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AUTHOR'S NOTE

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“What is real? Whose lives are real? How might reality be remade? Those who are unreal have, in a sense, already suffered the violence of derealization. What, then, is the relation between violence and those lives considered as ‘unreal’? Does violence effect that unreality? Does violence take place on the condition of that unreality?”

(Judith Butler 2006: 33)

“It is [...] easy to be certain; one has only to be sufficiently vague.”

(Charles S. Peirce, CP: 4.237)

“To intervene in the name of transformation means precisely to disrupt what has become settled knowledge and knowable reality, and to use, as it were, one’s unreality to make an otherwise impossible or illegible claim.”

(Judith Butler 2004: 27)

1. Introduction

- 1 Only a couple of weeks ago it would have been nearly unthinkable to imagine a world in shutdown-mode because of a pandemic virus. Yet, here we are, in the midst of the Corona Crisis which – by the time this paper is going to be published – probably still won't be over, and no one knows how we are going to deal with the long-term consequences. We don't even know yet what those consequences will turn out to be. Likewise, only a couple of weeks ago, it would have been as unthinkable to imagine that “iron certainties, practices, rules and institutions can be collectively overturned together with the habits of our everyday life” (Jaeggi 2020). Surprisingly, the TINA-principle (there is no alternative) has been proven wrong. If needed, a big part of world economics can be put into a state of temporary hibernation. So, common sense has been shaken in several ways. An article in the *New Yorker* headlined that the “virus is rewriting our imaginations. What felt impossible has become thinkable.” (Robinson 2020).
- 2 On the other hand, while the media have been dealing for weeks almost exclusively with the impact of Corona on European and US-American health and economy issues, the catastrophe of the fugitives in Lesbos, the dying in the Mediterranean Sea, as well as other catastrophes faded – again – into the background. Once again it became obvious that, within the dominant western mainstream, some lives, in the words of Judith Butler, are less grievable than others. They have become unreal to us, derealized. Those lives “have, in a sense, already suffered the violence of derealization” (Butler 2006: 33). That, too, is part of the globalized common sense, and this part seems quite unshaken. The acknowledgement and adequate treatment of catastrophes like the ongoing refugee crisis seem unimaginable *and* remain unreal (although we all know, vaguely, that we could take real action), leading to the suffering and death of thousands that could be prevented. Reality shows that in these cases, much different from the Corona crisis, mainstream decided that there is no need to take action. In this sense, common sense displays a stupendous degree of indifference.¹ One reason why this indifference is livable has to do with a remarkable characteristic of common sense Charles S. Peirce diagnoses: common sense is *vague*. Applied to the current situation in Europe, the indifference of the vague common sense blurs the view on the fact that “the border regime, especially in its catastrophic effects on refugees in camps in Greece [...] in its current form [...] violates international law and creates a permanent humanitarian catastrophe” (Celikates 2020). Common Sense becomes vague enough to let facts be reversed in a way that the virus “is ‘othered’ as a foreign threat [...] or ‘invasion’,” while “borders seem like part of the natural make-up of our world, especially for those who are exempt from borders’ daily terror” (*ibid.*). So, on the one hand, there are “powerful forces of naturalization that make” political decisions and power structures appear as natural givens, as an unchangeable reality, while on the other hand catastrophic realities like the current pandemic are being instrumentalized, in this case: “othered,” for all kinds of political interests (*ibid.*).
- 3 Common Sense, viewed in this light, is not only *vague*, but also dangerously *irresponsible*. And it becomes dangerous, because the irresponsibility is not being perceived as such (better said: dimly perceived but not acknowledged) due to its vagueness. Instead, the vagueness is veiled through a sense of *certainty* – another aspect of common sense Peirce adverts. However, as vague and certain as common sense

might seem, it still is to be held accountable. As Judith Shklar points out, “we must recognize that the line of separation between injustice and misfortune is a political choice, not a simple rule that can be taken as a given” (Shklar 1990: 5). Pointing at the common sense also means pointing at the political responsibility for our self-understanding, for the line *we draw* between the alleged unchangeable misfortune of natural givens and the changeable injustice of political decisions and their underlying power structures.

