**The impact is self-clash. Debate should begin with teams making arguments on *both sides* of the resolution to learn rhetorical effectiveness and judgment. Their disagreement with AFF side of the res should be treated as an opportunity for rhetorical invention. Sincerity and self-transparency are dangerous fantasies that will be exploited by rhetorical action.**

Robert **TERRILL** Communication & Culture @ Indiana **’11** “Mimesis, Duality, and Rhetorical Education” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* p. 297-300 [Ableist Language Changed – Turner]

Sincerity

Sincerity might inform and characterize a heartfelt effort at persuasion, as when the intended effect of discourse is fully aligned with the authentic commitments of the speaker. When a senator believes deeply that the bill she has sponsored will benefit the nation, and urges the support of her colleagues and constituents, she might be called sincere. Sincerity might also refer to, or imply, a promise of some future action, as when a plumber remains committed to her original estimate despite unforeseen complications. And an attribution of sincerity might follow upon an explicit and public show of emotion, for example when a philandering executive weeps as he publicly confesses his transgressions. In these instances, sincerity contributes to effective persuasion as a style of speech that communicates a close alignment between one’s mind and one’s tongue. As Lionel Trilling puts it, sincerity ‘‘as we now use it refers primarily to a congruence between avowal and actual feeling’’ (2). When people say what they believe, or promise what they deliver, or otherwise show that the words they are saying are inexorably entwined with something firmly rooted in the material or emotional world, it helps to assuage the fear that words have become disconnected from things, that verbiage is empty sound, and that rhetoric is merely rhetoric.2

But sincerity has a complex relationship to rhetorical education. To the extent that such pedagogy is designed to prepare citizens for effective rhetorical performance, its priorities lie beyond the mere training of an expressive ability to accurately portray one’s self to others. The success of a rhetorical performance is not assessed according to the degree that it expresses a latent or underlying motivation, commitment, or feeling, but instead is judged to succeed or fail depending on the response it stirs in an audience. A speaker might achieve this sort of success by translating private convictions into public speech, but also might not. As a corollary, an audience might be correct to understand a compelling public utterance as an authentic representation of an earnest commitment, but also might not. A rhetorical education cultivates a pervasive self-consciousness about discourse, an ability to stand to one side of linguistic performance—whether one’s own or someone else’s—and assess it along **multiple lines of effectiveness** rather than at the **single** **point** of **authenticity**. Of course, this ability can provide the unscrupulous with the means to hoodwink the unprepared, and so a **fully** **sincere** **discursive** **world** will always be a **seductive fantasy**. But it would be a **fatal fantasy,** because a public culture within which enthusiasm for sincerity has been elevated to a ‘‘**cult** of **plain speaking’’** (Haiman 101), and where ‘‘the reigning view of rhetorical speech is that it is a disruptive force in politics and a threat to democratic deliberation’’ (Garsten 3), would not only leave us at the mercy of hucksters and charlatans but also severely cripple [reduce] the flexibility and perspective-taking that enable us to get along. The tension between rhetorical education and contemporary norms of sincerity may stem from the fact that ‘‘sincerity’’ derives from Latin and Indo-European roots denoting not only cleanliness, purity, and honesty but also singularity or simplicity.3 Sincerity is recognized as the style of speech most closely associated with authenticity because it presents the self as whole or undivided. Because ‘‘the sincere speaker is unitary,’’ Markovits points out, ‘‘there is no split self, no self-consciousness that would allow the speaker to manipulate her own words for greatest effect’’ (34)—and thus little room for the linguistic self-consciousness fostered through rhetorical education. An education that disparages rhetoric would emphasize what Richard Lanham has referred to as the ‘‘C-B-S’’ theory of prose, dictating that language ideally should be clear, brief, and concise, ‘‘maximally transparent and minimally self-conscious.’’ Establishing ‘‘sincerity as a central evaluative term,’’ he continues, ‘‘implies that there is a central self to be sincere to, a ‘real me’ halfway between the ears,’’ and consequently that the quality of an utterance is judged according to how closely the utterance adheres to that ‘‘real me’’ (Lanham Analyzing Prose 1–2; Style: An Anti-Textbook).4 A rhetorical education, in contrast, would produce citizens who assume a ‘‘natural agility in changing orientations,’’ who dwell ‘‘not in a single value-structure but in several,’’ and who are ‘‘thus committed to no single construction of the world’’; while such citizens may relinquish ‘‘the luxury of a central self,’’ Lanham argues, they would gain ‘‘the tolerance, and usually the sense of humor, that comes from knowing [they]—and others—not only may think differently, but may be differently’’ (Motives of Eloquence 5).

