But conversely, how else might we think about abstraction in political thought? Forrester observes that political philosophy has resisted the "denaturalizing, anti-essentializing, and particularizing intellectual movements" of the late twentieth century (278). But as she hints, philosophy at its best can be a denaturalizing project in its own right. Indeed, it is among this book's virtues that it manages to engender sympathy for aspects of the Rawlsian project—namely, the effort to interrogate moral principles and ground normative claims—even as it systematically reveals its flaws. And although liberal egalitarianism is a particularly systematizing project, theory by nature makes some claim to abstraction or systematicity. We would all do well to reflect on the kinds of questions that our chosen traditions permit and preclude. "Particularizing intellectual movements," moreover, have often critiqued universalist tendencies in service of constructing a better universalism, a more complete view of the whole. The veil of ignorance behind which the Rawlsian individual imagines just principles, for example, is the precise opposite of Donna Haraway's idea of "situated knowledges"—yet Haraway's goal was not to undercut the possibility of shared projects, but to put them on better footing.[8] In a similar vein, the project of constructing a better systematicity is an important one for political theory, one made more possible but also more difficult by the absence of a central organizing tradition or framework.

What is certain is that all of our work, like that of Rawlsian liberals, will be inevitably constrained by history and circumstance, in some ways already apparent to us and others only to be revealed in time. We can, at least, be more honest with ourselves about that fact, and more clear-eyed about what our work can do—and what it cannot.

Philosophy in Light of In the Shadow of Justice

Murad Idris

University of Michigan Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA

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In the Shadow of Justice is a powerful intellectual history of "justice theory" and Rawlsian political philosophy. The book has been needed for a long time; now

[8]Donna Haraway, "'Situated Knowledges,' the Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 575–99.

that we have it, it is hard to imagine being without it. It is an integral part of recent scholarship that engages with the Rawlsian paradigm not as the ethicists' universalizing framework for prescribing right and proscribing wrong nor as free-floating liberal principles to be enlisted in intellectual duels between abstractions. Rather, the paradigm is a historical, ideological artifact, born of contingency, reflecting broader discursive structures and relations of power, and whose ascendance in some graduate programs is an institutional story. The move to critique, contextualize, and historicize effectively denaturalizes a mode of inquiry that has tended to naturalize the place of moral judgment, bracket relations of power, and elide its discourses' situatedness in historical and contemporary institutions. The partial translations of justice theory are, instead, illuminated by implicit histories and subjects, ones that, perhaps inadvertently, push critical, radical, global, and minoritized ones to the shadows.

Forrester contextualizes the intellectual life of Rawlsian philosophy from its inception in the late-1940s and 1950s United States to its development into a general and apparently flexible framework. Its chapters survey the reverberations of justice theory, mostly among its circle of philosophers, through the 1980s along with brief discussion of the 1990s. My work in the Rawls archives has focused on the later Rawls of The Law of Peoples (1999), especially Rawls's fictional Muslim state "Kazanistan" (along with a class about nations and war that Rawls taught in 1969). There, I describe *In the Shadow* as "agenda setting."[1] Scholars and historians of Rawlsian philosophy will live in the shadow of Forrester's book for years to come, just as scholarship on the histories of humanistic disciplines and the genealogies of contemporary knowledge will benefit by engaging with what it has illuminated.

Political theory, political science, and adjacent disciplines are at a moment of critical self-reflexivity. Scholars have been turning to their disciplines' archives to denaturalize their present by recontextualizing their past. Such histories reflect a renewed demand to take stock and imagine the humanities and social sciences anew.[2] Whether they trace a discipline to the

[1]Murad Idris, "The Kazanistan Papers: Reading the Muslim Question in the John Rawls Archives," *Perspectives on Politics* 19, no. 1 (2021): 112, https://doi.org/10.1017/S153759272000239X; "Rawls, Genealogy, History," *Polity* 53, no. 4 (2021): 541, https://doi.org/10.1086/716208. Forrester generously helped me find information about the 1969 class.

[2]See Robert Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015); Jessica Blatt, *Race and the Making of American Political Science* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018); and earlier, Brian Schmidt, *The Political Discourse of Anarchy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998). Also see Timothy Mitchell's study of the Cold War origins of Middle East studies ("The Middle East in the Past and Future of Social Science," in *The Politics of Knowledge: Area Studies and the Disciplines*, ed. David L. Szanton [Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003]) and John Hobson's *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

developmentalism, imperialism, and racism of mid-nineteenth-century Anglo-American intellectuals or to the restructuring of expertise in light of the Cold War and American dominance, the rise of such critical studies in political science says at least two things about the state of the field. First, it speaks to the disjunctures between what prevalent frameworks make visible and the experiences and contexts they partially apprehend, and to the suspicion that they are insidiously marked by, if not complicit in, the operations of empire, racial inequality, white supremacy, and/or Orientalism. One only restores what has been forgotten or left out—tainted beginnings, forgotten decisions, silenced voices—because doing so begins to remedy something that the forgetfulness had facilitated. Such conjunctures offer histories of the present, in which beginnings, decisions, and exclusions, perhaps unwittingly, provided a discipline with form or furnished the formula for its questions.

Second, studies of these forms and formulas do not respect disciplinary boundaries and specializations. *In the Shadow* is a critical intellectual history of a philosophy paradigm that can be found in various departments, including political science. Indeed, Forrester notes Rawlsian theory's presence and extension beyond philosophy departments (xviii, 53, 241). Such histories, then, are also stories about academic institutions: Forrester writes "the story of the triumph of a small group of influential, affluent, white, mostly male, analytical political philosophers who worked at a handful of elite institutions in the United States and Britain, especially Harvard, Princeton, and Oxford" (xvii). These are the dynamics of how research programs capture institutional space by, for example, establishing or promoting journals (xv, 41, 72, 89, 108, 241, 250), finding funding or sponsorship (44), and securing jobs for young practitioners; it is at least partly through these sites and mechanisms that an implicit morality or sensibility becomes common sense for the research program it vitalizes and the specialists it disciplines. A disciplinary critical history of political theory along these lines—which is a heterogenous, eclectic institutional formation that houses classicists, critical theorists, ethicists, ethnographers, intellectual historians, literary theorists, theologians, and area studies specialists, among others—would lean on Forrester's book to further track these dynamics.