- 4 Peirce addresses the problem of vague certainty and the illusion of being (self-)critical in the context of his notion of critical common sense. This pragmatist notion can help to diagnose power structures in a more encompassing way than discourses, because it brings out more clearly the non-discursive habitual practices and the own affective involvement with it, in this sense comparable to the work of Pierre Bourdieu. Put differently, with Antonio Gramsci, you could say that common sense answers the question: how do cultural hegemonic discourses *feel* like?² It takes into account the experiential dimension within those discourses, it emphasizes the tacit approval of assumptions and positions, it problematizes the consent with dominating power structures which you incorporate as your own implicit belief-habits – more so, when they coincidentally work in your favor, but also even if those power structures work against you. Complementary, if you were to translate post-structural or critical theory vocabulary into a pragmatist one, you could say that the pragmatist notion of doubting (as the opposing pole to belief-habits and common sense) describes how the ruptures, the shifts and deferrals of discourse *feel* like. Thereby, doubting also includes the experiential aspect of critique, of a critical stance. Thus, neither certainty nor doubt are to be conceived merely as epistemological matters. Instead, they always encompass political and moral, and even aesthetic matters.
- 5 Now, Peirce points at the dilemma between the will to take a critical stance, or to doubt – “to criticize is *ipso facto* to doubt” (CP: 5.523) – and the impossibility to criticize or to doubt at will, because, he claims, you cannot voluntarily doubt your belief-habits and, on a wider macro-level, the common sense you’re embedded in. We do not doubt what seems certain to us. In fact, as Peirce states, “if pedantry has not eaten all the reality out of you, recognize, as you must, that there is much that you do not doubt, in the least. Now that which you do not at all doubt, you must and do regard as infallible, absolute truth.” (CP: 5.416). This, however, contradicts deeply one of the achievements western thinking and democracies, notably since the period of enlightenment, are most proud of, that is our own capacity and the capacity of our democratic institutions and our forms of life of (self-)critical thinking. It makes the understanding of ourselves and our world – namely, our common sense – as being (self-)critical questionable. And this has to do a lot with vague certainties with respect to what counts as real or unreal.
- 6 As Ruth Sonderegger has recently argued, it does not suffice to hold on to a concept of critique with its long and dubious European tradition (including the co-presence, from the beginnings, of a willing blindness towards slavery, the uprising of capitalism, etc.), but to criticize precisely a tradition of self-proclaimed enlightened critique which in its vagueness remains inconsequential (Sonderegger 2019: 12ff.). This tradition itself has become part of western self-understanding, it has become part of our common sense. Hence, the problem to deal with is not only that our capacity to question the given common sense is limited by our being part of that common sense, but it becomes even more complicated through the accompaniment by a vague certainty of being self-

critical when *in fact we aren't*. Then again, this leads to the question: when are we *really* entitled to the claim of being self-critical? And which role does the uneven distribution of that self-entitlement play? Peirce gets to the heart of the issue by writing (thinking of Kant): “The Critical Philosopher seems to opine that the fact that he has not hitherto doubted a proposition is no reason why he should not henceforth doubt it. (At which Common-Sense whispers that, whether it be ‘reason’ or no, it will be a well-nigh insuperable obstacle to doubt.)” (CP: 5.524).

