# JF-Agonism Aff

### Framework

#### I affirm, there is no one correct system of ethics that applies to all circumstances and binds all individuals. Instead each person is thrown into the world tabula rasa, and left to create their own moral system. Absent a mediating force, any individuals index can establish an action as permissible.

Jean-Paul Sartre, Smart French Dude, Existentialism Is a Humanism, pub 1946, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/sartre/works/exist/sartre.htm> ///AHS PB

Who, then, can prove that I am the proper person to impose, by my own choice, my conception of man upon mankind? I shall never find any proof whatever; there will be no sign to convince me of it. If a voice speaks to me, it is still I myself who must decide whether the voice is or is not that of an angel. If I regard a certain course of action as good, it is only I who choose to say that it is good and not bad. There is nothing to show that I am Abraham: nevertheless I also am obliged at every instant to perform actions which are examples. Everything happens to every man as though the whole human race had its eyes fixed upon what he is doing and regulated its conduct accordingly. So every man ought to say, “Am I really a man who has the right to act in such a manner that humanity regulates itself by what I do.” If a man does not say that, he is dissembling his anguish. Clearly, the anguish with which we are concerned here is not one that could lead to quietism or inaction. It is anguish pure and simple, of the kind well known to all those who have borne responsibilities. When, for instance, a military leader takes upon himself the responsibility for an attack and sends a number of men to their death, he chooses to do it and at bottom he alone chooses. No doubt under a higher command, but its orders, which are more general, require interpretation by him and upon that interpretation depends the life of ten, fourteen or twenty men. In making the decision, he cannot but feel a certain anguish. All leaders know that anguish. It does not prevent their acting, on the contrary it is the very condition of their action, for the action presupposes that there is a plurality of possibilities, and in choosing one of these, they realize that it has value only because it is chosen. Now it is anguish of that kind which existentialism describes, and moreover, as we shall see, makes explicit through direct responsibility towards other men who are concerned. Far from being a screen which could separate us from action, it is a condition of action itself. And when we speak of “abandonment” – a favorite word of Heidegger – we only mean to say that God does not exist, and that it is necessary to draw the consequences of his absence right to the end. The existentialist is strongly opposed to a certain type of secular moralism which seeks to suppress God at the least possible expense. Towards 1880, when the French professors endeavoured to formulate a secular morality, they said something like this: God is a useless and costly hypothesis, so we will do without it. However, if we are to have morality, a society and a law-abiding world, it is essential that certain values should be taken seriously; they must have an a priori existence ascribed to them. It must be considered obligatory a priori to be honest, not to lie, not to beat one’s wife, to bring up children and so forth; so we are going to do a little work on this subject, which will enable us to show that these values exist all the same, inscribed in an intelligible heaven although, of course, there is no God. In other words – and this is, I believe, the purport of all that we in France call radicalism – nothing will be changed if God does not exist; we shall rediscover the same norms of honesty, progress and humanity, and we shall have disposed of God as an out-of-date hypothesis which will die away quietly of itself. The existentialist, on the contrary, finds it extremely embarrassing that God does not exist, for there disappears with Him all possibility of finding values in an intelligible heaven. There can no longer be any good a priori, since there is no infinite and perfect consciousness to think it. It is nowhere written that “the good” exists, that one must be honest or must not lie, since we are now upon the plane where there are only men. Dostoevsky once wrote: “If God did not exist, everything would be permitted”; and that, for existentialism, is the starting point. Everything is indeed permitted if God does not exist, and man is in consequence forlorn, for he cannot find anything to depend upon either within or outside himself. He discovers forthwith, that he is without excuse. For if indeed existence precedes essence, one will never be able to explain one’s action by reference to a given and specific human nature; in other words, there is no determinism – man is free, man is freedom. Nor, on the other hand, if God does not exist, are we provided with any values or commands that could legitimise our behaviour. Thus we have neither behind us, nor before us in a luminous realm of values, any means of justification or excuse. – We are left alone, without excuse. That is what I mean when I say that man is condemned to be free. Condemned, because he did not create himself, yet is nevertheless at liberty, and from the moment that he is thrown into this world he is responsible for everything he does. The existentialist does not believe in the power of passion. He will never regard a grand passion as a destructive torrent upon which a man is swept into certain actions as by fate, and which, therefore, is an excuse for them. He thinks that man is responsible for his passion. Neither will an existentialist think that a man can find help through some sign being vouchsafed upon earth for his orientation: for he thinks that the man himself interprets the sign as he chooses. He thinks that every man, without any support or help whatever, is condemned at every instant to invent man. As Ponge has written in a very fine article, “Man is the future of man.” That is exactly true. Only, if one took this to mean that the future is laid up in Heaven, that God knows what it is, it would be false, for then it would no longer even be a future. If, however, it means that, whatever man may now appear to be, there is a future to be fashioned, a virgin future that awaits him – then it is a true saying. But in the present one is forsaken. As an example by which you may the better understand this state of abandonment, I will refer to the case of a pupil of mine, who sought me out in the following circumstances. His father was quarrelling with his mother and was also inclined to be a “collaborator”; his elder brother had been killed in the German offensive of 1940 and this young man, with a sentiment somewhat primitive but generous, burned to avenge him. His mother was living alone with