

Key Terms Journal

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State of Nature

In John Locke's book *Second Treatise of Government*, he states: "The state of nature has a law of nature to govern it, which obliges every one: and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind, who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions" (Locke sect 6). The theoretical original state of mankind was one of equality and freedom. In the state of nature every person had a right to their life, health, liberty, and possessions. There was no need for a government and everyone acted according to reason. This is the perfect utopia where every person listens to reason and respects the basic rights of others. Locke believes that the state of nature would exist in the absence of government, therefore men must have been in this state at some point in history.

Jermemy Bentham in the book *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* also mentions nature placing man under a law: "Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do" (Bentham 14). Bentham also believes that people should consult a law outside of a government. Instead of reason governing our actions, Bentham believed that in a state of nature pain and pleasure decide if an action should be executed.

Furthermore, Charles W. Mills in his lecture "Theorizing Racial Justice" adds that the state of nature "is not actually meant as a literal account but a hypothetical one, an "as if" story." (Mills 15) Mills emphasizes that the state of nature can be used to imagine what the perfect state of mankind would be. The state of nature is not only something used to think of the past, but can be used to reimagine the future.

Happiness

Kant in *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* defines happiness as the “complete well-being and contentment with one’s state (Kant 527). Kant defines happiness as the contentment of an individual. It is not just an emotion, but a state of being.

Additionally, Bentham in *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* demonstrates how happiness can be seen as a part of the community “A man may be said to be a partizan of the principle of utility, when the approbation or disapprobation he annexes to any action or to any measure, is determined by and proportioned to the tendency which he conceives it to have to augment or to diminish the happiness of the community”. (Bentham 15)

Bentham demonstrates how happiness is not just a state of being for an individual, but also the state of a community. A community’s happiness may be affected by the actions of an individual.

Kant also demonstrates that happiness is “so indeterminate a concept that although every man wants to attain happiness, he can never say definitely and in unison with himself what it really is that he wants and wills” (Kant 532). He emphasizes that happiness is ambiguous, and there is no clear way to achieve the state of happiness.

Finally Kant emphasizes that “To assure one’s own happiness is a duty (at least indirectly) for discontent with one’s state, in a press of cares and amidst unsatisfied wants, might easily become a great temptation to the transgression of duty” (Kant 529). He demonstrates that discontent affects one’s ability to commit to their duties. This is why it is important to assure one’s own happiness

Obligation

Kant in the book *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, defines obligation as “The dependence of a will, not absolutely good on the principle of autonomy (that is moral necessitation) is obligation. Obligation can thus have no reference to a holy being. The obligation necessity to act from obligation is called duty” (Kant 542). Kant demonstrates that an obligation cannot rely on a requirement from society, religion, or other moral necessities. An obligation stems from the will that it must be committed. People must act on an obligation because it is their duty. These actions are the only ones that hold moral worth.

In John Locke’s book *Second Treatise of Government*, he states “This equality of men by nature, the judicious Hooker looks upon as so evident in itself, and beyond all question, that he makes it the foundation of that obligation to mutual love amongst men, on which he builds the duties they owe one another, and from whence he derives the great maxims of justice and charity.” (Locke sect 5.). Locke also believes that duty is derived from obligation. Locke believes love is a crucial obligation of men. This mutual love determines the duties men have to each other.

Contrary to Kant’s definition of an obligation, Locke believes in religious obligation: “Adam and Eve, and after them all parents were, by the law of nature, under an obligation to preserve, nourish, and educate the children they had begotten; not as their own workmanship, but the workmanship of their own maker, the Almighty, to whom they were to be accountable for them. (Locke sect 56.). He believes that the obligations owed to others come from an obligation to God. Locke believes that because he is our maker, men have an obligation to God and an obligation to protect his creations. This is a different way to act from obligation.

Freedom

John Locke in the book *Second Treatise of Government*, believes that mankind was once in a “state of perfect freedom to order their actions, and dispose of their possessions and persons, as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of nature” (Locke Sect. 4). His definition of perfect freedom is to act completely independently and move throughout the world without any interference. Mankind is currently far from this perfect state of freedom.

