The Good Life and the Bad: Dialectics of Solidarity[1]

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Abstract: Building on the feminist endeavour of analysing the personal and political within the same frame, this essay asks four questions about the good life. First, what place recognition of exclusion has in the politics of redistribution? Second, what is the political spatiality – can we imagine a public good life without also paying attention to the private and how does the private leach into the public imagination of a good life? Third, what secures the good life – what obligations of justice to fellow human beings do we have to ensure our shared good lives? And finally, is good life a life of solidarity – can we imagine new ways of thinking about resistance and change through alliances of the excluded? I argue that the imagination of a good life has to be contextual, it is gendered and it is solidaristic.

Key words: good life, recognition, redistribution, solidarity

"The most tragic form of loss isn't the loss of security; it's the loss of the capacity to imagine that things could be different."

— *Ernst Bloch*

I have often wanted to imagine a feminist utopia in my writing, but in a time of pain and fear that surrounds us at this historical moment this work seems more urgent; it is a time of right-wing populism; of a politics of hate as well as a politics of hope in both the global north and south. The context of this populist turn is in part the inequalities of global capitalism, of a colonial hangover of racialised exclusions and the collapse of progressive solidarities. As the lives of so many are destroyed by war, as thousands leave their homes in rickety, leaky boats to make hazardous journeys across the Mediterranean to seek the good life elsewhere, it is a moment to pause and reflect what a good life is and might be. And yet, the images of refugees on our television screens generate narratives of fear and of otherness that allows for building of alliances against a hospitable society; in the words of the poet CP Cavafy:

> Because night has fallen and the barbarians have not come.
> And some who have just returned from the border say
> there are no barbarians any longer.
> And now, what's going to happen to us without barbarians?
> They were, those people, a kind of solution.
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> (*Waiting for the Barbarians*)

This fear of the 'barbarians' that are not there, then poses another set of questions: in holding 'them' off, containing them, rejecting them do we erode ourselves, our own imaginaries of the good life? In welcoming them, helping them, working with them, might we build an inclusive world that holds us and them together in a shared good life? The question that Adorno posed in *Minima Moralia* is crucial here – *how does one lead 'a good life in a bad life'?* Or in Judith Butler's words, is it possible 'to live one's own life well, such that we might say that we are living a good life within a world in which the good life is structurally or systematically foreclosed for so many' (2012)? Can exploitation, inequality, discrimination, violence and other forms of effacement co-exist with the idea, the imaginary and the politics of the good life?

What is 'good' about the good life varies – lives are lived in different registers, with different levels of tolerance of difference and violence, measures of success and failure, production and reproduction, boundaries of safety and security. So, can we think about a good life without thinking about whose life that is? It is, after all, rooted in particular landscapes and histories - the horizon that we look to is shaped by the place where we stand.

Growing up in pre-liberalised India in a family of academics who were anti-religion, left-wing and socially liberal, I lived a good life in a country that was poor in some ways but very rich in its history and its political life. I was not denied life, as many girls are in rural India (see Sen,1990); rather my birth was celebrated – with joyous telegrams going to family and friends; I was sent to the best schools and university, supported at every step in my education and in my professional ambitions. I was brought up with social values that undermined caste and gender as categories of discrimination, where equality among all was espoused and indeed campaigned for. And the world was brought home – through books, travellers that my father bumped into in his long walks, through campaigners for political causes – gender mobilisations against violence against women; peace activism - the anti-Vietnam war, pro-Palestine campaigns; visitations from foreign academics who passed through Delhi university (I remember as a child of 8 years sitting on the knee of Andre Gunder Frank as he talked with my father). It was a good life – for me, for a middle class girl in India, and I could even claim that for a girl anywhere in the world.