him, deeply afflicted by the semi-treason of his father and by the death of her eldest son, and her one consolation was in this young man. But he, at this moment, had the choice between going to England to join the Free French Forces or of staying near his mother and helping her to live. He fully realised that this woman lived only for him and that his disappearance – or perhaps his death – would plunge her into despair. He also realised that, concretely and in fact, every action he performed on his mother’s behalf would be sure of effect in the sense of aiding her to live, whereas anything he did in order to go and fight would be an ambiguous action which might vanish like water into sand and serve no purpose. For instance, to set out for England he would have to wait indefinitely in a Spanish camp on the way through Spain; or, on arriving in England or in Algiers he might be put into an office to fill up forms. Consequently, he found himself confronted by two very different modes of action; the one concrete, immediate, but directed towards only one individual; and the other an action addressed to an end infinitely greater, a national collectivity, but for that very reason ambiguous – and it might be frustrated on the way. At the same time, he was hesitating between two kinds of morality; on the one side the morality of sympathy, of personal devotion and, on the other side, a morality of wider scope but of more debatable validity. He had to choose between those two. What could help him to choose? Could the Christian doctrine? No. Christian doctrine says: Act with charity, love your neighbour, deny yourself for others, choose the way which is hardest, and so forth. But which is the harder road? To whom does one owe the more brotherly love, the patriot or the mother? Which is the more useful aim, the general one of fighting in and for the whole community, or the precise aim of helping one particular person to live? Who can give an answer to that a priori? No one. Nor is it given in any ethical scripture. The Kantian ethic says, Never regard another as a means, but always as an end. Very well; if I remain with my mother, I shall be regarding her as the end and not as a means: but by the same token I am in danger of treating as means those who are fighting on my behalf; and the converse is also true, that if I go to the aid of the combatants I shall be treating them as the end at the risk of treating my mother as a means. If values are uncertain, if they are still too abstract to determine the particular, concrete case under consideration, nothing remains but to trust in our instincts. That is what this young man tried to do; and when I saw him he said, “In the end, it is feeling that counts; the direction in which it is really pushing me is the one I ought to choose. If I feel that I love my mother enough to sacrifice everything else for her – my will to be avenged, all my longings for action and adventure then I stay with her. If, on the contrary, I feel that my love for her is not enough, I go.” But how does one estimate the strength of a feeling? The value of his feeling for his mother was determined precisely by the fact that he was standing by her. I may say that I love a certain friend enough to sacrifice such or such a sum of money for him, but I cannot prove that unless I have done it. I may say, “I love my mother enough to remain with her,” if actually I have remained with her. I can only estimate the strength of this affection if I have performed an action by which it is defined and ratified. But if I then appeal to this affection to justify my action, I find myself drawn into a vicious circle. Moreover, as Gide has very well said, a sentiment which is play-acting and one which is vital are two things that are hardly distinguishable one from another. To decide that I love my mother by staying beside her, and to play a comedy the upshot of which is that I do so – these are nearly the same thing. In other words, feeling is formed by the deeds that one does; therefore I cannot consult it as a guide to action. And that is to say that I can neither seek within myself for an authentic impulse to action, nor can I expect, from some ethic, formulae that will enable me to act. You may say that the youth did, at least, go to a professor to ask for advice. But if you seek counsel – from a priest, for example you have selected that priest; and at bottom you already knew, more or less, what he would advise. In other words, to choose an adviser is nevertheless to commit oneself by that choice. If you are a Christian, you will say, consult a priest; but there are collaborationists, priests who are resisters and priests who wait for the tide to turn: which will you choose? Had this young man chosen a priest of the resistance, or one of the collaboration, he would have decided beforehand the kind of advice he was to receive. Similarly, in coming to me, he knew what advice I should give him, and I had but one reply to make. You are free, therefore choose, that is to say, invent. No rule of general morality can show you what you ought to do: no signs are vouchsafed in this world. The Catholics will reply, “Oh, but they are!” Very well; still, it is I myself, in every case, who have to interpret the signs. While I was imprisoned, I made the acquaintance of a somewhat remarkable man, a Jesuit, who had become a member of that order in the following manner. In his life he had suffered a succession of rather severe setbacks. His father had died when he was a child, leaving him in poverty, and he had been awarded a free scholarship in a religious institution, where he had been made continually to feel that he was accepted for charity’s sake, and, in consequence, he had been denied several of those distinctions and honours which gratify children. Later, about the age of eighteen, he came to grief in a sentimental affair; and finally, at twenty-two – this was a trifle in itself, but it was the last drop that overflowed his cup – he failed in his military examination. This young man, then, could regard himself as a total failure: it was a sign – but a sign of what? He might have taken refuge in bitterness or despair. But he took it – very cleverly for him – as a sign that he was not intended for secular success, and that only the attainments of religion, those of sanctity and of faith, were accessible to him. He interpreted his record as a message from God, and became a member of the Order. Who can doubt but that this decision as to the meaning of the sign was his, and his alone? One could have drawn quite different conclusions from such a series of reverses – as, for example, that he had better become a carpenter or a revolutionary. For the decipherment of the sign, however, he bears the entire responsibility. That is what “abandonment” implies, that we ourselves decide our being. And with this abandonment goes anguish.