My questions are in the spirit of thinking both with *In the Shadow* and about the kinds of research projects that might emerge with slight shifts in scale and focus. The first set of questions is about temporal scale. There are excellent reasons that a book about justice theory begins where Forrester does, with a young Rawls and post–World War II America. After all, Rawls is the main character, and one of the book's many fascinating historical threads follows how some of the ideas that he developed bear the marks of their initial context, and then how, a decade later, those ideas took on a different light as they became more widely accepted. But the book is also very effective at showing that the story is about much more than Rawls, even more than the field of political philosophy. How, then, might the story of political philosophy be told if it were to begin earlier than Rawls, in the second half of a

nineteenth century in which developmentalism, racial discourse, and social Darwinism openly offered the discursive scaffolding for such disciplines as political science? If these ideological structures did the same for philosophy and liberal thought, then the discipline's reliance on notions of progress, modernization, humanity, and culture should be regarded with suspicion; one might even find the developmentalist traces of that time continuing in twentieth-century liberal philosophy. If, on the other hand, nineteenth-century philosophers offered robust critiques of these structures and racial discourses, then the discipline's not-so-critical turn is even more noteworthy.

Inversely, if one continues the story with Rawls all the way through *The Law of Peoples* and its attempt to apprehend global structures, then its racialized assumptions about global hierarchy, Islam, and violence would point to an earlier Orientalist pedigree stretching back centuries and to Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* as its ideological sibling.[3] Scaling up temporally in both directions would reflect a different configuration of liberalism on international politics, race, and difference. The arc of political philosophy's story would not be about a domestic theory that eventually tries to be global. Rather, it would go—like political science?—from an unabashedly imperial and racial global view, to a methodological narrowing in the twentieth century, and then an expanded internationalism that quietly resembles the earlier imperial view. Each kind of story has different stakes.

My second question is about the ending and lessons of *In the Shadow*. Forrester begins by noting how the discourse of the "death of political philosophy" had developed among philosophers, where the scriptures of Rawlsian liberalism resurrected it with the good word of justice (x–xi). The book also very compellingly shows how the shadows of post–World War II politics and American involvement in the Vietnam War molded much of the early conceptual architecture. The implications of this argument are significant. At the same time, Forrester concludes by observing that political philosophy across all the humanities has been the least affected by the denaturalizing, antiessentializing, and particularizing intellectual movements of the last sixty or seventy years. This resistance, she adds, leaves it well placed to turn to critical or emancipatory programs that its universalism and egalitarianism might support. Although this is a gracious invitation, it risks reinscribing political philosophy's salvation history, in which engagement with critical movements would resurrect the discipline again.

I wish to ponder the difference between the discipline that could emerge from such an engagement and the discipline that appears in the book. I am not certain that the scope of liberal philosophy's assumptions—about society, the individual, objectivity, discourse (or the nonperformative nature

[3]I propose this reading in Idris, "Islam, Rawls, and the Disciplinary Limits of Late Twentieth-Century Liberal Philosophy," *Modern Intellectual History* 18, no. 4 (2021): 1048, 1053, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244320000499.

of discourse), the state, geopolitics, the centrality of "toleration" and "law," and the terms through which they should be apprehended—would stand up to critical scrutiny from these movements. To what extent would its form and its formulas be dramatically transformed through such engagements? Or to reverse the question, why do critical movements need political philosophers? I suspect that there is a tension between such movements and political philosophy's commitments to universalism and the current form of its argumentation. As Forrester persuasively argues, philosophy became deeply indebted to law and economics, drawing on their vocabularies and analytics; the transformation of philosophy might interrupt that link. Likewise, *The Law of Peoples*'s engagement with area studies, history, religious studies, and other humanistic disciplines relegated them to data suppliers for its hypotheticals and exceptions. A different relationship to the critical humanities might reconfigure philosophy's epistemic horizons and modes of abstraction.

Forrester shows with great nuance and care that contemporaneous discourses or demands existed but only entered the periphery of the Rawlsian discursive field. A reference to just war, civil disobedience, and decolonization in Algeria is one early and remarkable example (46, 301n36, 310n32). There are also suggestive references to critical, radical, Black, anticolonial, and Marxian alternatives and counterviews, often in the transitions between sections or in footnotes (e.g., 60–62, 144–45, 225, 261, 293n101, 304n107, 337n59). Indeed, many of these critical alternatives and counterviews could be found outside the philosophy departments that the book focuses on, in other departments and universities as well as in public discourse.

The book's narrative and structure raise questions about these movements and alternatives. On the one hand, what would engagement with these critical currents have done to the Rawlsian framework? One possibility is that they would have been absorbed and domesticated, as with the translation of the New International Economic Order into global justice theory (see chapter 5). But another is that some of these exclusions might have been existentially necessary for Rawlsian philosophy. On the other hand, then, beginning with those footnotes and paragraphs is an invitation to uncover and tell alternative stories about the discipline of philosophy.

In the Shadow is a generative and inspiring critical history of a body of knowledge and its relationships to the world and to other fields. My questions build on its spirit by inquiring into the histories that come into view if one shifts temporal, geographic, and disciplinary scales, and the transformed disciplines that we might imagine and work to realize.