A good life until for a mere two years it was taken away in unexpected and brutal ways – the suspension of civil rights of Indian citizens under the Emergency that was declared by Mrs Gandhi in 1975. It was then that I saw what Arendt has called the banality of evil (1977) take hold in our lives – when I saw my parents worry about their safety and that of the family, when thousands went to jail, when many thousands were dislocated in the name of aestheticizing the city and whose selfhood was attacked through officially sanctioned forced sterilization programmes in the name of 'family planning'. Fear has no place in a good life – I learnt that early and also learnt the euphoria of overthrowing tyranny as millions mobilized against the Emergency. The good life then was re-made for at least the middle classes in India in 1977 – with the electoral defeat of Mrs Gandhi and the emergence of many different political

parties on the Indian landscape. This change alerted us that visions of the good life – a democratic, non-violent life - cannot be taken for granted; rather they can spur us on to action in concert with others, to change the world we live in. I remember well the jubilant crowds on the streets of Delhi when the election results started rolling in – a collective weight was lifted off the chests of the citizens; we cried, we danced, we hugged strangers as we celebrated together. The form that this change takes might be different, but working with others to bring about transformation of our worlds for the better is something that we can aspire to. And yet, recently at Jawaharlal University, where I was a Visiting Professorial Fellow –the ghost of the Emergency was again felt walking the campus. In the name of anti-nationalism, police were sent on campus, students were arrested and a vicious campaign against the university and progressive politics was launched. The appropriation of nationalism in the narrowest of registers by the right-wing BJP poses a new challenge to the country and its democratic and secular ethos today. But as during the first Emergency, this in itself has elicited a response that has brought many strands of politics and many groups of citizens together against this government's oppressive modalities of governance. My Civics teachers in high school used to intone in class, 'eternal vigilance is the price of liberty'[2] – the good life is under threat from many directions and needs vigilant citizens to protect it.

However, this discourse of eternal vigilance has largely attached itself to the political sites of governance, not to the everyday domestic sites of governance. My good life as a girl in growing up in Delhi also depended on living in a cocoon – of being ferried from place to place by either my parents or school transportation; unattended entry into the public space – walking to and from the market, for example – could elicit sexual harassment. For many women, entering the public space can mean and an experience of violence, as the 2012 rape of a young woman on a Delhi bus, which mobilised thousands to protest against violence against women reminded us[3]. Violence also marks private spaces – domestic and partner violence continues to mar

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[2] From a speech made by the American abolitionist and liberal activist Wendell Phillips on January 28, 1852.
[3] See Pratiksha Baxi, 2012, Rape Cultures in India, https://kafila.online/2012/12/23/rape-cultures-in-india-pratiksha-baxi/

the lives of women[4]. In the 1980s women mobilized in India against state violence - the Mathura rape in custody became the trigger (Baxi et al 1979) as well as violence by the marital family (dowry murders). Both elicited huge demonstrations against the perpetrators and against the state's neglect in bringing them to justice. In the 1990s, when I had already left India for the UK, the liberalization of the economy and the experience of globalization became the important filter through which the good life came to be imagined – mass poverty had not been eradicated through a state dominated, inefficient capitalism; globalized capital's shining lights beckoned (Bhagwati and Panagariya, 2014). Even as we celebrate India as a new power on the rise, the economic indicators provide a very mixed picture and in certain areas (Kohli, 2012) – such as violence against women (Kannabiran, 2007) – they are particularly troubling.

The good life then was and remains fragile both in the public and the private spheres of life. What is clear is that for it to be a good life its conception needs not only a focus on democratic rights of citizens, but also on the conditions that embed these; not only the formal public political rights but also the informal social norms of equality and dignity that ensure a good life in private spaces. The imaginary of good life thus needs to bridge the public and the private spheres (a long standing feminist position) and also individual and collective lives – the good life needs to be a *shared* good life. So, maybe the question we need to ask ourselves is not what is 'the good life', but what work does the idea of the good life perform in our social, political and personal milieus?

However fragile, the value of alternative imaginings is also important to recognise. First, without *reimaginings we could become complicit in the reproduction of the dominant norms and values, our unjust worlds.* Unless we are able to challenge the lives we live through reimagining it, we are also not able to make judgements about right and wrong, good and bad, about how we can live a good life when so much is bad around us. Contemporary work on feminist utopias (Cooper, 2014; Gornick and

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[4] From 50,703 in 2003, the number of reported cases has gone up to 118,866 in 2013 - an increase of 134% over 10 years, far out-stripping the rise in population over the same period. This is in part because of increased reporting of domestic violence, since the passing of the Domestic Violence Act in 2005. (http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-29708612 See also, http://ncrb.nic.in/StatPublications/CII/CII2015/chapters/Chapter%205-15.11.16.pdf)

