

The Philosophy after “Philosophy”

Review

**Nader N. Chokr – ‘Philosophy’ – After the End of Philosophy in a
Globalizing and Glocalizing World
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Through a collage of essays Nader N. Chokr illustrates his divorce from academic philosophy, philosophy understood as theoretical discipline. He illustrates the truth of this paradoxical statement about the status of Philosophy as being both the most useless of all human endeavors and the worthiest undertaking precisely because it is useless. In a very truly philosophical perspective, encompassing multiple areas of social, moral, and political philosophy, Chokr’s nine essays address particular questions related to Culture, Bullshit, Cognition, Capabilities Approach, Morality, Human Rights, Justice, and Philosophy.

The first essay is concerned with the consequences of recognizing the *complex* nature of culture in a world undergoing simultaneous globalization and glocalization. In other words, the author attempts a better understanding of the manifold content of Culture, which takes into account the very internal dynamics, of Culture and last, but not the least, he tries to articulate a future “pluralistic, historically enlightened ethical universalism”.

The second essay focuses on the peril of the inconsistent, self-defeating and misguided “cultural relativism” under its both descriptive and normative aspects. The futility of cultural relativism stems from its uselessness because it is either too early or too late, warns on a general moral problem, and is accompanied, from an ethical and political point of view, only by dangerous consequences. The same “pluralistic, historically enlightened ethical universalism” as opposed to the epistemological unworthiness of “cultural relativism” is seen as the most promising perspective to address the moral questions of our times.

The third essay deals with “one of the most salient features of our culture” today: the “bullshit” (humbug). Drawing on the works by H. Frankfurt and G. A. Cohen, respectively, Chokr investigates further this pervasive phenomenon which lacks a consistent analysis so far. Chokr finds an unusually general significance for the bullshit as being the *untrustworthy philosophical otherness* (with various names such as the irrational, the nonsense, the meaningless, the unclear, the incomprehensible, the unsubstantiated / unsubstantiable, the untrue, the neither false or true, the outright false, the untenable or as the too speculative, the metaphysical, the far-fetched, the unrealistic or merely as the practically irrelevant to human life). Thus, he plunges deeper in the comprehension of this readily metaphysical but neglected concept. Instead of getting lost in an endless dispute to which an internal point of view would lead him (the produce-process understanding of bullshit), he argues for a more pragmatic external point of view, namely the impact of bullshit (either as process or produce) over individuals, groups, communities, and ultimately over the society as a whole, or over culture, normative practices, values and ideals.

The fourth essay uncovers the fundamental contrasts and prospective advantages between the “embodied and situated cognition” (ESC) research program and the classical Cartesian paradigm of “cognitivist framework” in light of some empirical works. Chokr finds at least five tenets of the ESC programs which, on the one hand, are incompatible with the cognitivist framework and, on the other hand, seem more plausible, empirically and theoretically compelling. The five tenets are: (1) the favored approach to analysis is essentially rational, interactional and even transactional; (2) cognition consists of the interplay between mind, body and environment; (3) cognition consists mainly of active contraction based on embodied goal-directed actions of organism; (4) representations are considered to be sensori-motor representations; (5) primacy is given to goal-directed actions unfolding in real time and practical activities in context. The complexity of human mind is due to the intricate dialectics of life and environment, culture and organism, and this very dialectics makes inappropriate the computer metaphor of mind rule-based and logic-driven. Alternatively, the author envisages a more appropriate coupling metaphor of the mind as a mixture of constraints on cognitive processes involving a tripartite form of embodiment, environment and action.

The fifth essay brings to the fore the debate on Pogge’s perspective on Capability Approach and its supposedly inferior plausibility and workable public

criterion for social justice compared with the “Rawlsian Resourcist” Approach. Although it isn’t yet a fully-fledged theory of justice that doesn’t aim to compete with the more rigorous, consistent and complete Rawlsian theory, the Capability Approach proves to be a viable and justifiable explanatory and even promising normative perspective. Its moral fundamental institution, compatible with the Rawlsian one, leads to a totally different conception and characterization of the scope of social justice. The author’s thesis is that even if this perspective is still incomplete and is met with outstanding problems and difficulties, there are very good and strong reasons for advocating the epistemic accomplishments of Capability Approach: the comprehensive conceptualization of capabilities, development and flourishing; the metric for assessing well-being, inequality, and poverty; and signs of a trustworthy investment of energy and resources in articulating a fully-fledge theory of social and global justice.