- 7 To make this problem tangible and to transform void forms of critique into more powerful political practices, Sonderegger recently proposed a closer examination of everyday practices, life forms, and habits. In particular, she proposes political practices of *de-habitualizations* to overcome persistent habits as embodiments of power structures. In my view, this is not far away from the pragmatic notion of doubting, however, as I wish to show, a re-articulation as imaginative and other forms of doubting is needed to overcome some shortcomings of the pragmatist, particularly the Peircian notion of doubt. This tendency in recent political theory informed by (post-)Marxism, critical theory and poststructuralism to address everyday habits and life forms – apart from the known and valid forms of political struggles – of course resonates with pragmatist philosophy.³ One important aspect of this strategy is that good or at least better practices are not being situated in a utopian future, seemingly forever unattainable for us, but that they start today, here and now.
- 8 Last, but not least, all this makes it necessary to problematize the concept of the *self* within our self-understanding. As I am going to argue, we need to transform the problematic common sense notion of the self by taking more into account the *intermediate ground* between vague (self-)certainty (as an implicit result of belief-habits) and states of (self-)doubting and (self-)critique, which the pragmatist, particularly the Peircean model of the self tends to neglect. Apart from the fact that, for the majority of the world's population, (self-)certainty represents a luxurious state of mind they could only dream of, we have to ask in how far this comfortable position of certainty can only be maintained by some at the expense of a destabilized vast world majority and the corresponding indifference toward that fact. This is the question Butler examines (her focus is not on certainty, but as we will see, her theory is applicable to this problem). Put in psychoanalytic terms, one could say that vague certainty is only sustainable through a repression of the uncertain and a projection of that repressed uncertainty onto others; that the seemingly high reality level of ascertained belief-habits can only be maintained by derealizing others. Thus, to counter that, a *derealization* of certainty needs to go hand in hand with a *rerealization* of those derealized. As I propose, imaginative and other forms of doubting are viable candidates for this process, because they make the intermediate ground between the seemingly real (and certain) and the unreal (and uncertain) experienceable. Also, as I will argue, doubting is not reducible to an uncomfortable, but nevertheless necessary evil to be left behind rapidly by new belief-habits and certainties. Instead, it describes an instable yet empowering site of contestation in between the unsettling and resettling of the self and, thereby, of common sense. But, this is an important distinction to be drawn, it is only empowering by being clearly distinguished from its violent kindred such as shame, guilt, and self-hatred. There is even an aesthetic component in doubting (Salaverría 2012, 2014, 2017). From a perspective of self-certainty, this might sound absurd. But imaginative doubting points precisely at a different notion of subjectivity, conceived as, speaking with Jacques Rancière, a subjectivation that tries to distance

itself from the common sense as a false consent – including the phantasm of unassailable individualist self-certainty.

- 9 In what follows, first I am going to discuss Peirce's notion of common sense and vague certainty, distinguishing two different kinds of certainty, the latter of which being related to Bourdieu's notion of distinction, showing that they accordingly require different types of doubting and a closer connection to creative processes of abduction, thereby overcoming a tension within Peirce's notion of the self. Secondly, I am going to discuss different forms of doubting as a way to counter derealization, as the opposing pole to vague certainties in the light of a contemporary discussion of political movements, violence, and grievability. Also, I am going to show why and how a specific understanding of imaginative doubting forms part of political critique and practices. It contains both a painful element in that it involves "removal from the naturalness of a place," while at the same time enabling "the opening up of a subject where anyone can be counted since it is the space where those of no account are counted" (Rancière 1999: 36). The aesthetic element consists furthermore in that imaginative doubting temporarily unsettles the consent on what Rancière calls the "partition of the sensible," with Peirce's vocabulary: the common sense which hinders us to perceive those outside the common sense. So, on the one hand, Peirce maintains a notion of common sense reality, but on the other hand, as I am going to show, he maintains a deeply ambiguous notion of the self and its (self-)critical capacities. The concept of critical common sense, applied to the present with a modified notion of doubting, can provide an intermediate alternative to both a too hopeless position as in Theodor W. Adorno's disputed declaration of "total social delusion" (Adorno 1974: 206) and the devastating phantasm – rightly attacked by Peirce, Adorno, Butler and others – of an unassailable individualism.

2. Critical Common Sense, Forms of Certainty

- 10 Peirce's notion of the critical common sense (a notion he coins in his later work) is a useful tool to deal with a major unresolved conflict of western self-understanding: the idea of being (self-)critical, when this idea itself is part of a common sense disabling the critique of that what it intends to do. The concept of critical common sense points at the danger of critical thinking to oversee its own partial blindness and to be too comfortable within the own alleged critical position when instead it stabilizes injustices.
- 11 As we know, Peirce links this critique of the critique to the famous pragmatist pendulum of doubt and belief he developed – deepened, modified, and enriched by William James, John Dewey, and others. We are convinced of something unless this belief is being disrupted by a doubt. Now, as already mentioned, he claims that we cannot *choose* to doubt. To do so, as he holds against this voluntarist tendency in Descartes, would merely be "paper doubts" (CP: 5.514), objecting the idea to be able to decide willingly when and what to doubt. At least, we "cannot begin with complete doubt. We must begin with all the prejudices which we actually have." (CP: 5.265). The crucial point he makes is that these "prejudices are not to be dispelled by a maxim," as he holds against Kant and, more generally, against an overestimation of reason, "for they are things which it does not occur to us *can* be questioned [...]. Hence this initial skepticism will be a mere self-deception, and not real doubt; and no one who follows