Meyers, 2009) may be one such way of reimagining life but needs to be situated in the unequal worlds that we occupy (Hassim, 2009). Second, utopia *reassures us that 'another world is possible' – that there are (different) routes out of our individual or collective conditions as they are out of them*. As the Buddha learnt, behind the curtain of happiness drawn around him by his adoring parents, lay a world that was marked by pain, illness and death, as well as education, meditation and renunciation. For the Buddha, a happy world was one where everyone followed the Dharma – the laws of social good – and where this 'right path' led to Nirvana, or the freedom from the cycle of rebirth. *Being good* then, was for Buddhists, the good life. This led Ambedkar – Chair of the Indian Constituent Assembly and leader of India's Dalits – to urge Dalits to leave their oppressive existence within Hinduism for the more equal spaces of Buddhism (2014). Even though this strategy of 'moving out' did not produce the results Ambedkar hoped for, it allowed for conversations about the place of Dalits in Indian (not just Hindu) society. Third, *imagining another world also makes us struggle over resources we might need to bring it into being*. Rights to material goods as well as public political good, individual as well as collective, capabilities that are honed and those that wither, are all to be struggled over for a fairer distribution of these resources that can underpin the good life. Transforming gender relations for example needs a historical analysis of imperialism that allows for continued expropriation of care labour of women in the global south to plug the care gaps in the global north (Hassim, 2009), it also needs an analysis of the subsidy that care work in the home – unrecognised and therefore unrecompensed – pays to global capitalism, and it needs to address how institutional intervention, while important are not sufficient unless we transform the gendered division of labour in the home (Rai et al, 2014). Fourth, *an alternative imaginary provides us with a sense of belonging, and of solidarity*. If being good was the path to a good life in Buddhist philosophy, in western philosophy, participation in public life was the route to a good life. This is because the highest good, virtuous activity, is not something that comes to us by chance but through exercising reason in the service of the city-state which exists for the sake of the good life (Miller, 2017). The life of a citizen in the city state was for Aristotle the life that was fulfilled: it involved activity as well as moral habits, exhibiting virtue in accordance with reason. It also involved the solidarity of mobilizing to protect the city and its inhabitants; the militarized and masculine citizenship/solidarity. Those outside of this life - the slaves and women – were not

thus fulfilled, however. Expanding solidarities – of the marginalised, of students and workers - also provide alternate visions of belonging, of redistribution of resources, power and social roles.

Here, I argue that although utopias have value they are ever bounded by histories and geographies of inclusion and exclusion (Chowdhury and Rai, 2009). And further, that contemporary imaginaries are often articulated in narrow registers rather than the expansive ones that Hannah Arendt attributed to Walter Benjamin:

> He was concerned with the correlation between a street scene, a speculation on the stock exchange, a poem, a thought, with the hidden line which holds them together and enables the historian or philologist to recognize that they must all be placed in the same period (1968:11).

It is such associations I suggest, across the boundaries of disciplines and the public and the private that can help us think through the good life.

Four tropes emerge: first, the place recognition of exclusion has in the politics of redistribution outlined in the debates between Fraser (1995) and Butler (1997) and Fraser and Honeth (2003). Second, is about the spatiality of the good life – holding the public and the private together in the same frame. Third concerns what secures the good life – what obligations of justice to fellow citizens ensure our shared good lives. And finally, the fourth, situates the good life as a life of solidarity – requiring us to imagine new ways of thinking about resistance and change through alliances of the excluded.

I
Whose Good Life?

At the bottom of the heart of every human being, from earliest infancy until the tomb, there is something that goes on indomitably expecting, in the teeth of all experience of crimes committed, suffered, and witnessed, that good and not evil will be done to him[sic]. It is this above all that is sacred in every human being' (Simone Weil, 2005:71).

When we think of the good life, whose life are we thinking of and who is the agent of change? Most of liberal philosophy in some ways puts forward the idea of the

7

universalisable good life. The idea of the good life permeates most of our political thinking. Liberal theory has largely focused on individual rights rather than social life; the resources available, garnered and invested by individuals towards the improvement of their lives is different from a more structuralist approach to a good life. While for Adam Smith social happiness is the effect of naturally arising morality, for Marx individual happiness is the result of socially arising solidarity.