#### Prefer on Logic: defining a single moral condition as universally “good” produces a tautology.

Pidgen[[1]](#footnote-1)**,** For any naturalistic or metaphysical ‘X’, if ‘good’ meant ‘X’, then (i) ‘X things are good’ would be a barren tautology, equivalent to (ii) ‘X things are X’ or (iii) ‘Good things are good’. (1.2) For any naturalistic or metaphysical ‘X’, if (i) ‘X things are good’ were a barren tautology, it would not provide a reason for action (i.e. a reason to promote X-ness). (1.3) So for any naturalistic or metaphysical ‘X’, either (i) ‘X things are good’ does not provide a reason for action (i.e. a reason to promote X-ness), or ‘good’ does not mean ‘X’**.**

#### Thus in our natural condition there is no one moral theory that goes beyond just pertaining to a particular agents state of being in the world. This entails that holding one particular belief system above other’s is arbitrary, as there are no relevant distinctions between moral truths.

#### However, the resolution is a question of politics, which asks individuals all with their own belief systems, to collectively engage in a single action. Instead of pretending a rational consensus is possible, politics must give equal respect to every belief system and individuals must treat their ideological opponents with respect, transforming antagonism into agonistic discourse.

#### Thus the Standard is consistency with Agonistic Democracy, Only this avoids arbitrary conflict and oppression between ideological groups.

Amanda Machin, Mouffe, Merleau-Ponty and Others: The View from Somewhere?, 2014 Vol. 20, No. 2, 73–87, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13534645.2014.896553> ///AHS PB