One traditional component of the rhetorical paideia that contributes to the problematic relationship between rhetoric and sincerity is rooted in the **dissoi logoi,** the practice of **producing arguments on two sides** of an issue. Thomas Sloane argues that ‘‘the ancient dialogic practice of generating arguments on both sides of the question’’ is ‘‘of the essence in traditional rhetorical education,’’ and in particular that it is the ‘‘**core’’** of **rhetorical invention** (11, 3, 30). Generating persuasive arguments on competing sides fosters flexibility and copia, and is thus an essential pedagogical practice that encourages a fullness both of ideas and of words. But composing two-sided arguments implies, of course, that at least one of the arguments does not represent the sincerely held conviction of the speaker. As Ronald Greene and Darrin Hicks put it, debating both sides of an issue requires ‘‘de-coupling the sincerity principle from the arguments presented by a debater’’ (101). The citizen engaged in producing both pro and con arguments cannot reliably present the unitary self associated with sincere speech; she is bifurcated, perhaps unable to seem committed to a single position and certainly unable to present her discourse without self-consciousness. This inherent critique of the sincerity norm is one reason for the long-standing place of the dissoi logoi in rhetorical pedagogy, as it ‘‘grooms one to appreciate the **process of debate** as a **method** of **democratic decision-making’’** (Greene and Hicks 102). ‘‘Debating both sides,’’ further, ‘‘transforms the student-debater by developing a **post-conventional morality**—one capable of making moral judgments based on reason and **not** **authority** or personal convictions’’ (120). Dissoi logoi, as a practice, contributes to citizen education, then, by nudging students away from their tendency to conflate persuasion with conviction and toward a self-conscious faculty of reasoned judgment.

**Demand for authenticity and consistency destroys political spaces – cycles of moralism, charges of hypocrisy and vengeance make misery the foundation for political truth.**

