

THE ROLE OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY IN ADDRESSING POLICE BRUTALITY AND RACIAL CRISIS

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the role of political philosophy in understanding and addressing the persistent issues of police brutality and racial injustice. By examining key political theories, the paper investigates how concepts such as justice, equality, and human rights can be applied to the current racial crisis, with particular emphasis on the systemic abuse of power within law enforcement institutions. Drawing on the works of philosophers such as John Rawls, Michel Foucault, and critical race theorists, the article critiques the relationship between state power, social inequality, and race, offering philosophical frameworks for reform. It argues that political philosophy can guide policy development and public discourse, emphasizing the importance of accountability, restorative justice, and the dismantling of structures that perpetuate racial violence. Ultimately, the article contends that addressing police brutality requires a comprehensive political response rooted in ethical and philosophical reflections on justice, power, and racial equality.

Keywords: Role, Political Philosophy, Police Brutality, Racial Crisis, Social Justice.

1. Introduction

Political philosophy has always been a means for examining justice or the equitable portion of things. When discussing, or considering, the recent police brutality against People of Color (POC) across the globe, and especially Americans of African Descent, it behooves us to consider these heartbreaking malfeasances through a philosophical lens, and that, primarily, of a political philosophy (Durán & Shroulote-Durán, 2021). Hopefully, approaching the dilemma of police brutality against People of Color from this angle, using a variety of historical philosophic ideas will inspire those fighting the good cause today. As public policy making is increasingly informed by a number of philosophic frameworks, rooted in varied great traditions, it is of the utmost importance to analyze contemporary social justice dilemmas via a broad, considerate framework and with a sharp eye on the plans created for

acting on the state front (Brown & Shirsat, 2018). It is to this ultimate feat, considering the most advantageous means to always secure and respectfully pursue the investigation of Justice, and of the manageable equitable portion of things, that the dialogue of this paper is prompted. Yet, herein it is hoped that a discourse can be struck which pays appropriate attention to both practical/perceptible and more intangible/theoretical aspects of the dilemma, while asking relevant and hopefully astute questions for those honestly pursuing better modes of behavior, not just by the State, but all actors at every level of social order.

There are a few key points about this way of approaching an understanding of police brutality that need to be expressed from the outset. Obviously state authority is going to be primarily confronted here and not the obviously stooped acts of individuals such as George Zimmerman who was a neighborhood watch coordinator and not a law enforcement officer, and of a different ilk than the professional police force itself (Banerjee et al.2025). However, such individuals whose actions directly contribute to the concerning behavior of state enforcers, who in turn more than 99% of exonerations meticulously acquit such vulture acts of violence, must also be examined. Police Misconduct includes (but is not limited to) bribes, extortion, discrimination, excessive force, fraud, injury, perjury, sexual harassment, theft, profiling, unlawful searches, and arrests. The paper will generally speak of these collapses as “brutalities”, but it’s important to bear in thought that acts of brutality draw from a broader segment of (often abusive or oppressive) behavior.

2. Understanding Police Brutality and Racial Crisis

In the contemporary US, police brutality and racial crisis are two of the most-debated issues. First, police brutality is defined as the state-sanctioned violence created by the police to oppress marginalized individuals. Police brutality can take multiple forms such as assault, interrogation, and torture. Aggressions that cannot be justified or have a legal basis are also considered as police brutality. However, focusing only on the aggressions is not enough to understand police brutality itself. It needs more specific and insightful definitions of police brutality in diverse viewpoints (Song Richardson & Atiba Goff, 2014). The racial crisis, on the other hand, is the aggregate of distress and destruction brought by racial tensions and conflicts. Commonly, the term “racial crisis” is used to describe the problems facing the black community in a modern state. The ongoing racial crisis in the US can be actualized through police brutality and the militarization of the police, especially when activism arises in the black community. The intersection of police practices with racial crisis has been a notable issue for scholars of diverse fields, and there are already ample artworks that analyze the police practice’s role in the development and enforcement of the racial crisis (Durán & Shroulote-Durán, 2021).