At this point, I turn to the work of Chantal Mouffe and her account of politics and antagonism. Like Merleau-Ponty, Mouffe is concerned by the rationalist presupposition that an inclusive and fully objective perspective can be reached. She explains that the notion of a rational and universal perspective denies the ever- present existence of different viewpoints: ‘Things could always be otherwise and every order is predicated on the exclusion of other possibilities [ . . . ] What is at a given moment accepted as the ‘natural’ order, jointly with the common sense that accompanies it, is the result of sedimented hegemonic practices’.44 Mouffe’s argument, as well as her terminology, resonates with Merleau-Ponty’s contestation of the notion of ‘a view from nowhere’. An overarching theme of Mouffe’s work is her understanding of politics as making decisions between irreconcilable alternatives, or what we might call incommensurable ‘views from somewhere’. Every decision excludes all other possibilities. Politics, as Mouffe sees it, is about acting together to contest the hegemonic status quo and therefore involves the ongoing construction of collective identifications. Collective identities always necessarily exist in an antagonistic relation of ‘us’/ ‘them’. As she explains, using Derrida, for an ‘us’ to exist, there must exist an ‘other’ who is not ‘us’: ‘every form of identity entails drawing a frontier between those who belong to the ‘we’ and those who are outside it’.45 An ‘us’ is inextricably entangled with ‘them’; ‘we’ cannot escape our dependence on the other who must be excluded in order for us to exist. There is always the possibility that the relation between us and them becomes antagonistic. Antagonism is not a simple opposition between two complete identities, A and B, but rather involves the interdependence between identification and its other, in which A cannot become fully A without B. The other is seen as threatening ‘our’ existence, precisely because ‘our’ existence depends upon theirs: ‘the very condition of possibility of the formation of political identities is at the same time the condition of the impossibility of a society from which antagonism can be eliminated’.46 Mouffe explains there is an insuppressable human need for collective identifications. Following psychoanalytical accounts, Mouffe locates this need in affective, libidinal forces or passions.47 She is fiercely critical of the rationalist expectation that ‘archaic’ passions can be overcome through clear thinking.48 I have suggested that Merleau- Ponty provides a different, yet complementary, approach to understanding the endurance of collective identifications. We can see identifications as embodied and, as such, they influence our pre-reflective awareness of the world. Identifications exist in the world as what we bodily experience and recreate. This shows that identities are not only passionate but also tenacious. Although they are never fixed, collective identifications can endure over time and space and through on-going transformations. The various practices, gestures and clothing through which identifications are embodied can thus be stubbornly embedded (although never fixed) within human being-in-the-world. But further, I suggest, collective identifications involve the bodily reproduction not only of ‘us’ but of ‘them’. The frontier between us and them is drawn on and through the body. Otherness is corporealised in different skin colour, strange gestures, ‘exotic’ hairstyles, cuisine and clothes. The other appears in bodily differences that somehow stand out; the body of the other appears as other in the foreground of perception. The bodies of others, for Merleau-Ponty, are not usually experienced as objects but rather are perceived as other subjects who participate in the creating of the ambiguous meaning of the world: ‘Our perspectives slip into each other and are brought together finally in the thing’.49 Yet he notes that others bodies can be relegated to an object. In his discussion of sexuality he suggests a dynamic of desire in which ‘in so far as I have a body I may be reduced to the status of object beneath the gaze of another person’.50 There always exists the threat that my body can become simply an object for the other and her body an object for me. The body-object of the other in an antagonism is not desired, but feared. Or, rather, regarded as the source of fear. Using Merleau-Ponty in her discussion of racism, Sara Ahmed considers how the emotions and affects of bodies perform a crucial role in the formation of collectivities.51 She argues that emotions should not be regarded as being contained within individual subjects but rather arise through their bodily interaction with others. Emotions – which, she notes, both move us and attach us – (re)shape the space between bodies: ‘emotional responses to others involve the alignment of subjects with and against other others’.52 Collective bodies, Ahmed notes, are ‘surfaced’ through the emotional encounter with others; the ‘skin’ of a collective body is formed through the touch of the other: ‘the collective takes shape through the impressions made by bodily others’.53 But this, for Ahmed, doesn’t happen only cognitively and symbolically, but plays out in bodily space: ‘the white woman’s refusal to touch the Black child does not simply stand for the expulsion of Blackness from white social space, but actually reforms social space through reforming the apartness of the white body’.54 Interaction with others is affected by somatic memories and pre-reflective associations that are then reproduced through the encounter. The other’s body is regarded as the very cause of hatred and fear and discomfort: ‘It is not just that feelings are ‘in tension’ but that the tension is located somewhere; in being felt by some bodies, it is attributed as caused by another body, who thus comes to be felt as apart from the groups, as getting in the way of its enjoyment and solidarity’.55 Ahmed, then, provides an account of embodied antagonism that complements Mouffe’s arguments. The solidarity of the collective body is threatened by, yet dependent upon, the other’s body. There is a bodily entanglement between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Bodies enflesh the antagonisms between collective identifications. How might such antagonism be defused? For Ahmed and for Mouffe, cosmopolitan identifications that are expected to encompass everyone are actually dangerous fictions that naturalise and universalise a particular embodied form of reason. ‘The presumption of the neutrality of reason as the foundation of the global community works to conceal how reason is already defined as the property of some bodies and not others’.56 Ahmed demands the contestation of the notion of diversity as a quality of self-congratulating organisations and societies, where certain bodies are positioned as tokens of difference and nothing needs changing: ‘we need to be bad at embodying diversity’, she urges.57 For Mouffe, rather than construing ‘a dangerous utopia of reconciliation’, contemporary liberal-democracies need to face the irreducible dimension of antagonism.58 It is simply not possible to completely eradicate all traces of antagonism and bring everybody into an inclusive agreement. The aim of politics should not be to arrive at a rational consensus, since this would involve suppressing the us/them relation which would then simply emerge in other, very possibly violent, ways. What is required by democracy today, she says, is to keep ajar the possibility for contestation of any decision: ‘acknowledging that the ineradicability of the conflictual dimension in social life, far from undermining the democratic project, is the necessary condition for grasping the challenge to which democratic politics is confronted’.59 Instead of advocating the eradication of the ineradicable possibility of antagonism, Mouffe therefore promotes a transformation from antagonism into ‘agonism’, where political opponents acknowledge each other as legitimate adversaries rather than enemies to be destroyed, yet are not expected or pressured to agree: ‘agonism is a we/they relation where the conflicting parties, although acknowledging that there is no rational solution to their conflict, nevertheless recognise the legitimacy of their opponents’.60 Antagonism is not expunged but rather ‘sublimated’. In this way the inevitability of conflict is incorporated, but transformed from violent into agonistic respect. Mouffe’s agonism involves the creation of institutions that sublimate antagonism and allow the peaceful interaction of ‘us’ and ‘them’. But if there is to be interaction between opponents, must there not be some sort of common ground? Mouffe advocates what she calls a ‘conflictual consensus’ where a ‘common symbolic space’ is shared by opponents who share an allegiance to a set of democratic or ’ethico- political values’, but, importantly, understand these values differently: ‘Consensus is needed on the institutions constitutive of democracy and on the ethico-political values informing the political association – liberty and equality for all – but there will always be disagreement concerning their meaning and the way they should be implemented’.61 Agonistic democracy demands that all those who are to be included within the demos uphold ‘democracy’ and the democratic values of equality and liberty. However, ‘democracy’, ‘equality’ and ‘freedom’ can be understood in different ways, their meaning is not fixed and given. By asserting the existence of a common allegiance to shared ethico-political values, understood diversely, Mouffe avoids any reliance on agreement regarding substantive values and yet allows that there is some sort of agreement, to allow political interaction to occur without descending into antagonistic carnage. ‘Conflictual consensus’ is a way of creating widespread agreement without solid substance.