Now, of course, feminist theorists have long critiqued this universalist impulse in political theory as privileging the male norm – Carole Pateman for example critiqued the social contract as the sexual contract. Feminist scholars have also challenged the social separation upon which this norm is constructed – the private and the public – arguing that the absence of insecurity and violence in both the private and the public spheres must surely be part of our conceptualization about the good life. Further, there have been struggles over how the emplacement of gendered individuals matters within the context of state formations. The anthropologist Schepper-Hughes, for example, points to how deep injustices of political and economic inequality are manifested in women's emotional responses to child bearing, rearing and mortality (specifically, in poor women's acceptance of their children's death) (1992: 341). And the sociologist Arjun Appadurai alerts us to the ways in which the capacity to aspire is itself located in our everyday exclusions (2004). So, imagining a good life can also be a marker of a struggle to give voice to aspirations and visions of a different, better life. The location also of individuals within particular states also has effect on imaginaries of the good life. As Hassim has pointed out, 'utopian proposals…are not *viable* without radical changes in the economic and institutional landscape' of countries of the global south (2009:94. From early discussions of the exclusion of women from the public space and incarceration in the private (Engels, 1884) to the work on how the state has been mobilised into stabilising these carceral relations of domesticity (Barratt, 2014), to their particular and unequal inclusion in the productive spaces of international political economy (Mies, 1999; Elson and Pearson, 1984), feminist and post-colonial work has vigorously challenged the discourse of the universality of the human, and hence of a human good life. It is instructive to think through these debates to understand the pull of a good life as a concept and as a goal that we all in different ways strive for.

As a political economist, however, I do think that the good life needs tethering in social conditions and relations, which is where issues of (mis)recognition and (mal)redistribution become important. Nancy Fraser (1995) and Judith Butler (1997) have argued over the nature of capitalism, the injustices of distribution and injustices of recognition. Butler was insistent that Fraser's perspectival dualism allowed issues of recognition to be trumped by those of economic distribution. While Fraser insisted that within her framework, status-order injuries as well as maldistribution injuries often go together, the underlying message of her formulation was seen to be that the economic structure and the status order are not the same; that redistributive politics addresses the economic structure and the recognition politics addresses issues of identity, which are important but not reducible to structure. What I posit is that the recognition of exclusion has an important place in the politics of redistribution; that indeed the two are imbricated. Recognition is critically important to our sense of well-being: both as individual subjects and as part of a social life where cruelties of misrecognition are minimised. Recognition is also important for us to think through what needs to be put in place for the enhancement, not just survival, of our lives.

II
The Spaces of Good Life

We the women
We the women who toil unadorn
Heads tie with cheap cotton
We the women who cut
Clear fetch dig sing
We the women making
something from this
ache-and-pain-a-me
back-o-hardness
Yet we the women
Whose praises go unsung
Whose voices go unheard
Whose deaths they sweep
Aside
As easy as dead leaves

(Grace Nichols; I is a Long Memoried; 1990, London, Karnak House)

Thinking about recognition and redistribution always reminds me of a story my father told me: he was a great walker and loved to walk in the mountains. We visited Shimla every summer, the hill station which had also been the summer capital of the British. One day my father came back from his usual morning walk rather subdued. This is what he related:

> I have been taught a lesson today. I was sitting on the roadside bollards and admiring the mountains when a coolie came and rested beside me. I turned to him and asked him 'Aren't you a lucky man to live in Shimla? You have these mountains as companions all the time, while I will be going home to hot and busy Delhi soon. He looked at me and said 'Sahib, when do I have the time to lift up my head to see the mountains? I am a coolie; I always look down to make sure I don't stumble''.

My father's anger with himself was about his narrow understanding of beauty and who is able to reflect upon it. He wanted me to remember this story; I always have. Perhaps because of this, in my work, I too have been a bit of what Sara Ahmed calls a feminist 'killjoy' – not raising my eyes to view the beauty of the mountain summit (the good life), but doggedly grappling with issues of inclusion and the terms of inclusion, of labour and its framing, and of violence and its effects (the bad life). So, my understanding of the good life has really built on attempting to understand its other – the unhappy, exploited, excluded life. Can an alienated life teach us more about what we visualize as the good, the happy and enriched life? While I agree with Ahmed when she notes that 'Explanations of relative unhappiness can function to restore the power of an image of the good life in the form of nostalgia or regret for what has been lost (2010:52)', I suggest that debates on relative unhappiness can also spur us on to action to move towards a shared good life.