Since racial crisis is closely connected with the police practice, scholars from various disciplines approached the problem from broad viewpoints. From the perspective of intellectuals, there are some artworks discussing racial crisis as the contemporary social problem explicitly. Meanwhile, the agonies experienced in black communities as a consequence of racial crisis are also addressed through the attention to physical injury and psychological trauma (Brown & Shirsat, 2018). As a result, police brutality is defined, analyzed and criticized alongside presenting its historical and systemic root to provide a backdrop in

the settlement of the racial crisis and presenting thoughtful opportunities for future actions. What is less discussed, and deserves close attention, however, is the aggregate of these problems, or why a nonminority group, which is defined by its positionality in relation to policing in a specific racial crisis, might care beyond individual spheres of influence. This disparity between the micro and macro implications of police brutality in conjunction with the complexity of its contours as it extends beyond the physical must both be understood to reveal the full spectrum crises of police brutality.

3. Political Philosophy and Its Relevance to Social Justice

Political philosophy has articulated, examined and oriented discourses on social justice since the time of Plato who, through Socrates, first asked what justice is. In the wake of the campaign of “events of violence”, the continuation, and expansion, of those now long established debates links a re-reading of three relatively contemporaneous anti-foundationalist thinkers in political philosophy: Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, and John Rawls (Papastephanou et al.2022). The debate about what constitutes just treatment has reached the different terrain of the organization of cities, communities, societies, and the planet, from the first big questions about justice in personal or social relations involving power. (J Taylor, 1995) tries to help provide a tractable though necessarily selective overview of sophisticated and sometimes dense material. This dense material has for over two millennia taken various different forms and migrated through varied traditions and disciplines. It has been debated by scholars fragile in interest group analyses but determinedly trained in other fields, by mighty emperors seeking universal justice through wise laws, by great generals with a reforming interest in welfare, by rebels against a crushing order, by faiths trying to negotiate imperial patronage, and by members of the modern political class very concerned about their personal wealth.

Political philosophers, of one kind, have sought to defend and critique a contemporary society ((Pasquino, 2015)). Nonetheless, such a characterisation of political philosophy is left with notoriously malleable concepts on which it is obviously impossible to secure an even temporary consensus. The demand of so-called ‘political philosophy’ to pin down, identify and interpret what justice actually is on the basis of empirical knowledge in order to subsequently critique the social worlds bearing it is shown to be problematic because strategies for so-doing must themselves rest on a range of prior views about the nature of the social worlds it is claimed are being identified and judged. It is conceivable, nevertheless, that it may be found that political philosophy and political science have a role together over and above such scientific Eurocentric platitudes. For these reasons, fundamental questions about the nature of justice and the just city/ republic, though still debated, seemed in the late 1990s to have shifted to the implications of micro-level interactions.

4. Political Philosophy in Practice: Addressing Police Brutality and Racial Injustice

Philosophy has long established foundational theories on governance, justice, and equality, and increasingly we see the necessity of applying political philosophy to formulation of practical policy and law (Asaduzzaman and Virtanen2023). This is particularly evident in the responses to large movements expressing concern about systemic police brutality and racial injustice. In the United States and around the globe, nascent reform initiatives are seeded in a

variety of philosophical frameworks. The pendulum of historical and contemporary reform movements provides an evolving example of the impact of idea on society. Modern activists are pushing for policies that conform with the philosophical principles of justice, non-violence, and equality, as illustrated by the calls for demilitarization, defunding, and community-based alternatives in recent protests (Hunter, 2022). By examining the philosophical underpinnings of existing police and reform measures so far, one can evaluate the follow-up strategies and potential pitfalls. With varying degrees of success, these reforms have taken shape through disparate mechanisms and institutions, including consent decrees, citizen review boards, body-worn cameras, and alternative policing models. In practice, the incorporation of philosophy into policy and law-making often occurs within the highly technical and unequal schema of expert systems (Erman & Furendal, 2022). The role of expanded community engagement and dialogue in the philosophy-to-implement feedback loop will thus be emphasized. This essay seeks to reconsider reform responses to a broad-based assessment by integrating philosophical principles, holding as a foundational layer of governance that all people are endowed with equal dignity, reason, and rights.

