

Thanks to Gaza, European Philosophy Has Been Exposed as Ethically Bankrupt

From Heidegger's Nazism to Habermas's Zionism, the suffering of the 'Other' is of little consequence

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Imagine if [Iran](#), [Syria](#), [Lebanon](#), or [Turkey](#) - fully backed, armed and diplomatically protected by [Russia](#) and [China](#) - had the will and the wherewithal to bomb Tel Aviv for three months, day and night, murder tens of thousands of Israelis, maim countless more and make millions homeless, and turn the city into a heap of uninhabitable rubble, like Gaza today.

Just imagine it for a few seconds: Iran and its allies deliberately targeting populated parts of Tel Aviv, hospitals, synagogues, schools, universities, libraries - or indeed any populated place - to ensure maximum civilian casualties. They would tell the world they were just looking for [Israeli](#) Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his war cabinet.

Ask yourself what the [US](#), [UK](#), EU, Canada, Australia and Germany in particular would do within 24 hours of the onslaught of this fictional scenario.

Now come back to reality, and consider the fact that since 7 October (and for decades before that date), Tel Aviv's western allies have not only witnessed what Israel has done to the [Palestinian](#) people, but have also provided it with military equipment, bombs, munitions and diplomatic coverage, while American media outlets have offered ideological justifications for the slaughter and genocide of Palestinians.

The aforementioned fictional scenario would not be tolerated for a day by the existing world

order. With the military thuggery of the US, Europe, Australia and Canada fully behind Israel, we helpless people of the world, just like Palestinians, do not count. This is not just a political reality; it is also pertinent to the moral imaginary and philosophical universe of the thing that calls itself “the West”.

Those of us outside the European sphere of moral imagination do not exist in their philosophical universe. Arabs, Iranians and Muslims; or people in Asia, Africa and Latin America - we do not have any ontological reality for European philosophers, except as a metaphysical menace that must be conquered and quieted.

Beginning with Immanuel Kant and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and continuing with Emmanuel Levinas and Slavoj Žižek, we are oddities, things, knowable objects that Orientalists were tasked with deciphering. As such, the murder of tens of thousands of us by Israel, or the US and its European allies, does not cause the slightest pause in the minds of European philosophers.

Tribal European Audiences

If you doubt that, just take a look at [leading European philosopher](#) Jürgen Habermas and a few of his colleagues, who in an astoundingly barefaced act of cruel vulgarity, have come out in support of Israel’s slaughter of Palestinians. The question is no longer what we might think of Habermas, now 94, as a human being. The question is what we might think of him as a social scientist, philosopher and critical thinker. Does what he thinks matter to the world anymore, if it ever did?

The world has been [asking similar questions](#) about another major German philosopher, Martin Heidegger, in light of his pernicious affiliations with Nazism. In my opinion, we must now ask such questions about Habermas’s violent Zionism and the significant consequences for what we might think of his entire philosophical project?

If Habermas has not an iota of space in his moral imagination for people such as Palestinians, do we have any reason to consider his entire philosophical project as being in any way related to the rest of humanity - beyond his immediate tribal European audiences?

In [an open letter to Habermas](#), distinguished Iranian sociologist Asef Bayat said he “contradicts his own ideas” when it comes to the situation in Gaza. With all due respect, I beg to differ. I believe Habermas’s disregard for Palestinian lives is entirely consistent with his Zionism. It is perfectly consistent with the worldview in which non-Europeans are not completely human, or are “human animals”, as Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant has [openly declared](#).

This utter disregard for Palestinians is deeply rooted in the German and European philosophical imagination. The common wisdom is that [out of the guilt](#) of the Holocaust, Germans have developed a solid commitment to Israel.

But to the rest of the world, as now evidenced by [the magnificent document](#) that South Africa has presented to the International Court of Justice, there is a perfect consistency between what Germany did during its Nazi era and what it is now doing during its Zionist era.

I believe that Habermas’s position is in line with the German state policy of [partaking in](#) the

Zionist slaughter of Palestinians. It is also in line with what passes for the “German left”, with their equally racist, [Islamophobic](#) and xenophobic hatred of Arabs and Muslims, and their wholesale support for the genocidal actions of the Israeli settler colony.

We must be forgiven if we thought what Germany had today was not Holocaust guilt, but genocide nostalgia, as it has vicariously indulged in Israel’s slaughter of Palestinians over the past century (not just the past [100 days](#)).

Moral Depravity

The charge of Eurocentrism that is consistently levelled against European philosophers’ conception of the world is not based merely on an epistemic flaw in their thinking. It is a consistent sign of moral depravity. On [multiple past occasions](#), I have pointed out the incurable racism at the heart of European philosophical thinking and its most celebrated representatives today.

This moral depravity is not just a political faux pas or an ideological blind spot. It is written deeply into their philosophical imaginations, which have remained incurably tribal.

Here, we must recap the glorious Martinican poet Aime Cesaire’s [famous statement](#):

“Yes, it would be worthwhile to study clinically, in detail, the steps taken by Hitler and Hitlerism and to reveal to the very distinguished, very humanistic, very Christian bourgeois of the 20th century that without his being aware of it, he has a Hitler inside him, that Hitler inhabits him, that Hitler is his demon, that if he rails against him, he is being inconsistent and that, at bottom, what he cannot forgive Hitler for is not crime in itself, the crime against man, it is not the humiliation of man as such, it is the crime against the white man, the humiliation of the white man, and the fact that he applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for [Arab, Indian and African peoples].”

Palestine is today an extension of the colonial atrocities Cesaire cites in this passage. Habermas appears ignorant that his endorsement of the slaughter of Palestinians is completely consistent with what his ancestors did in Namibia during the Herero and Namaqua genocide. Like the proverbial ostrich, German philosophers have stuck their heads inside their European delusions, thinking the world does not see them for what they are.

Ultimately, in my view, Habermas has not said or done anything surprising or contradictory; quite the contrary. He has been entirely consistent with the incurable tribalism of his philosophical pedigree, which had falsely assumed a universal posture.

The world is now disabused of that false sense of universality. Philosophers such as [VY Mudimbe](#) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, [Walter Dignolo](#) or [Enrique Dussel](#) in Argentina, or [Kojin Karatani](#) in Japan have far more legitimate claims to universality than Habermas and his ilk ever did.

In my opinion, the moral bankruptcy of Habermas’s statement on Palestine marks a turning point in the colonial relationship between European philosophy and the rest of the world. The world has been awoken from the false slumber of European ethno-philosophy. Today, we owe this liberation to the global suffering of peoples such as the Palestinians, whose prolonged, historic heroism and sacrifices have finally dismantled the barefaced barbarity at the foundation of “western civilisation”.

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