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POLITICAL IDENTITY AND THE LIMITS OF UNMASKING In On Revolution, Arendt singled out one central trope of the French Revolution, that it would finally mean the tearing away of the **mask of hypocrisy** from 'the face of French society ... exposing behind it the unspoiled, honest face of the peuple' (OR, 102). The corruption of the ancien regime led to an appeal outside the aristocracy for a new source of political authority. The true inner heart of the people stood against the rotten facade of the life of the rich. As such, Arendt suggested, 'the very concept of le peuple received its connotations from an outrage of the "heart" ... against the corruption and hypocrisy of the salons' (BPF, 200). The idea is clearly expressed in the writing ofJean-Jacques Rousseau, who out of disgust for the heartlessness of the salons had valorized the unaffected sentiments of those uncorrupted by high society (Davidson 1997). With the Revolution, it finally seemed as though the true face of le peuple would no longer be' "artificially" hidden behind any masks' (OR, 105). Arendt recalled a different metaphor of the mask derived from Greek theatre, but its real significance is found in Roman politics and law. In her words, The mask ... had two functions: it had to hide, or rather to replace, the actor's own face and countenance, but in a way that would make it possible for the **voice to sound through** ... The distinction between a private individual in Rome and a Roman citizen was that the latter had a persona, a legal personality ... ; it was as though the law had affixed to him the part he was expected to play on the public scene, with the provision, however, that his own voice would be able to sound through (OR, 102). The mask made possible the public voice of the citizen. The artificial persona was the legal, public personality. This is **not** a mask of **hypocrisy**. On the public stage, to appear is to be. And to appear in public is to wear a sort of mask. The meaning of the mask here is best understood, not as a defence of presenting oneself as otherwise, but in relation to the conditions for political agency. Arendt's idea is captured in Richard Sennett's description (1976) of theatrical conventions that emerged in the public discourse in European cities in the eighteenth-century (also see Villa 1999: 147-54). The focus, like the actor on the stage, is on the content of the political act, the gesture or word rather than the political identity of the agent behind. Such social codes provoked sentiments in others without compelling one to define oneself to the other. The mask enabled a degree of impersonality and alienation from self for the integrity of the public realm. By creating a distance between the actor and the act, individuals could express opinions as public personalities and to act 'as a sounding board for truth' (OR, 103). In turn, others could disagree with such opinions without **demonizing the essence** of the **individual** **behind the mask**. These conventions were essential to opening up communicative spaces for individuals to appear and express opinions in public. The war on hypocrisy conducted by the French revolutionists failed to heed the importance of the public persona as the foundation of citizenship. Again, there was rage, 'the rage of misfortune pitted against the rage of unmasked corruption' (OR, 106-7). However, in contrasting the honest dignity of the poor with the filthiness of the rich the revolutionists apparently felt obliged to emancipate le peuple not as citizens but qua malheureux. The ordinary suffering poor would be freed from enslavement, but as the poor, as the needy, as men, rather than as equal citizens before man-made law. Unmasking the machinations of the Court was to reveal 'the "natural man" -that is, a human being ... indicating someone outside the range of the law' (OR, 103). But the possibility of liberation and equality was destroyed because the revolutionaries had no conception of the public personality 'given and guaranteed by the body politic'. As Arendt stated in Origins, 'Men are unequal according to their natural origin, their different organization, and fate in history. Their equality is an equality of rights' (OT, 234). Thus while hypocrisy did not distort the 'faces' of the people, neither did any 'legal personality' protect them (OR, 105). The human being qua human being, as Arendt frequently pointed out, is a politically irrelevant being. To be political, to speak and act in the public realm, is to wear a mask 'as the **rules of the political game demand**, as a sounding board for the truth' (OR, 103). The bourgeois hypocrites so hated by Rousseau, Lawrence, the Front generation and Fanon, did not follow this rule, but used the mask 'as a contraption for deception' (OR, 103). But the anti-hypocrites each failed to understand that in the hunt for innermost motives, in seeking to tear away the mask of hypocrisy to reveal some other truer, more honest face, risked destroying the sense in which politics is itself an artificially constructed 'space of appearances' (HC, 199). 