Much of my recent work has been on the non-recognition of domestic work – in society, by the state and through regulatory mechanisms such as the System of National Accounts that calculates our GDP. Marilyn Waring, who is herself a statistician and who worked for the UN has this to say about the later:

> "When you are seeking out the most vicious tools of colonization, those that can obliterate a culture and a nation, a tribe or a people's value system, then

10

rank the UNSNA [United Nation System of National Accounts] among those tools" (1988:49).

This lack of recognition of domestic labour means that we cannot capture the everyday 'mess, pain, pleasure and pressure of everyday life' (Pettman 2003: 158). Trying to gauge the costs of this non-recognition I have, with my colleagues, analysed the consequences of non-recognition as mal-distribution by developing the concept of depletion through social reproduction (Rai et al 2014). The argument is as follows: we all crave recognition of the work we do and without this we feel personally and socially unvalued. Unpaid domestic work remains deeply gendered, which means that this unrecognised work continues to be largely done by women. While it is important to acknowledge that many women/carers feel that they gain from enacting their roles, while different locations affect what systems of support they are able to access to inform their choices, I would suggest that without recognition of their contribution to society, which we call depletion through social reproduction, most of us will be harmed. This harm takes many forms: to individuals (adversely affecting their physical and mental health), to households (adversely affecting the relationships and material fabric of the home) and to the community (through erosion of public spaces accessed by all as well as of solidaristic relations). It also harms by generating a very different politics of citizenship where those not recognised as workers (in the home) are also not recognised as citizens with entitlements against the state; rather they are constructed as recipients of welfare. *Such depleted lives cannot be good lives*.

The principle of visualising the good life through critiquing a bad life is an important one. Without joining the spaces of the domestic/private and the public we are only thinking about half of a good life. By posing the question 'whose good life' we can bring into light the hidden corners of the everyday where inequalities are reproduced and through which the good life of some is dependent upon the bad life of the many.

III
Routes to the Good Life

To imagine a good life in its complexities, is also to think about how we can bring about the good life; searching for a utopia means also searching for the paths that lead to it.

Here again we find routes that are individual and ones that are more solidaristic. Viewing the individual as the object and the agent of the visualization of a good life has a long history. In 5th century BCE Hindu philosophy the good life is attained in two ways – one by living through as well as one can, the four stages or ashramas of the life of a man: Brahmacharya or the Student Stage which focused on study and celibacy, Grihastha or the Householder Stage – when the head of household attained the means to provide for his family – wealth as well as values, Vanaprastha or the Hermit Stage, the stage of retirement and passing on the responsibilities of the family to the son and Sannyasa or the Wandering Ascetic Stage – the stage of renunciation and withdrawal from the world in preparation of death.

Of course, I use the words 'life of a man' advisedly; just as the women and the slaves were denied citizenship in Greek city states, a life of education, as well as reflection was not on offer for women in traditional Hindu society, even though individual women like the poet Meera did rebel and pursue a life of education and sanyasa. Equally outside of this cycle of life were the lower castes, with the Shudras only able to experience the householder stage, with no resources to retire from work and family responsibilities. These socio-temporal phases of the good life are also an attempt to escape the cycle of death and rebirth (Nirvana) – the treadmill which keeps us tied to the materiality of living. A modern manifestation of this route could be seen to be the rise of the self-help industry – the self-improvement market in the U.S. was worth more than $9 billion in 2009 and is increasing. Is this however a good life? As Ahmed suggests, where we find the good life 'teaches us what we value rather than simply what is of value' (p. 13).

A second, more familiar strand of reaching the individual good life is of course that proposed by liberal theorists such as Bentham and Mill and most of all by Adam Smith. The shared good life (the social good) is the result of the individual pursuing of the good life through 'truck and barter' in the market. Individual consumption or aspirations to it has become the main route to happiness in the contemporary world. The Malls of London and Mumbai, of New York and New Delhi suggest that there is traction in this understanding of the good life. And yet, of course, Smith's work is more complex than this:

12

> 'The poor man's son, whom heaven in its anger has visited with ambition, …finds the cottage of his father too small…, and fancies he should be lodged more at his ease in a palace. … It [isn't until] in the last dregs of life, his body wasted with toil and diseases… that he begins at last to find that wealth and greatness are mere trinkets of frivolous utility, no more adapted for procuring ease of body or tranquility of mind than the tweezer-cases of the lover of toys (Smith 1982, 181).