Andre Lepecki in his article “Choreopolice and Choreopolitics”, emphasizes the connection between freedom, politics, and dance. He writes that politics “can be redefined as a general orientation towards freedom” (Lepecki 14) and “to address freedom as both orientation and meaning of the political, to see it constitutively tied to the figure of the dancer” (Lepecki 15). She believes that freedom is politics and is something we must move towards. The best way to understand this definition of freedom is through the dancer. Lepecki believes that “on our way to freedom, we must first of all tackle that which blocks, directs, diverts, and (pre)conditions our movements” (Lepecki 18). Similar to Locke, he believes that freedom is when there is nothing restricting our movement. Everyone can move freely throughout the world and is not restricted from moving in certain ways or in certain places.

Dance is also used as a way to reach freedom. In Sheree Renée Thomas’s book *Dark Matter*, Thomas states that during the Capoeira dance, “nobody interrupts the dancer; his or her time is respected and each person is allowed a space for freedom” (Thomas 38). Thomas implies that a space for freedom can be created through dance and community.

Law

According to Robert Cover's essay 'Nomos and Narrative,' "Law is a force, like gravity, through which our worlds exercise an influence upon one another, a force that affects the courses of these worlds through a normative space" (Cover 10). Cover emphasizes that law is built into the framework of how our world functions, similar to gravity. Law keeps us grounded in reality while allowing space to imagine a better world.

Cover emphasizes that law acts as a link between two worlds and also asserts that it is best represented through a narrative: "Law may be viewed as a system of tension or a bridge linking a concept of a reality to an imagined alternative - that is, as a connective between two states of affairs, both of which can be represented in their normative significance only through the devices of narrative" (Cover 9). Cover demonstrates that laws connect reality to an ideal reality (how things could be). The significance of a law is best represented through stories and history.

Additionally, Cover adds that "Law must be meaningful in the sense that it permits those who live together to express themselves with it and with respect to it" (Cover 14). Cover demonstrates the impacts of law. He asserts that law itself is a way for people to express themselves, through narratives, and law creates a world where people are able to express themselves.

Movement Choir

Marie C. Percy in *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Theater*, states that a movement choir was “a dance form that allowed for personal expression within a choreographed form containing massive numbers of professional or amateur dancers” (Percy 775). Movement choirs allowed for both amateurs and professionals to participate.

Movement choirs were developed by Rudolf Von Laban and according to Percy, Laban wanted “to create a joyous sense of a community celebration within the movement choirs.” (Percy 782). Movement choirs demonstrate the importance of movement within a community. Moving with others strengthens the sense of community among people.

Percy also mentions the movement choirs used by the Nazis: “Olympic Youth was able to achieve what Laban had not: a massive movement choir spectacle that supported the invisible propaganda in the 1936 Berlin Olympics.” (Percy 788). Percy emphasizes the “Nazi use of mass movement for power” (Percy 788). Therefore movement choirs can also be used to support a political agenda. They can be used to destroy communities and force people to move in particular ways.

Percy defines a movement choir in her work and demonstrates how it can be used to strengthen a community and hold power over people. Movement choirs can both encourage self-expression and force propaganda on people about the correct way to live. Movement choirs are powerful and their positive and negative impacts can be seen throughout history.

Revenge

In the article “On Jewish Revenge,” Shachar Pinsky describes revenge as connected to justice. He writes that “one can understand a human sense of the need for revenge as a persistent desire for justice” and that “revenge is a kind of wild justice”(Pinsky). Therefore revenge can be understood as an unruly way to reach justice. It is an uncontrolled way of leveling the scales. Additionally, the desire for revenge is long-lasting and one can be consumed by this desire.

Pinsky also says “Revenge can indeed be the opposite of justice, a product of utter despair, a kind of empty and final gesture toward restoring one’s shattered self-respect” (Pinsky). Even though revenge may originally be connected to achieving justice, Pinsky demonstrates that it can turn into a more sinister act. Revenge is a last resort to restore what has been lost, but typically ends in more pain for both parties. Revenge is not a viable way of achieving justice.

Shachar demonstrates that revenge is an emotion: “It seems certain, though, that revenge is connected to the realm of emotions and affect, for there can be a desire or a fantasy of vengeance without actualization” (Pinsky).

However, he also demonstrates that it can be an action: “But, of course, it also describes actions. The thirst for revenge animates much of the world of tragic literature, and it is a common element in art, theatre, and cinema.” (Pinsky).