14 Arendt shared with Machiavelli the view that in the political realm it is **impossible** to **judge anything but appearances**-the words and deeds of political actors, not their **innermost motives.** For Machiavelli, it famously mattered only that the actor appeared good to others; only God, who was 'beyond the realm of appearance', could judge the goodness of a human heart. There was a necessary gap between how the actor appeared to others and to any 'transcendent Being'. This is not a defence of hypocrisy ( cf. Grant 1997: ch. 2). It is a statement about the possibilities of knowledge and what constitutes the political world. The public is constituted by a plurality of others speaking and acting and judging what is only visible in the 'space of appearances'. But we cannot verify innermost motives, **no matter how authentic they may be.** The inner motives of action, because they are located in the human heart and are not seen, cannot be judged. Moral clarity and the strength of conviction cannot be openly, publicly scrutinized or be beyond doubt; 'it is impossible ever to know beyond doubt another man's heart'; it 'becomes an object of suspicion rather than insight ... behind which again other, ulterior motives may lurk, such as hypocrisy and deceit' (OR, 91; OT, 430), or rather they should. For what is the guarantee of virtue? How do we verify the authenticity of the leaders' political convictions? In response, the resolute leader must expose the **suffering** that **alone** can make **self-evident** the **virtuousness** of the motive to act. The result is the **glorification of suffering**, 'hailing the exposed **misery** as the best and even **only** **guarantee** of **virtue'** (OR, 107). Machiavelli taught, in Arendt's words, '"Appear as you may wish to be", by which he meant: "Never mind how you [really] are [on the inside], this is of no relevance in the world and in politics, where only appearances, not true" being, count; if you can manage to appear to others as you would wish to be, that is all that can possibly be required' (OR, 97). To think through the political relevance of this idea with Arendt does not leave us without grounds for condemning hypocrisy. On the contrary, it provides a stronger basis from which to condemn the gap between words and actions so indicative in contemporary politics. The real problem is that in a perversion of Socrates' belief that we must be true to ourselves, the hypocrite behaves as though there is a unity between the public presentation of the self and the innermost motives of the heart. This is the essence of the conviction politics so prevalent in the current political scene, which seeks support for political action based on the good intentions of morally inspired leaders (Runciman 2006). For the sake of authenticity, such a leader must pretend that the public and private selves are totally at one. It is also why the charge of hypocrisy is so easy to make against those who wear their moral convictions on their sleeve. 'The test applying to the hypocrite', Arendt wrote, 'is indeed the old Socratic "Be as you wish to appear", which means appear always as you wish to appear to others even if it happens that you are alone and appear to no one but yourself (LM, 37). To be sure, as Arendt suggested, Socrates possessed an 'unquestioned belief in the truth of appearance and taught "Appear to yourself as you would wish to appear to others"' (OR, 97). But in Andrea Nye's useful suggestion, the hypocrite 'no longer engages in the inner self-questioning which Arendt identifies with [Socratic] thought. To be "true to oneself" is not to appear to be someone identical with a real inner self. It is to think, to engage in a constant questioning of words and actions that results in a degree of consistency in words and actions' (1994: 146; LM, 36-40). Arendt criticized both hypocrisy and wars on hypocrisy for failing to respect or understand the importance of the politically constructed persona, the mask that was necessary to provide the artificial built spaces in which each actor's voice is 'able to sound through' (OR, 102) and for breaking a promise. In her words, It has been said that hypocrisy is the compliment vice pays to virtue, but this is not quite true. All virtue begins with a compliment paid to it, by which I express my being pleased with it. The compliment implies a promise to the world, to those to whom I appear, to act in accordance with my pleasure, and it is the breaking of the implied promise that characterizes the hypocrite (LM, 36). Hypocrisy threatens the very sense in which the public is an artificial realm of what appears. The plurality of voices, each acting as a 'sounding board for the truth' is constitutive of worldly reality. Without hearing the many voices, the political facts and competing truths that make up the political world are lost. Arendt always discussed truth in a manner that placed the perspectival as central. Hypocrisy is therefore a problem of the first order when the factual truths about the gap between words and actions are concealed. The mask matters to Arendt because it enables the kind of political agency that focuses not on who actors are, or what their inner motives might be, but on the words that they utter and the actions that they undertake.