Justice, beneficence and prudence were the virtues that would ensure good life. Social happiness is the effect of a 'natural arising morality' even though the individual might act morally for reasons other than the social good (Busch, 2008; see also Sen, 1984). However, given the Indian caste context, what I immediately think of is that while tranquillity is a virtue, is it a virtue only for the rich? Can a poor man's son not be ambitious without coming to grief; this sounds very much like the Varna system in Hindu philosophy where those who keep their place and show no ambition to leave their station will receive their rewards in 'other ways'. And what about the poor woman's daughter, one might ask? The altruism that is assumed where her labour is concerned sits uneasily next to a 'natural arising morality', when the double burden of work, the non-recognition of labour and the gender segregated nature of work is factored in. Marx, of course, approached the good life from a historical materialist position – universal in its sweep of history's unfolding exploitation, class war leading to a utopia where, famously, a liberated society of the future would make it

> "possible for me to do one thing to-day and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have in mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic" (1947:22).

Absent here also is a consideration of who will be doing the house chores when Marx (or another man) is hunting, fishing, shepherding or critiquing.

So, to secure the good life for all, I return to the discussion of depletion above, and examine both individual and collective strategies to reverse it (Rai et al, 2014). The first strategy is that of *mitigation*, which includes paying others to do tasks such as childcare and cleaning with low wages and long hours of work, using labour saving appliances and buying convenience foods. This is thus not a shared vision of the good life – buying others' labour to mitigate one's own, to be in a relationship of

exploitation -low wages and long hours of work - with another cannot contribute to the quality of life of all. In the context of global care chains, histories of empire remain present in the exploitation of care labour and the ruination of habitats left behind the migrant worker (Michel and Peng, 2012; Mahon and Robinson, 2011; Safri and Graham, 2010).

A second way of reversing depletion is what we call *replenishment*, where the state or private bodies and voluntary associations contribute to lessen the effects of depletion without necessarily recognising it as harmful in the ways that we have outlined. Much of the feminist social policy debates on care focus on this aspect – how to mobilize state resources that are fiscal, discursive and policy oriented in order to address care gaps , gender symmetries (Gornick and Meyers, 2009) and what Fraser has called the shift to a 'universal caregiver' model (1994). Collective struggles for consolidating and expanding social protection and community networks are important aspects of political action that can contribute to an understanding of and strategy towards bringing about a shared good life for all.

The third way to reverse depletion we term *transformation*, which involves structural change - first in transforming gendered social relations such that both men and women equally share social reproductive responsibilities – as Fraser has posited we must 'end gender as we know it'! (1994:611), with social provisions made to reflect this. Again, issues of difference, location and subjectivity are important here (Orloff, 2009) as is reflecting on what a gendered good life might entail in terms of redistribution of care responsibilities. And second, the recognition and valuation of social reproduction and therefore of depletion. This is not to put monetary but social value on how we treat care work that gives carers significance and recognition as contributors to a good life for all. If they are to be successful, both these transformative arenas need strategies that cut across private/public, North/South divides.

Struggles for transforming both these arenas have been ongoing and have seen some successes – formal and informal, legal, constitutional and discursive – but as yet these successes have not led to systemic transformations. However, if we see successful transformation not as a single revolutionary event but as a bundle of changes that may

add up to transformation in the long term, then we may see some elements of that bundle emerging through these struggles for gender equality and the valuation of social reproduction (Rai et al 2014).

IV
Securing the good life

A tragedy cannot be written about creatures of the jungle, only about those who try to get out of it – or those who succumb to it knowing that it is possible to transform it
Alan Silitoe, The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists

Thinking about these individual and collective strategies to the good life also makes me think about what secures these. Despite our critiques of government, governance and the law, contemporary struggles to attain equality, non-discrimination and democratic parity have been focused on these institutions. According to Ostrom, 'The concept of a civil society outside of a governed society is difficult for me to accept. It seems to me that the problem of achieving a good society is not to move outside of government' (2007). In democratic politics recognition, redistribution and development of capabilities of citizens are connected to fair representation, holding the state and governance institutions accountable and improving delivery mechanisms for policies directed towards achieving these goals. Anne Phillips points out that the "persistent under-representation of women in most of the forums in which…issues [of public life] are addressed then emerges as a particularly pressing problem'. It is pressing because different notions of the good life find particular articulations, and these articulations are represented in public life – institutional and informal - in different modes, with different outcomes. It is also pressing because institutional exclusions don't result in an inclusive social politics. The evidence across the world suggests that a significant increase in representation of women's and other marginalised groups will need special state supported measures such as quotas, as necessary if not a sufficient measure to increase participation in public life (Dahlerup, 2006).