Furthermore, Shachar emphasizes revenge's connection to time: “Revenge has a distinctive and dynamic relationship to time: it is caused by an act of wrong that happened in the past as an explanation for the present moment, but it is also directed towards the future.” (Pinsky). Revenge is influenced not only by the past, but persists in the present to affect the future. Revenge is dynamic and exists across all of time.

Freedom Song

According to Kernodle in "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free," a freedom song began as a "revamped spiritual and gospel song performed in a call-and-response form" (Kernodle 296). The freedom songs originated from gospel music and were performed in a religious setting.

However in the 1960's the freedom song became a "secular individually performed song that reflected the feelings and aspirations of the larger community" (Kernodle 296). A freedom song was used to convey the message of the black community to a greater audience.

Kernodle also emphasizes that there was a "second generation of freedom songs that emerged in the mid-1960s and reflected the rhetorical and eventual philosophical transition of the movement from the nonviolent, interracial, church-based activism of Martin Luther King Jr. to the black nationalist, black power rhetoric of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Black Panthers, and similar organizations (Kernodle 295-296). A freedom song changes to reflect the feelings of a movement. A song can convey nonviolence or power.

Furthermore, Kernodle says that "freedom songs conveyed key values and tactics of the movement in verses that progressed from freedom in its most abstract form (i.e., calls for equality) to specific assertions about measures that would be used to achieve it" (Kernodle 297). Therefore freedom songs were ways of achieving freedom. They did not simply discuss the ideal of freedom, but they were a call to take action.

Interpretation

In the article “Violence and the Word,” Robert M. Cover explains that “‘Interpretation’ suggests a social construction of an interpersonal reality through language”. Cover suggests that interpretations are not formed individually, but through a social process. They are influenced by one’s relationship to the world and to other people.

Andrea R. Roberts in the article “Performance as place preservation: The role of storytelling in formation of Shankleville community’s Black counterpublics” also explains how an interpretation is affected by outside influences. She demonstrates how the “government and outsider’s hegemonic framing of place threatens how one’s community interprets itself” (Roberts 6). She proves that the way a community defines itself will always be influenced by the way outsiders see a place. This holds true even in the case of Shankleville, which was formed as an escape from dominant society.

Furthermore, Ruha Benjamin in her book *RACE AFTER TECHNOLOGY* explains how a photograph can take on many interpretations because of the “social nature of vision”. She invokes the research of Deborah Poole, a visual anthropologist who argues that: “it is important to investigate the social nature of vision, because, once ‘unleashed in society, an image can acquire myriad interpretations or meanings according to the different codes and referents brought to it by its diverse viewers’” (Benjamin 16). Benjamin addresses how many interpretations can exist about one object, in this case a photograph, and how those interpretations are shaped by the diverse consumers of the picture. The “social nature of vision” implies that an interpretation about photographs can never be formed individually because the way we see things is influenced by our knowledge, relationships, and society.

Counterpublic

Andrea R. Roberts in the article “Performance as place preservation: The role of storytelling in formation of Shankleville community’s Black counterpublics” explains how counterpublics play a role in developing one’s identity. She writes that a Black counterpublic is an “avenue for forming and negotiating place-based identity outside the white gaze (McCutcheon 2015, 387) – enabling descendants to determine their sense of place, belonging, and identity” (Roberts 3). Counterpublics exist as an escape from dominant society, allowing people to negotiate their identity on their own terms. Roberts elaborates on this definition:

Nancy Fraser defined counterpublic as any ‘parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs’ (Fraser 1990, 67)” (Roberts 3).

Nancy Fraser emphasizes the importance of the counterdiscourses that arise from counterpublics. The discourse of the community allows people to form interpretations about themselves away from the harmful stereotypes and expectations of society. This discourse also functions as resistance to those stereotypes, circulating in opposition to the ideas of dominant society.

In the paper “Maroons: Blackgirlhood in Plain Sight,” LeConte J. Dill explains that “Freedom Colonies emerge as a “counterpublic” with a dual character—a place for withdrawal and regrouping, as well as training grounds for agitational activities and the potential for liberation (Fraser 1990, 68)” (Dill 265). The freedom colonies allow residents to feel free and aims to stretch its influence outside of its own counterpublic. Though counterpublics exist outside society, they have the ability to influence larger society and are a form of resistance.