#### treating imagination as “abstract”/distant makes the existing social order permanent. If we don’t develop utopian imaginaries, the utopian impulse will get coopted to support right-wing nationalism.

William PARIS Philosophy @ Toronto ’22 “CRISIS CONSCIOUSNESS, UTOPIAN CONSCIOUSNESS, AND THE STRUGGLE FOR RACIAL JUSTICE” *Puncta: A Journal of Critical Phenomenology* 5.4 p. 155-162

UTOPIAN CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE “NOT-YET” SOCIAL ORDER

Crisis consciousness is not sufficient to explain how agents come to constitute a new horizon of normative expectations. If a social order can stabilize a crisis and meet some of the demands of the agents in crisis, then we might expect their horizon of normative expectations to be reintegrated into the social order. However, in the period when a gap opens up between agents’ horizons and the extant social order it is possible that an alternative set of possibilities for a social order may be grasped alongside new normative criteria by which a social order ought to be judged. Utopian consciousness distinguishes itself from crisis consciousness in that it develops new norms of justification for social practices and experiences insight into the “structural possibility” (Wright 2010, 107) of a social order that is not yet. Breakdown and dysfunction appear to be the structural conditions for utopian consciousness, yet they do not exhaust its content.

I emphasize insight in order to address an ambivalence that is at the heart of conceptualizations of utopian consciousness. Modern criticism of utopian consciousness, and utopia more generally, go as far back as conservative critiques of the French revolution and its enthusiasm. The normative expectation that a social order should produce happiness for all and the hubris of thinking the many could, by fiat, bend life away from hierarchy and tragedy struck many critics as dangerous and lacking any insight into the real strictures of life (Losurdo 2021, 86–108).17 The concern has been that such desires sidestep the complexities of social life. These desires may even misunderstand the necessary role some form of unhappiness play in securing stability. Hayek, for instance, inherits this tradition, making the argument that a healthy dose of pessimism is necessary for a stable social order. We should restrain our expectations of what reason and consciousness can deliver. But distrust of utopian enthusiasm is not confined to more conservative philosophical traditions. We can find Theodor Adorno (2005) in “Marginalia to Theory and Praxis” criticizing student activists in Germany for their voluntarist enthusiasm to transform society that lacks an adequate thematization of the objective blockages to freedom. In other words, they lacked insight into how the world really was.

Much as I want to avoid romanticizing crisis consciousness, I also think it is imperative that we resist romanticizing utopian consciousness as if it immediately follows that all enthusiasm is normatively praiseworthy and functionally successful. However, I register this ambivalence not in order to disavow what I take to be the necessary role of utopian consciousness in social transformation, but to explicate how critics from both the right and the left have painted utopian consciousness with too broad of a brush.18 What both sets of critics presume is that utopian consciousness and utopias are primarily of the order of the imagination and are thus either provide no knowledge at all or, at the very least, a degraded form of knowledge. In “Socialism: Utopian and Scientific,” Friedrich Engels (1978) juxtaposes utopia that is made up of fantasies and ephemeral desires against science that grasps objective reality. I think this manner of carving up the distinction between utopia and knowledge has held sway for far too long and we would do well to loosen its grip.

One of the key insights the Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch (1986) offers is that traces of utopian consciousness inflect our everyday social practices in the form of daydreams, wishes, and even the somatic experience of hunger (11). Critics such as Jürgen Habermas (1969) have cited Bloch’s reliance on naturalistic interpretations of utopia as evidence that he is a romantic who indulged the imaginary and irrational (Habermas 1969, 323–25). But this is not what he is saying at all. Bloch claims that the phenomenological evidence of daydreams, for example, indicate that an extant social order is not satisfying some desire the agent has.19 Or to use the language I have been deploying: our horizons of normative expectations are never completely isomorphic with our social order. Bloch contends that these average and everyday yearnings are implicit knowledge of dysfunctions in one’s social knowledge.20

Bloch’s project, at varying levels of success, was to argue that philosophy should thematize this everyday, implicit knowledge and bring it into contact with social scientific analyses of objective conditions rather than allow it to languish ineffectually in the sphere of imagination. Bloch (1986) concludes, “Philosophy will have conscience of tomorrow, commitment to the future, knowledge of hope, or it will have no more knowledge” (7). The tendency of social orders and its elites toward inertia and conserving the status quo will often systemically distort the “not-yet” as an essential category of social experience.21 For Bloch, the “not-yet” was not an abstract future that has not arrived, but bundles of tendencies and capacities that exist within a social order that in everyday situations are suppressed and disciplined. Nevertheless, consciousness grasps them in diffuse, inchoate patterns.

Unfortunately, Bloch’s dense and literary style, replete with metaphors, obscures the rather mundane and practical point he wants to make: a social order’s norms of justification never entirely convince everyone. Consciousness is never fully satiated and strives to both understand why and thematize what state of affairs would bring satisfaction. What frustrates projects of social transformation are a social order’s systematic attempts to separate utopia from social reality, to render the former imaginary and the latter real. For instance, calls for abolishing prisons or the police are systematically met with the dismissal that these do not deal with actual social problems and are the exercise of imaginary ideals that may inspire us, but cannot give us any relevant knowledge of what is really possible. Appeals to polling data that suggest the relative unpopularity of the “slogans” is marshalled as evidence of an objective limit to social transformation. And so, we have the “dreamers” and the “realists.” But Bloch (1986) insists that for those of us interested in social transformation it is “a question of learning hope” (3; emphasis in original), and this means that hope can be a mode of knowledge production—perhaps the essential mode of knowledge production— for grasping objective tendencies and latent possibilities permeating a social order.