the Cartesian method will ever be satisfied until he has formally recovered all those beliefs which in form he has given up.” (CP: 5.265). We have a strong tendency to maintain those positions we believe in. This is so because, in Peirce’s view, doubt “is an uneasy and dissatisfied state from which we struggle to free ourselves and pass into the state of belief; while the latter is a calm and satisfactory state which we do not wish to avoid” (CP: 5.372).

- 12 Still, Peirce locates himself in between Kant and the Scottish common sense realism of Thomas Reid. With Reid, he problematizes the possibility of being able to exert control over the choice and range of critique – limited by the vague common sense, understood as some macro-belief-instinct of humanity or of a given society, which stabilizes our sense of reality.⁴ With Kant, he holds on to the necessity to articulate critique.
- 13 Peirce’s concept of reality is complex and contested. Suffice it to say in this context that he vehemently rejects the Kantian notion of the *Ding-an-Sich*, in other words, we have no “conception of the absolutely incognizable” (CP: 5.265). Instead, he defends a robust common sense realism (CP: 5.312), an understanding of a common sense reality based on an indefinite past (partly constituted through micro-and macro-habits). At the same time, he believes in the “real possibility” (CP: 5.453) of a more complete and definite understanding of reality in the future which we might get closer to as human community – especially through the community of investigators and the *scientific method*. That, as Peirce hoped, would help to overcome other, more limited methods for the fixation of beliefs (which he labels as *methods of tenacity, authority, and a priori*) (CP: 5.316).
- 14 Interestingly, this leads Peirce to the conclusion that the individual is rather unreal. He asks: “And what do we mean by the real? It is a conception which we must first have had *when we discovered that there was an unreal, an illusion; that is, when we first corrected ourselves.*” (CP: 5.311; emphasis H.S.). For Peirce, to “make single individuals absolute judges of truth is most pernicious,” as the “individual man, since his separate existence is manifested only by ignorance and error, so far as he is anything apart from his fellows [...], is only a negation” (CP: 5.317). “The real, then,” Peirce concludes, “is that which, sooner or later, information and reasoning would finally result in, and which is therefore independent of the vagaries of me and you” (CP: 5.311). So, this position is radically opposed to the (Peircian version of) Cartesianism, that “the ultimate test of certainty is to be found in the individual consciousness” (CP: 5.264).
- 15 Within his theory, habits are on a micro-level what the critical common sense is on a macro-level: Modifications take place in the space of vagueness (which for Peirce is real, too) common sense leaves, or, as Dewey later put it: “Thinking is secreted in the interstices of habits.” (Dewey 1984: 335). So, while vague certainty paralyses critique, there is potential in the vaguely uncertain, as there are “real *vagues*, and especially real possibility” (CP: 5.453). But how is this possible if “there are some propositions that a man, as a fact, does not doubt; and what he does not doubt, he can, at most, make but a futile pretense to criticize” (EP2: 432-3)?
- 16 The vagueness of common sense contains at least two problems: it is difficult to grasp and it is very comfortable. It is difficult to grasp because, as a kind of a macro-habit, it has converted into second nature shared by many, being naturalized to a degree where it becomes almost invisible. It is comfortable because it brings about certainty which is accompanied by a feeling of complacency. “Dismiss make-believes Philosophers of very diverse stripes propose that philosophy shall take its start from one or another state of

mind in which no man, least of all a beginner in philosophy, actually is. [...] But in truth, there is but one state of mind from which you can ‘set out,’ namely, the very state of mind in which you actually find yourself at the time you do ‘set out’ – a state in which you are laden with an immense mass of cognition already formed, of which you cannot divest yourself if you would.” (EP: 2.336).