In order to support a shared good life, however, the link between access to power structures, participation in decision-making and achieving a gender balance between

men and women in political institutions needs to be made and struggled over in the context of the political economy in which these institutions are embedded – neoliberal smart economics, which promote casualization, flexibilisation and low wages, cannot underpin movement towards a gendered good life (Hawkesworth 2006). Without such political economy analysis of democratic institutional membership and political participation, we risk depoliticisation of gender sensitive policy-making. Depoliticisation can also take the form of neglecting the link feminists have sought to establish – between private and the public, between the governance of polities and governance of communities. This is important because the two often work together powerfully through the imbricated nature of state and non-state governance mechanisms that shape both formal citizenship and the informality of belonging to communities both of which affect how subjectivity and agency are supported as well as constrained (Baxi, et al, 2006; Madhok and Rai, 2012).

Finally, securing the good life in terms of recognition and redistribution also means paying attention to difference. Reflexive analysis of the erasures of race and culture in the stories of feminist theory are made possible through a series of ontological and epistemological manoeuvres, which structure the emergence of a "common sense" regarding the boundaries of the known and knowable and make alliances across these boundaries difficult (Hemmings, 2011). In terms of social policy, Orloff asks 'who will be entitled to …new social protections and services?' (2009:141); as we have seen in the context of debates on depletion above, the language of citizenship includes as well as excludes. Fraser resolved the recognition/redistribution conflict through her Weberian formulation of institutionalized parity of participation; I argue instead that in addition, a more political approach is needed that addresses the need for new solidarities for change. This of course is not easy. From working class women's and black feminist challenges to 'global feminism' in the 1970s, to the 'cultural' difference debates of the 1980s, difference had vexed feminist theory and practice in productive and less fruitful ways. While the earlier optimistic readings of women's solidarity had folded in differences among them, many have argued that the cultural turn of the 1990s led to a cultural essentialism on the one hand (Narayan, 1998) and a 'hands off' approach to otherness which meant that most dialogue across cultural boundaries ceased to animate feminist work. I can vouch for this hesitancy that emerges from a feeling of being always in the 'wrong place' or the perpetual state of

otherness. When writing or speaking of 'honour crimes' in India and Pakistan for example, I have felt worried about the reading my work will generate in those outside the cultural boundaries within which this crime takes place, while at the same time recognising the importance of breaking the codes of silence that racism imposes, something that most people of colour experience. As Geeta Chowdhury and I have argued, we have not yet been able to develop the vocabularies that would allow us to speak confidently and respectfully across these borders of difference (2009). And yet reimagining the good life and struggling to make it real needs precisely that – a new politics of solidarity.

IV

Solidarity

... we might even say that the quest for the good life is the quest for the right form of politics, if indeed such a right form of politics lay within the realm of what can be achieved today. (Adorno, 2000:176).

We have seen above that the struggle for the good life takes both individual and collective forms. Trade unions, mobilising memberships in defence of their rights, insurgent citizens challenging inequalities of recognition and of redistribution of national resources, global social movements campaigning on issues that cannot be resolved within national boundaries – all these have contributed to conceiving of, articulating and working to bring into being the good life.