My point is not to delve into complex questions of polling methodology or how polling plays a role in belief formation rather than only measuring the opinion that is out there. Instead, I want question the criteria we, as theorists, use to decide the difference between real possibility and objective impossibility. Bloch insists that no matter how central and essential one takes the objective sciences to be (what he calls the “cold stream” of Marxism), you will never find the “not-yet” social order in that data. The specificity of the “not- yet” will only be found in agents’ utopian consciousness at their points of frustration and breakdown. And so, he insists that we must bid “farewell to the closed, static concept of being” so that we can grasp a world that is “full of propensity towards something, tendency towards something, latency of something, and this intended something means fulfilment of the intending” (18). Unless one’s theory of social change is completely functionalist, whereby social orders will automatically do what they will do independent of the actions of various agents or accords primacy to technocrats and elites as in the best epistemological position to decide what is really possible, then I think the conclusion that ordinary agents have a central role to play in social transformation is inescapable.

None of this is to suggest that utopian consciousness spontaneously and automatically brings about a better social order. What I claimed for crisis consciousness follows for utopian consciousness as well: it has no necessary moral or political content. In fact, Bloch (1977) was aware of this as well, as shown by his analyses of fascism in Nazi Germany.22 The danger was that a social order oriented utopian desires back to a nostalgia for a lost homeland that had been humiliated. A more robust account of utopian consciousness would take it to be crucial to the social learning process of what alternative social orders would allow for the establishment of shared horizons of normative expectations and wellbeing. I follow Jaeggi (2016) here when she concludes that a “successful form-of-life would be one that has the feature of not hindering, but facilitating successful collective learning processes” (65; emphasis in original). A social order that systematically and actively suppresses utopian consciousness deprives itself of practical knowledge as well as desiccates the capacity for imagination.

I am insisting that theories of social transformation should take stock of the loss or distortion of knowledge as much as the potential harmful effects that a dysfunctional social order can have on agents’ imaginative capacities. Bloch (1986) differentiates between knowledge that distills what has already occurred from prospective knowledge “in the sense of what is becoming . . . decisively contributes to this becoming” (132). Social orders often turn the “not-yet” into disciplinary injunctions to slow down and trust the process since a better order cannot yet emerge. However, for utopian consciousness, the “not-yet” is not a limit, but an epistemic task to understand what tendencies and capacities could establish an alternative social order. In this way, consciousness still does not outstrip the present social order by fleeing into the space of imagination, but instead delves deeper into it and inquires after real possibilities of social life.

Moreover, I think this provides us with a plausible response to the Hayekian quandary of epistemic pessimism. Hayek takes our reliance on implicit or tacit knowledge of our social order as a limit to what consciousness can grasp and effectuate. But if Bloch is right that this implicit knowledge also contains a not-yet explicated apprehension of the problems of a social order and the immanent resolution to those problems, then we are not resigned to the conservative position as concerns tacit knowledge. By linking tacit knowledge with objective analyses of the social world, we could, hypothetically, establish utopian learning processes from which new forms of problem-solving and social life could emerge. This would allow us to develop a more grounded critical theory that illuminates the complex relays between needs, social environments, and political practice. Indeed, it would require that we incorporate work from the social sciences on how actions become meaningful for us given the environments in which we are embedded.23

Crisis consciousness and utopian consciousness should be understood as mutually supportive of the learning process that can crystallize new horizons of normative expectations. Without utopia, crisis consciousness cannot grasp alternative possibilities of normative expectation. Without crisis, utopian consciousness will not understand the breakdowns and dysfunctions that shape social life. These two typologies of consciousness more adequately explain potential processes of social transformation than models that explicitly focus on moral awareness and ignorance. I now turn to contemporary struggles for racial justice and how they can be informed by crisis and utopian consciousness.