- 17 On the other hand, Peirce contends that a “person may, it is true, in the course of his studies, find reason to doubt what he began by believing; but in that case he doubts because he has a positive reason for it, and not on account of the Cartesian maxim. Let us not pretend to doubt in philosophy what we do not doubt in our hearts.” (CP: 5.265). The distinction drawn here between self-deceptive and real heart-felt doubt is that you find a *positive reason* to doubt. This positive reason, and for that matter the real doubt, has to do with what Peirce calls within his system of categories secondness: an experiential confrontation, for example a conflict or a surprise. “The breaking of a belief can only be due to some novel experience.” (CP: 5.524). Clearly, this is not the case when you experience certainty. For further clarification, two kinds of certainty need to be distinguished.⁵
- 18 The first kind is the one Peirce focuses on as vague everyday certainty which constitutes our common-sense belief-habits or, in the words of Ludwig Wittgenstein who describes certainty similarly, our forms of life. They ground our claims to knowledge. Peirce calls them “acritical” (CP: 5.440). As Christopher Hookway puts it, we “do not know why we believe these things; we cannot imagine being able to doubt them; and they have a foundational role for our practices of inquiry and justification” (Hookway 2002: 150). Certainty, in this sense, is not the *aim* of our endeavors, but the *basis* from which we stem, in which we are always embedded. These kind of common sense certainties include vague assumptions of the sort that “there is an order in nature, or that I will be the same person tomorrow that I am today” (CP: 5.265).
- 19 However, taking up again the example of the current Corona crisis, one can see how quickly even those most basic and uncontested certainties can become dubitable. So, one could assume it might turn out that we are responsible for this pandemic (there has been shown a correlation between past epidemics and factory farming, as in the bird and swine flu). One might then conclude that we are dealing with a human-made disaster, which disturbed the not human-made given order of nature. Even then, one could wonder how stable the belief in the reliability of that order remains. If not, one surely will start to wonder how it is possible that the globalized world is being turned upside down by a virus. And even if we know that epidemics and pandemics happened before, the certainty will be shaken.
- 20 One might counter that this argument is not valid as it is mixing up the logical and the political; that Peirce aimed at pointing out that we cannot doubt *in principle* as long as there isn’t a basis of vague common sense certainties on which we stand. Common Sense certainties and confidence represent the form of life or frame or background assumptions necessary to doubt in the first place (Tiercelin 2016: 187). Hence, one shouldn’t conflate acritical common sense certainties and prejudices or common belief-habits. However, as Claudine Tiercelin underscores comparing Wittgenstein’s and Peirce’s notion of certainty, the “epistemic status of such ungrounded beliefs” is difficult to determine: Are those “unearned certainties” (Wright 2004: 38; Tiercelin 2016: 191) logical truths, propositions (if interpreted as descriptions instead of norms), analytic rules, principles, norms? Many agree on the conclusion that they have a

“hybrid status” (Tiercelin 2016: 191). And, in the light of political and ethical issues, one *should* ask if our “failure to doubt these propositions ‘in our hearts’ may reveal the weakness of our epistemic characters rather than the superior epistemical authority of our ‘hearts’” (Hookway 2002: 248).⁶ Also, we shouldn’t forget that, for Peirce, “he who would not sacrifice his own soul to save the whole world, is, as it seems to me, illogical in all his inferences, collectively. Logic is rooted in the social principle” or “based upon ethics” (CP: 2.654, 5.533). Now, there is a tension for one thing between Peirce’s emphasis on common sense, vague certainties and beliefs and, then again, his emphasis on critique – as it is not the case that critical common sense regards itself as less critical than the critical philosophers (namely Kant), but on the contrary as *more* critical. The critical commonsensist “feels that the danger [...] does not lie in believing too little but in believing too much” (CP: 5.451, 5.523, 5.517; Tiercelin 2016: 195). In this sense, critical common sense is a posture in which you *acknowledge the danger of believing things although they are not warranted*. And even if Peirce surely wouldn’t have agreed with Richard Rorty’s philosophical prospect, he might have agreed that “solidarity is based on a sense of a common danger, not on a common possession or a shared power” (Rorty 1989: 91).

