds now acquire greater immediacy and indeterminacy, interrupted by the uncertain, the uncanny, and the unimaginable. If truth is a matter of wager, a bet that one takes with oneself, as Merleau Ponty once argued, this is because truth is about life and living, politics and worlds, each betokening the other. These are life-worlds, saturated with immanence, that are ours to carefully question, to ethically articulate, and even to re-enchant amidst the enchantments that abound. This might particularly be the case as we think through entitlement and privilege exactly in order to actively unlearn privilege and entitlement.

AT THE END

All of this is to ask also if certain key question simply disappear as we acknowledge the presence of immanence amidst the enchantments of modernity? What is at stake in enquiring whether the most careful, creative of “our” understandings might yet subsume and subordinate – to our compellingly held claims – contradictory worlds and their contentions? In responding politically and affectively to the urgency of the present, are we to abandon the impulse to cautiously probe and critically affirm social worlds with the desire to carefully narrate and searchingly describe them? Taking seriously the requirements of evidence and the fidelity to facts, might we also consider sieving evidence through critical filters and construing facts, times, and spaces unexpected? Can such facts speak in the uneasy echoes of limiting doubt rather than readily deal in satisfying certainties? 

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