CRISES AND UTOPIAS OF RACIAL JUSTICE

In the United States, calls for racial justice and critiques of systemic racism as it concerns policing, prisons, and poverty have only become more urgent in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the George Floyd protests of 2020. It is not uncommon to hear the language of crisis being used when describing the situation of impoverished Black communities. In fact, it is hard to think of time when talk of race, racism, and the United States’s sordid history with non-white peoples was more ubiquitous. For better and for worse, few are unaware of discourses concerning racial justice. One might expect that after the severe challenges to its legitimacy brought on by a mishandled pandemic and nationwide protests, the social order of the United States was on the cusp of transformation. However, the opposite has proven to be the case. The social order of the United States has shown itself to be remarkably durable even as trust in the government reaches historic lows.24

Now, this does not imply that the crises and dysfunctions were not real and that the social situation in the United States was in actuality going well. One can point to any number of data points, such as an increased debt held by the young, decreasing life expectancy among whites, and deteriorating democratic mechanisms to suggest that there are real crises within the United States social order. Instead, what follows is that a social order can persist even as there are widening rifts between it and agents’ horizons of normative expectations.25 My hypothesis is that the general crisis facing racial justice is not a crisis of moral ignorance or a lack of knowledge concerning the situation of Blacks, migrants, or other minorities, but to borrow a famous phrase from Antonio Gramsci (1992): “The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear” (276). The increased reliance on what I have called the “awareness model on consciousness” in discourses of racial justice expresses the real lack of political and organizational capacity to resolve the systemic dysfunction of our social order. If we cannot change the world, we can at least change ourselves. Our moment is a moment of breakdown and transition where new horizons are forming, yet old social relations persist. The aim of racial justice needs to be the establishment of a new common ground for meaningful action, or else we will witness the diminishing returns of our struggles in the guise of increased bureaucracies, token representation, and the decay of knowledge of how to organize ourselves.

There is not enough space to give full and specific details of the social causes of our interregnum, so a broad outline will have to suffice. In the social order of the United States, norms of legitimation and allegiance no longer have a rational structure for many citizens, and yet nothing has come to replace those norms that would bind together some minimal life that we could call the common good (Macintyre 1990, 351). The fragmentation of social life is not only due to market pressures that continue to destabilize increasing swaths of the general populace with insecurity, but that this social order ideologically takes itself to be “post-racial” despite much empirical evidence to the contrary. I would call this, following Terry Pinkard (2012), a systemic form of alienation whereby a form of life “can no longer sustain allegiance because of the incompatible entitlements and commitments such a way of life puts on its members” (148). The increasing absorption of a Black elite and political class attempting to represent and legitimate this social order while presiding over apparatuses of violence and humiliation disproportionately targeting Blacks and other minorities, only heightens a sense of alienation.26 And so, projects of racial justice find themselves struggling within a social form of life in which fewer people believe, but continue to lack the structural capacity to achieve a new form of life.

However, we do not lack vision or imagination in this moment. Activists, philosophers, and even some politicians have been writing and envisioning worlds without police or prisons, ecologically sustainable and just worlds, and worlds without borders or with the right to free movement.27 It may be difficult to apprehend from within what seems to be a dystopian interregnum, but we are also living through a utopian renaissance. Utopias, as I have argued, often attend moments of crisis. These visions are crucial, especially since we can expect regressive visions of utopia to emerge that will demand a “return” to a purer nation-state. These visions ought to be contested. Nevertheless, vision is not enough if we do not grasp the shape of crisis before us.

There is no telling how long interregnums will persist. Given this, if I am right that we are in an interregnum, then racial justice requires both normative critique and functional analyses of why it is so difficult in our present moment to establish an alternative social order that accords with our new horizons of normative expectations. Without such analyses the project of racial justice risks becoming an ineffective slogan, or it will be vulnerable to capture by elites (Black or otherwise) who will attempt to mold its horizons according to their interests in the extant social order.28 The utopian consciousness of racial justice should allow us to specify the difficult terrain and new problems we face in the interest of repairing and nurturing our social learning processes. No doubt this is an immensely complex endeavor, but if we are to identify real utopian possibilities in our current crisis, we need much more than the awareness of racial injustices.