- 21 With that in mind, Peirce’s stating the existence of vague certainties should be understood more as a critical diagnosis than as an affirmation. It is a way to dismantle the illusion of being capable of criticizing all we wish to (while simultaneously wishing that this capacity won’t trouble our certainty-comfort). This is the important distinction Peirce draws between critical and uncritical common sense. The critical common sense he defends “criticizes the critical method, follows its footsteps, tracks it to its lair” (CP: 5.523). Isn’t it striking that this somewhat merciless hunt Peirce depicts does not address the uncritical common sense but the critical method, for not being as *critical as it presumes*? Peirce attacks the false critique of the critical thinker and less the unreflective common sense, which has less tools and, in a way, is more innocent, because it simply doesn’t know better. In another way, however, this kind of common sense certainty could be related to his *method of tenacity* – “the instinctive dislike of an undecided state of mind, exaggerated into a vague dread of doubt” (CP: 5.377). A position, which, as we can see until today, is dangerous and violent, but needs to be tackled differently than the critical philosopher who acts “as if doubting were ‘as easy as lying’” (CP: 5.416).
- 22 This has to do with the second way of understanding certainty: as (self-)certainty – not as the underlying ground of our thinking and acting, but as its purpose. Pinnacing Dewey’s famous *quest for certainty*, one could speak of a *will* to certainty or even a self-proclaimed *right* to (self-)certainty. Let’s put it like this: we don’t need to worry about scarcity of certainty. Rather, it seems that there is an entropic process at work which leads, if we don’t actively work *against* it, towards vague (self-)certainty. Interpreted this way, certainty could be compared to laziness. If, for example, I don’t actively do physical exercise, I will remain physically passive and inactive. I don’t have to worry that I will not rest, except in cases of workaholic, anorectic, or self-optimizational pathologies (which are real problems, though, having to do again with internalized mechanisms of self-punishment). I should worry more about the workout than about the resting. Or, you could compare it to cleaning your apartment. I don’t have to worry about the dust never returning. It will. Self-certainty is comparable to laziness or dust. It is entropic. If you don’t do anything, it will grow. And, forgive me this polemic, precisely as (seemingly) agreeable and comfortable as laziness is the *a priori method* –

from Peirce's point of view, of course. It is "agreeable to reason" in that it is not led by experience but by its inclinations, something which can be seen particularly, for Peirce, in the "history of metaphysical philosophy," but as well, e.g., in the dubious "doctrine that man only acts selfishly" (CP: 5.382). It is "distinguished for its comfortable conclusions" and includes "certain flatteries to the vanity of man" (CP: 5.386).

- 23 But his critique of the *a priori method* not only consists in detecting the problem that inquiry becomes "something similar to the development of taste," but also in that it "does not differ in a very essential way from the [method] of authority" (CP: 5.383). And this is something which comes quite close to what French thinkers like Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu diagnosed in great detail much later (paved by Friedrich Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*), namely the internalization of external force. "The government," Peirce writes, "may not have lifted its finger to influence my convictions" (CP: 5.383). But still I will be influenced by the doctrines of society, or should we say with Peirce: by common sense. The "persecution does not all come from without; but a man torments himself and is oftentimes most distressed at finding himself believing propositions which he has been brought up to regard with aversion" (CP: 5.386). Seen in this light, the self-certainties of the *a priori method* help stabilizing power structures by making violent practices of exclusion seem unconstrained for some while leaving others "tormented and distressed" in self-punishment – and therefore fearing doubts.
- 24 Applied to the present, one could describe this kind of self-certainty with Bourdieu as a tool of distinction representing an implicit power which will grow entropically for the privileged if they don't actively work against it, and as a production of self-uncertainty for those less privileged. Bourdieu criticizes the distinguished taste of the upper classes for the fact that their refined aesthetic judgements both reinforce and conceal the class differences on which they are based. In a similar way as monarchies were once legitimized by the divine right of God, a specific understanding of transcendental capacities – in the form of (aesthetic) autonomy that is particularly developed among the upper classes – serves to legitimize their economic privileges. And it is precisely this distorted understanding of autonomy (Peirce's *a priori method*) which leads to false self-certainty. It works as a "manner of using symbolic goods, especially those regarded as the attributes of excellence," which constitute "one of the key markers of 'class' and also the ideal weapon in strategies of distinction." One could say that the bourgeois common sense has been naturalized from early childhood on as "imperceptible learning" that leads to a feeling of self-certainty marking the difference to lower classes. "It confers the self-certainty which accompanies the certainty of possessing cultural legitimacy, and the ease which is the touchstone of excellence [...] which bourgeois families hand down to their offspring as if it were a heirloom." (Bourdieu 1984: 66). Distinction appears free and autonomous when in fact it is based on processes of exclusion, which are further reinforced by it.
- 25 Self-certainty, understood this way, is therefore not a neutral epistemological matter, but an ethical-political question of securing distinction, which stabilizes one's power. It is accompanied by a tacitly assumed *right* to self-certainty, which Rorty gets to the heart of it by diagnosing his own positioning in society. "In our society, straight white males of my generation – even earnestly egalitarian straight white males – cannot easily stop themselves from feeling guilty relief that they were not born women, or gay