#### Prefer the standard:

#### [1] Testing: Agonism is a side constraint on other Frameworks and Kritiks. When we justify shutting out certain opinions from the sphere of deliberation, its impossible to compare our theories against all possible alternatives. 2 implications: A) we can’t know if our theories are true as we could be excluding evidence that proves them false or identifies a error that we need to revise. B) the possibility of revision logically entails a permutation on neg K’s as there is a better version of your method only knowable through the aff.

#### [2] Agonism entails that you should reject the role of the ballots which try to police the limits of acceptable debate, by imposing authority upon the judge. Thus the Role of the ballot is to test the Truth or Falsity of the resolution. Truth testing is inherently agonistic as any offense can function under it relating to the preset burden of proving the resolution, while yours is exclusionary. Truth testing outweighs as A) people without every comprehensive technical skill or debate knowledge are shut out of your scholarship while under truth testing you can do what your good at and so can I B) Truth Testing is substantively neutral, while other framing mechanism prioritize certain philosophical systems and C) Putting the judge in a position of authority to parametrize the debate turns the K as instead of deliberating and learning to question authority, we just receive the answers from an educator. This outweighs as 1) your defense doesn’t assume this violence since the norms we create are hidden 2) Since the education is disempowering, students wont actually do anything with it.

#### [3] Denying Agonism is a contradiction, insofar as responding to the AC presupposes that your arguments are evaluated as an equal form of ideological conflict. However, if it is justified to arbitrarily exclude certain viewpoints, the judge can just hack against the entirety of the NC strategy.

#### [4] Indeterminacy: rules can’t secure their own application, If you see the sequence 2, 4, 6 then you suppose the next number is 8 based on past usage as plus, but there is no way to know that rule of past instances would hold true. Thus there is no secure foundation for applying rules to action. Only agonism solves this as, we create a diversity of an interpretations, and discursively analyze situations instead of always applying the same universal theory.