Race

In the book *Lynching In The West*, Ken Gonzalez-Day defines race using Michael Omi and Howard Winant's definition that race is a concept that "signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies" (Gonzalez-Day 32-33). The concept of race was created with the intention of classifying people based on their body. Race exists to execute the agenda of the state and prioritize the interests of those in power.

Gonzalez-Day explains that these classifications become harmful because "the notion of race does not just consist of ideas and sentiments; it comes into being when these ideas and sentiments are publicly articulated and institutionalized" (Gonzalez-Day 32). Race is not just a concept, but dictates the way that society functions for individuals. One of the systems that institutionalizes race in the United States is the prison system.

In *The New Jim Crow*, Michelle Alexander asserts that mass incarceration "is a 'race-making institution'" which "serves to define the meaning and significance of race in America" (Alexander 249). The way that race is defined is through institutions and how they treat people depending on their race. Mass incarceration "defines the meaning of blackness in America: black people, especially black men, are criminals" (Alexander 244). Mass incarceration targets and traps black men, therefore labeling them as criminals and defining what it means to be black in America. The institution itself functions on race-based stereotypes and perpetuates the stereotypes by locking up primarily black men. Race is used as a way to target specific groups of people and protect those in power. Institutions, like prisons, use race as a way to implement their own agenda and consequently define race.

War

In the book *War is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*, Chris Hedges delves into how war functions and creates meaning. Hedges asserts that “War makes the world understandable, a black and white tableau of them and us. It suspends thought, especially self-critical thought. All bow before the supreme effort. We are one” (Hedges 15). Hedges explains how war makes life straightforward. The complications of everyday life are no longer relevant. There is a common goal and a way to achieve it. Every action towards meeting this goal is full of meaning; there is a purpose for one’s life. Hedges also implies that war brings people together. There is a sense of oneness. The individual is no longer isolated. Each person is a part of something much bigger. However there are still ways for the individual to be valued in war.

Hedges explains that war “gives a sense that we can rise above our smallness and divisiveness.” (Hedges 14). It gives each person a chance to be a part of a greater goal. Those who may have felt no purpose for their lives are given the chance to earn great meaning through war. Hedges illustrates how this experience can be addicting. Hedges claims that “The rush of battle is a potent and often lethal addiction, for war is a drug” (Hedges 10). The heightened sense of purpose that one experiences during war is impossible to replicate. War changes the way that its victims interpret the world. Hedges adds that:

“Peace had again exposed the void that the rush of war, of battle, had filled. Once again they were, as perhaps we all are, alone, no longer bound by that common sense of struggle, no longer given the opportunity to be noble, heroic, no longer sure what life was about or what it meant. (Hedges 13).

Hedges claims that war exposes the void that everyone has inside of them. Their desire to have a purpose is satisfied in these life or death experiences.

Maroons

LeConte J. Dill begins her paper *Maroons: Blackgirlhood in Plain Sight* with a basic definition of maroons:

“Maroons n. 1. fugitive Black slaves; 2. former enslaved people who physically fled their enslavement to maintain absolute sovereignty; 3. descendants of such enslaved people.”
(Dill 263)

This definition requires that there was at some point a physical separation from enslavement. It is implied that one is a maroon when they flee society. Dill complicates this definition by stating that “Blackgirls are present-day maroons in plain sight” (Dill 267). She supports this claim by explaining that “maroons were not just fleeing a place; they were fleeing a mindset and a system of tyranny and white supremacist heteropatriarchy (Hartman 1997, 35)” (Dill 266). Therefore, blackgirls do not have to physically leave society in order to be maroons. Dill asserts that they are maroons everyday “by creating and disseminating art, by meditating, dancing, and moving” (Dill 272). Blackgirls demonstrate self-determination through the art they create and the stories they tell. It is a way of world making and an exercise of agency.

Though the circumstances are vastly different for escaped enslaved people and modern day maroons, both groups experience an escape and maintain sovereignty over their lives through their actions. Dill emphasizes that maroons are still important for today’s society and are in plain sight. Blackgirls are maroons by making themselves visible and fighting back against a system that is designed against them.