The sixth essay reveals the insufficiency and out-datedness of the classical approach and conceptualization of the social and moral philosophy for addressing the critical issues of modern interconnectedness and interdependence state of global world. It is advocated the idea that, although paradoxically at the first sight, a properly conceived notion of “international pluralism” or “plural universalism” is more appropriate for a realistic description of present-day global solidarity and justice and can prescribe suitable norms required to accommodate the necessary cosmopolitanism. This alternative seems more proper for the constitution of a trans-national civil society, the guarantee for an international system of solidarities, which requires not only the acceptance of a plurality of principles and norms required by a strong articulated global justice but also the tolerance of a plurality of international agents and institutions allocating among them the right of sovereignty.

The same fully philosophical motive of “trans-ness” of a perspective beyond the classical static dichotomic conundrum between universalism and relativism in comprehending cultural phenomena is applied to human rights issue in the seventh essay of the book. The present wide spreading of “globalized human rights culture” asks for a new and more potentially prolific conceptual framework for integrating the real and symbolic dimensions of current human rights practices. This is compulsory for drawing the discourse out of the current impasse. In this respect, the author previously proposed a broader conceptual framework for understanding the cultural complexity of a “post-cultural, global and glocal world”, i.e. culture understood as a dynamic, open-ended, a crosscut of convergent

and divergent processes rather than enclosed, unitary and determinant entity). He considers that only by integrating the human rights issue in the aforementioned perspective, this matter could acquire a proper understanding as “cultural practices” always “at work” “in the process of constituting, reconstituting and reformulating themselves”.

The eighth essay starts from what the author characterizes as the fundamental dilemma of liberalism understood as moral and political philosophy, which becomes manifest when one expands his/her understanding of and application to the global and international realm. Henceforth the problem of the moral status of states, nation-states or national-boundaries, together with the international justice becomes obvious. After revealing the shortcomings and limitations of traditional approaches and social justice theories (nationalists-partialists-particularists-cultural perfectionists, Rawls’ political liberalism, cosmopolitanism) on this issue, the author calls for a solution stemming from a “rooted cosmopolitan pluralism under rigorous normative constraints”. This is consonant with the author’s expression of his general „plural universalism” view on the present global state. He believes that such *rooted cosmopolitan pluralism under rigorous normative constraints* could remain focused enough on the non-ideal conditions we live by most of our life, even when we engage in the great but necessary amount of abstraction and idealization required for its proper understanding and development. This subsequently enables us to achieve even a more “realistic utopia” in Rawls’ expression.

The last essay proposes a Decalogue for a New Philosophy if it could be one after the postmodern extensive acclamation of the death of Philosophy. Following the harsh, various and continuing critiques concerning all aspects of traditional Philosophy (its tasks, goals, claims, methods and methodologies, public image, and self-image), the next question arises: Should the Philosophy’s dearest aspects – the quest for Certainty and the long for Absolute in Reason and thinking – be preserved, or should they have to be abandoned forever? This dire situation allows for a positive, daring and imaginative alternative of a new informed Philosophy, strengthened even by these latter critiques. This new Philosophy “can only be a new kind of Critical Theory”. The fundamental requirements which form the Decalogue of the new Philosophy encompass:

- the addressability to the real problems of Human beings;
- the acceptance of a role of tribunal or guardian over the other forms of rationality;

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- the binding matter for critical alliances across Disciplinary Boundaries;
- the swift from metaphysics to ethics as First Philosophy;
- the advance of naturalism and anti-transcendentalism;
- promoting fallibilism and experimentalism;
- inhabiting time and space;
- articulating a pluralistic, historical and enlightened universalism;
- an integrated, holistic and comprehensive approach;
- a clear emancipator thrust.

Consonant with the author's "anti-scholastic" (or "anti-scholarly") and non-disciplinary perspective, the entire book and its approach are made from a contemporary philosophical perspective, but the foundational ideas of traditional philosophical minds and systems are still reflected indirectly within the discourse. Sometimes this approach conceals and disregards the meaningful truth and perspective of classical philosophy rather than provide a totally new and evolved argument.

The work expresses the thinking of a person who understands to reject Philosophy as a formal endeavor, as a profession, and who dedicates himself to Philosophy in its pristine form as practice, *as a way of life*, Philosophy as life itself. Deeply philosophical, the author proves a sharp social critical thinking with a high sense of inequity and inequality and is a fervent detractor of an obsolete and oppressing system such is that of political capitalism that undermines the very fabric of democracy due its very internal logic. Accordingly, the book represents the author's confession of faith in the fundamental role of Philosophy which at the same time is both full of intrinsic limitations, blind spots, and constitutive tensions, and also constitutes the essential "ladder which has served its limited purpose - enabling us then to rise to the next level in our understanding of the world, and our place in it." I share the same (or at least similar) creed that postmodernism was a necessary footstep for the authentic resurrection of Philosophy in the modern Scientific and Technological Age:

Philosophy is dead, long live Philosophy!