Bloch argued that Utopia was a form of 'cultural surplus' - in the world, but not of it: 'it contains the spark that reaches out beyond the surrounding emptiness,' (in Giroux, 1986b: 249). Lighting the spark and making social transformations happen involves agency – both as resistance and as solidarity. However, exercising agency also attracts risks, especially as Rahel Jaeggi suggests, in conditions of 'a deficit of social cooperation that can result in a situation of 'social alienation' (2001: 288). Sumi Madhok and I have argued that mobilising, exercising or framing agency, must be informed by a mapping of power relations as it alerts us to the levels of risk involved in exercising agency in a political landscape where political power is manifest as well as hidden, disciplining as well as disruptive (2010). This is to counter the tendency to view agency as an attribute of the individual who, in the words of Wendy Brown

'…bears full responsibility for the consequences of his or her action, no matter how severe the constraints on this action…' (Brown 2003:np). Struggles for change do not unfold in individualist, ahistorical, universalist and acontextual frames; they do so in specific contexts, in languages that are laden with histories and through agency that is framed by risks. While not acting might prolong social injury, strategizing for change needs to involve attention to the parameters of power within which agential subjects seek to act. Here also, as we have seen above in the context of the debate on depletion and care, the good life cannot be realised if the costs of its realisation are too high for too many; after all, we don't want to be thinking about tragedies but positive outcomes. Solidarity can be a defence against such costs.

For Durkheim, solidarity was what prevents the breakdown of societies; for Marx it was class reflexivity translated into political action against exploitation; for feminists it has been at times 'global sisterhood' and at others solidarity in difference. Solidarity has also been visualised as one standing for the others and the others standing in for one – as a form of coordinated action (Einwohner et al, 2016). Solidarity is not beneficence or charity, I would argue; it is a more symmetrical relationship among those whose vision of a good life coalesce around similar forms of politics. It militates against, what Giroux calls, 'the sheer weight of apocalypse' (1986b: 247). Take for example the slut walks as a campaign to challenge the denial of public spaces to women, or the Why Loiter? Campaign which is doing the same for women in India (Khan et al 2011). Both can be criticised for their white and middle class composition, but even in this critique they provide us with questions that we need to address to build networks of solidarity-in-action (Mercier, 2017). Solidarity is reflexive: it illuminates practices of power at work within different discursive and institutional relations of domination but it also critiques itself as a particular type of practice in which men and women challenge oppressive and dominating institutions (Giroux, ibid. 251). According to Sharon D Welch solidarity is the opposite of indifference: 'To remember the reality of oppression in the lives of people and to value those lives is to be saved from the luxury of hopelessness' (1985:90).

Solidarity then ties people together – it binds, but if it is reflexive, it does so capaciously and sensitively. Even as the individual strategies of leaving violent worlds behind makes refugees in Europe vulnerable to new violent words of hate and

rejection, we need to think what solidarity might for us all. After all, although there have been many who have waved flags that say, in the words of the poet Wasran Shire:

go home blacks

refugees

dirty immigrants

asylum seekers

sucking our country dry (2015)

there have also been many who have given the arriving refugees bread and water, warmth and support – solidarity in short. In these acts of solidarity we can also see how Marx thought (in unfeminist vocabulary) of the 'species being' - that each human being must, by virtue of being human, imagine 'himself'/herself as the example of being human. Through developing such a reflexive solidarity, through standing with others in struggle defined by historical processes to develop concrete forms of sociality, we can develop what Welch calls a 'redeemed community'. This capacious solidarity can let us come together and generate a liminal moments of change, even though we later go our own ways – Spivak's notion of strategic essentialism (1987) – not just as a mobilizational device but also alerting us to the dangers of doing so - can guide us here to build bridges to cross to a shared end. Solidarity with others can then help us towards a good life for ourselves.

We, as intellectuals, educators can participate in developing this solidarity – we can do this through reflecting on our curricula, our pedagogy, our writing and the spaces we are ready to occupy. bell hooks called for "renewal and rejuvenation in our teaching practices […] so that we can create new visions, [through] a movement which makes education the practice of freedom" (1994: 12). So, when a group of academics from the University of East London teach refugees in Calais even as the camp there is dismantled by the French government; or when professors from different disciplines and countries conduct 'teach-ins' at Jawaharlal University challenging the appropriation of nationalism by the current right-wing government, in support of the student movement, such acts of everyday solidarity help bridge the private and public, the individual and the collective and challenge the dichotomies of knowledge/power. By 'uncovering forms of historical and subjugated knowledges that point to experiences of suffering, conflict, and collective struggle… teachers as

intellectuals can begin to link the notion of historical understanding to elements of critique and hope' (Giroux, 1986b:254). In doing so, we place ourselves in relation to the social that we critique, the individual that we nurture in our classrooms, and the political that we seek to change.

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