The Body

Savannah Shange in her article “Black Girl Ordinary: Flesh, Carcerality, and the Refusal of Ethnography” emphasizes that “the “body” is the paradigmatic subject of the social world—a normative “person” with access to citizenship and genealogy” (Shange 8). Shange asserts that the body is understood through the framework that society has set up for it. One’s body is subject to the circulating beliefs and stereotypes that are created through our normative world. A body will always be subject to the social world, and because of its relationship to the social world it has meaning.

In the book *How to Make Dances in an Epidemic*, David Gere elaborates on the meaning-making capability of a body, by citing the anthropologist Mary Douglas who believes that “the tension between the physical body and the social body, which regulates and controls the physical body, allows the elaboration of meanings” (Gere 44). Gere explains how the social body, which is impacted by social norms, affects how one presents their physical body and how the physical body is perceived by society. One may change how they dress or do their hair to adhere to beauty standards or meet society’s expectations of them. This relationship between the physical and social body allows the body to become a vessel for meaning-making. One can use their physical body to subvert the expectations of their social body.

Susan Leigh Foster in her essay “Choreographies of Protest,” approaches the body “as a vast reservoir of signs and symbols” and envisions that body “as capable of both persuasion and obstinate recalcitrance” (Foster 395). Foster emphasizes the body’s physical ability to enact change and perform resistance through protest. She also highlights the potential that the body has to symbolize and signal different meanings. It is when this potential is harnessed that stereotypical norms can be resisted.

Agency

In “Choreographies of Protest,” Susan Leigh Foster demonstrates “the central role that physicality plays in constructing both individual agency and sociality” (Foster 395). Foster highlights the importance of the body in exercising agency. When people protest laws and policies they are exercising their agency by creating physical barriers and meaningful messages with their body.

Foster explains the effects that protest had on the demonstrators at the World Trade Organization protest in Seattle, stating that they “underwent a transformation in their own sense of agency, one that endowed them with newly found freedom as individuals and as a collective” (Foster 410). Foster implies that agency makes room for a new sense of freedom to be attained. When the protester opposed their normal routine to attend the protest they were exercising power over both their life and global issues. Foster also emphasizes that agency can be a collective experience. It does not have to be strictly individual experience. A group can attain agency through a community effort to resist the system.

Andrea R. Roberts demonstrates another way that agency can be practiced: storytelling. In her article “Performance as place preservation: The role of storytelling in formation of Shankleville community’s Black counterpublics,” Roberts highlights the potential for storytelling to reestablish agency for the residents of Shankleville: “As if to reestablish Jim’s agency, Elzie foregrounds Jim’s heroism telling the small crowd that the story is about love, and the idea that ‘if you keep trying, despite rivers and despite the darkness of night you can do it’” (Roberts 12-13). By retelling the story of their town’s establishment in a way that emphasizes their own actions, people can emphasize their agency in the past, which restores their agency in the present.

Forgiveness

In her book *WHEN SHOULD LAW FORGIVE* Martha Minow explores the nuances of forgiveness and how it relates to the law. She explains forgiveness as a process between people that requires them to “have sufficient proximity to encounter each other” and spend “time to consider the possibility of forgiveness” to allow them to see “the other person in reality rather than in memory or imagination may make forgiveness more conceivable” (Minow 20).

Minow emphasizes the necessity of closeness and understanding for forgiveness. Forgiveness is made possible by looking at the situation from the other’s perspective. By understanding a person outside of how they acted in one altercation allows the victim to humanize them and understand what may have led to their actions.

Furthermore, Minow highlights the difference between punishment and forgiveness, stating that forgiveness “allows the wrongdoer to make a genuinely fresh start” (Minow 9). This aspect of forgiveness relies on the fact that the perpetrator has motivation to change their ways. But this aspect also accepts that all people make mistakes and punishment may not prevent mistakes. However, in extreme circumstances where forgiveness is unfathomable, punishment may be the only way for the victim to receive some sense of justice.

Minow also expresses that forgiveness is not exclusive to individuals and that “law may itself enact forgiveness by forgoing otherwise applicable legal accountability and refraining from blame” (Minow 7). Forgiveness is not always about personal healing and moving forward, but it is also built into the law. Forgiveness within the law is similar to personal apologies because it can allow for individuals to have a fresh start by expunging a criminal record or forgiving a debt. However, there is much more room in the law for forgiveness to be manipulated to benefit those in power.

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