5. Case Studies and Real-World Applications

Healthcare is a sector that has seen the realization of the centrality of political philosophy whereby it plays empirical roles in asking and answering empirical questions. For example, contractarians, liberalists, utilitarians, and egalitarians have shared the stage with the public health/political philosophy literatures (Brown & Shirsat, 2018). Another example of a growing literature is the work on the concept of exploitation. Though 'exploitation' is a pre-theoretic term that can be manipulated for rhetorical sway, the political theorist might ask how we ought to understand the conditions under which workers are exploited and what policies might be acceptable for addressing exploitation. Indeed, the realization that the language of exploitation works as a place-holder for a myriad of underlying intuitions that differ vastly across the deliberative public may engender further applications of political philosophy to our understanding of what counts as exploitation in the first place. Herein, five case studies of the empirical manifestations of political philosophy in grappling with a crisis or a problem are presented. (Halevy, 2022) These instances are intentionally considered from different locations around the globe and over a vast period of time. As a result, some individual pieces may resonate particularly with one's own view of the nature of the issues and the change required. However, what is unique about this examination is an almost unprecedented space in which to document how philosophical ideas were understood and operationalized in distinct contexts. Further, there is no demand that the process is yielding perfectly just outcomes, nor that the examination is neutral between the persuasive force of the arguments on display. Instead, these examples will hopefully provide an opportunity to re-ground discussions into the empirical landscape in which theoretical debates take place, thereby yielding conviction and vocabularies that can accentuate change in aspiration for a better world.

6. Challenges and Critiques

Philosophy is not always geared toward responding to a crisis as it happens and in a practical sense. Unlike a practical police or military response to ongoing civil unrest or threats of violence, philosophy is often abstract and theoretical. It can take time to apply a philosophical

theory to praxis. Critics skeptical of the utility of political philosophizing about police during a time of insurrection frequently demand practical, here-and-now answers and actions. For many people, the lived experience of the police both encompasses and exceeds the limits of any given philosophical or theoretical frame (De Rond 2022).

Another important set of critiques looks askance at reformism and those invested in it. Practice complicates theory. Responses to police and the broader crisis of police legitimacy cover a wide range including counter-mobilization against political and social resistance to reform policy done by those who benefit from the status quo. It also involves a massive mobilized military response targeting those resisting existing public order classifications, legal and extralegal tactics of exclusion and control, as well as policies that exacerbate the power and reach of the state at the expense of its more vulnerable individuals and communities. There will be those who take the engagement with political philosophy to be impractical and in contradiction to a general resistance to Scripturalizing or rooting policy and protest responses in particular theories (P.S. Milnor, 2015).

Moreover, while it can be useful to identify a sense of what's objectionable about certain police practices, for a myriad of reasons it is naive to think that these insights can readily be used to shape policy discussions and designs or to control their application within one's own state. There is also an understanding of the potential pitfalls of making a policy demand contingent on a certain interpretation of a philosophical or theoretical framework. Police and public order management—or lack thereof—are extremely complex issues that are implicated in the police and racial crises. They suggest that the urgency and stakes of the moment mean that it's always possible to make a course of action other than the one deemed most philosophically or theoretically sound. Instead, the hope is to draw attention to what's being left out and why it's crucially important to critically engage with political philosophy, fostering a more conformable and robust dialogue that recognizes and hones strategies for refining the limitations of available approaches and solutions (Thomas Rockwell Carson, 2022).

7. Conclusion

Beyond question, political philosophy has bearings on many pressing social issues, but its value for the more focused and time-sensitive salience of such things as dealing with the killing by the police in this nation of young black men and boys seems less straightforward. One role of political philosophy, at least in its more canonical, popular reception, is to establish principles by which to justify or criticize what it is that governments do, how they do it, and the reasons reported for such actions. When broadened to consider what it is that policy makers do when they ask questions informed by political philosophy about how our institutions or action would have to be structured to comply with certain demands of justice or rewards, this role starts to recon more broader on text (Brown & Shirsat, 2018). A pressing and urgent example is the inquest or erection now taken by so many into the comprehensive scope of racial injustice in the criminal justice system in the United States. Here political philosophy helps to provide those making, or on inquests into, such inadequacies with the necessary lexicon, concepts, data requests, philosophical arguments, and ethical instincts to disclose and clarify even incognito, present preconceptions. Despite the compelled prevalence of this machinery, the interactions of the concrete wording of norms or edicts remain open to

a vast array of distinct policy choices and leverage a familiar list of rationales in aid women command of decisions aimed to bring about reforms critical evidence, copied, one time policy selection levers remain drably implicated into means.

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