#### [5] Evaluate Intent First: [A] Consequences are infinitely regressive because they always produce more consequences [B] Ends based ethics like util could never deem certain actions as generally prohibited or obligated since the only morally relevant feature is whether an action maximizes utility [C] Sensations like pleasure and pain are internal to individuals, which means that its impossible to externally evaluate them, as we never know how much pain other agents feel from actions, making aggregation impossible.

### Offense

**I contend that providing military aid to authoritarian regimes Is against the principles of agonistic democracy.**

#### [1] Forms of Western intervention like military aid, represent forms of coercion where we use force in an attempt to create a world that accords by our systems of meaning, which violates authoritarian pluralism. This is not a relativism claim, but rather saying that engaging in active hegemonic practices to force other’s to adopt our ideals is bad.

Rosemary E. Shinko, Agonistic Peace: A Postmodern Reading, 2008, BRACKETS IN ORIGINAL CARD ///AHS PB

Recent critiques of the liberal democratic peace have problematised the above liberal characteristics by drawing attention to their disciplinary aspects and hegemonic scripting of political order. Barkawi and Laffey identify not just zones of peace but zones of war and observe that ‘within the “liberal heartland”, force usually takes the form, literally, of “policing”; outside that heartland, the resort to military and other forms of informal coercion is more common’.38 They also draw attention to the ways in which liberalism promotes the use of force in order to advance its own project of liberal geostrategic and political economic ordering.39 With respect to liberal approaches to making peace, Richmond criticises peace operations that are ‘acultural, give rise to the possibility of intervention without consent, [and are] based on Western models of neoliberal democratization and human rights as universally prescriptive’.40 He concludes that making peace should not be a Westphalian state-induced disciplinary tactic to normalise recalcitrants.41 What is paradoxical about the democratic peace is the argument that the liberal states’ commitment to perpetual peace engenders perpetual states of war.42 In the most far- reaching critique, Jabri carefully details the transformative implications of the global matrix of war where liberal wars of humanitarian intervention manifest themselves in the power to kill, to discipline, and to govern.43 Taken together these discussions of the liberal proclivity to only grant respect to those in whom it recognises the self-same moral attributes and liberal commitments, coupled with a penchant for violence as a means to secure peace as a disciplinary order, highlight agonism’s potential as a critical wedge in the study of peace. Universal moral limits are underwritten by efforts to secure us against the excesses of power, yet agonism is a double-edged political problematique of excesses.44 It traverses the terrain of power and freedom looking for disjunctions to exploit in order to exceed the arbitrary cruelties embedded in institutional frameworks and structures, but such transgressions operate within the terms of an individual subjectivity that constantly reformulates itself with care for its own ethical content. Thus, as Simons observes, agonism holds out both risk and promise. Connolly imbues his concept of agonistic contestability with the ethical prescript of generosity, as a pathos of distance which the self works on the self to cultivate in an effort to recognise the interdependence and contingency of its own identity.45 This prescript is meant to smooth the violent edges of resentment which fuels the struggle over identity/ difference and it therefore operates as both the desired outcome and the principle upon which the agonistic encounter rests. And yet Connolly himself argues that demands to ‘guarantee the effects sought’ is what ushers in authoritarian versions of morality.46 It is not that generosity is not an admirable ethical trait, but privileging a certain ethical view is exactly what confounds the liberal democratic peace. If life itself is the term of excess that invariably exceeds all attempts to organise it along particular trajectories of thought, then it must be the actuality of lived life that supplies the ethical insights for an agonistic politics where the terms of excess are left radically open.47 There are a host of ethical precepts that could accompany the unfolding of an agonistic struggle, but attempting to set them out in advance truncates the productive excess. A productive excess is only possible if the terms of the agonistic encounter are left undefined and contingent.48

#### [2] Authoritarianism is an active bad under the framework as is founded on arbitrarily privileging some systems of meaning above others. This produces a normative obligation to not help the spread of authoritarian systems, even if we believe it would further an agonistic cause in other places.

Gerald Gaus, The Order of Public Reason: A Theory of Freedom and Morality in a Diverse and Bounded World, Cambridge University Press, 2011 ///AHS PB

Perhaps I am a bit of a hedgehog too, for this book is motivated by one central concern: can the authority of social morality be reconciled with our status as free and equal moral persons in a world characterized by deep and pervasive yet reasonable disagreements about the standards by which to evaluate the justifiability of claims to moral authority? My worry, which I try to show should be yours too, is that claims of social morality may be simply authoritarian. One demands that others must do as he instructs because he has access to the moral truth; another admits that she has no access to any moral truth, but nevertheless employs morality as a way to express (or, to use an older language, emote) her own view of what others must do. But what if reasonable moral persons deny the purported truth or are unimpressed by the expressive act? And what if, in spite of that denial, one goes ahead and makes demands blames, punishes, is indignant, and so on at their refusal to comply? In this case, I shall argue, one is just being a small-scale authoritarian. And authoritarians do not respect the moral equality of their fellows. A social order that is structured by a nonauthoritarian social morality is a free moral order: a moral order that is endorsed by the reasons of all, in which all have reasons of their own, based on their own ideas of what is important and valuable, to endorse the authority of social morality. Such a social and moral order is what I shall call “an order of public reason” – it is endorsed by the reasons of all the public. Only if we achieve an order of public reason can we share a cooperative social order on terms of moral freedom and equality. Only in an order of public reason is our morality truly a joint product of the reasons of all rather than a mode of oppression by which some invoke the idea of morality to rule the lives of others.

#### [3] Military aid to authoritarian regimes is not pluralistic: as it is only justified through a few particular belief systems that hold comprising our principles to achieve a theoretically good end is just. This undermines, our own agonistic sphere as we legally enshrine certain theories of foreign policy as more valuable than others.

# Rejected Cards

Other offense

We should begin to envision how instances of peace may be possible in the agonistic moment of hard-earned recognition and respect. We should strive to re-envision peace as a cacophonic and cluttered terrain of political struggle, denoted by multilayered and discontinuous sites of emergence.86 Deploying an analytic of agonism will serve as a constant reminder of our own complicity in the perpetuation of structures of domination and moral hierarchies. It will force us to call into question our own attempts to write the peace for others, to declare the space of peace for others, and alert us to our own patronising attempts to define peace for others. This analytical frame will enable us to analyse the formidable structural impediments arrayed against attempts to contest, resist and/ or change patterns of domination. But it will also conversely enable us to identify the emergence of local resistances and in so doing afford us an invaluable insight into how struggles unfold and wend their way through the international political landscape. Foucauldian agonism with its hard-edged view of power combined with its intransigent struggle for freedom is perhaps the best analytical tool we have to study international relations’ most intractable problems, from genocidal conflicts to the war on terror.
Take, for example, the conflict in Darfur and how easily it has been inserted into the wider analytical framings of the war on terror. Also note how hard the United States in particular has worked to discursively frame the conflict along the identity/difference continuum that pits Arabs against black Africans.87 Part of the problem in analysing such protracted and seemingly intractable conflicts lies within the dynamics of the democratic peace theory itself. The democratic peace theory is driven along the identity/difference fault-line precisely because it looks for ways in which it can overlay identity markers on combatants and read them through analytical structures which rely upon over-simplified dichotomous pairings. Such a dichotomous reading is threaded into the very fabric of the theory but Foucault’s analytic of agonism provides a much more expansive conceptual tool precisely because it cuts across multiple economic, social, cultural, and political vectors and resists neat categorisations.
Applying an analytic of agonism to the conflict in Darfur would offer a much more nuanced and complicated reading of the conflict and in so doing would reveal the interlocking structural components, identify their role in the emergence of conflict and provide a greater in-depth understanding of what it might take for a politicised peace to emerge within the terms of an agonistic struggle for recognition and respect. It requires that we pay attention to the complicated history, inequitable economic conditions and complex external and internal political dynamics that have shaped the conflict. As Mamdani indicates, ‘there was a struggle for power within the political class in Sudan, with more marginal interests in the west (following those in the south and in the east) calling for reform at the centre’.88 And according to him resolution would entail ‘power-sharing at the state level and resource-sharing at the community level, land being the key resource’.89 An analytic of agonism’s first task is to locate structural inequities in an effort to draw their operations out into the open and to identify the power resources that have held and continue to hold them in place. The second issue is to pay attention to how the granting and withholding of recognition and respect are embedded in those very same economic, political, and social structures. Overlaying simplistic renditions of identity/difference with its accompanying moralising discourses reveals all too well the liberal tendency to occlude the complex and messy with the neater narratives of depoliticised peace. My aim in these closing comments is merely to suggest Darfur as one example of how an analytic of agonism would serve us well as the basis for a critical agenda for the study of peace in international relations.

1. Pigden, Charles. “Russell’s Moral Philosophy.” SEP. 2007. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)