or black, any more than they can stop themselves from being glad that they were not born mentally retarded or schizophrenic.” (Rorty 1998: 224).

- 26 The difference between both kinds of certainty is that the first one, described as the everyday certainty, is based more in common sense, that is, in a vague mainstream understanding of the world, while the second kind of certainty, the self-certainty, works more along the lines of exclusiveness, distinction, and thereby, the exclusion of others. Of course, both forms can and do overlap. The best way to distinguish them is along the intersectional lines of class differences, sexism and racism. A white German from a lower class probably will have some common sense certainties including prejudices towards blacks, women, gays, etc. He will share some of those vague certainties with an upper class white man, while at the same time feeling insecure and inferior with regard to his intellectual status, a feeling which tends to be transformed into aggressive resentments, preferentially being split off and projected onto marginalized groups. The self-certainty (comfortably blurring structures of exclusion) thrives on exclusivity and decorates itself with the trophy of being (self-)critical, using it as a tool of distinction, fading out what (self-)critical thinking was intended to be – not aimed at the fortification of one’s own status and position, but to take into account others, particularly those vulnerabilized precisely by resentments on the one hand and structures of distinction and exclusion on the other. From this point of view, the vague common sense certainties for somebody from a lower class will be different from someone from an upper class.

3. Forms of Doubting

- 27 Analogously, the doubts needed to disrupt their corresponding certainties *will and need to be different depending on where you stand in society*. So, we are not talking about (merely) epistemological but practical and aesthetic certainties. Correspondingly, doubting needs to take into account all these fields. Rorty once has been sharply criticized for his figure of the liberal ironist who constantly and radically doubts her own position. Later on, he conceded that his characterization had been wrong and exaggerated, because it would lead to an unrealistic and unlivable skepticism, for that matter incompatible with pragmatist fallibilism (Rorty 1989: 73; 2010: 506; Salaverría 2020). True, it is an almost unlivable position – which makes it even worse, as the position of unceasingly doubting the legitimacy of your own position represents a painful reality for many people. However, what they are dealing with is neither skepticism nor a productive doubt leading to inquiry, but a self-destructive self-doubt inseparable from feelings of shame, guilt and self-hatred. It is the embodiment of the real and structural violence (exclusion and deprecation) which has been inflicted upon you, until it became a habit, forming a marginalized second-class common-sense. More than doubting, it is internalized humiliation. But if you want to call it doubting, it should be specified as *authoritarian self-doubts*.
- 28 In 2018, the Tasmanian comedian Hannah Gadsby became famous for her comedy special “Nanette,” in which she describes her struggles as an autistic lesbian comedian and announces to quit comedy, at least the way she had done it before: “I built a career out of self-deprecating humor. [...] And I don’t want to do that anymore. Because, do you understand what self-deprecation means when it comes from someone who already exists in the margins? It’s not humility, it’s humiliation. I put myself down in

order to speak, in order to seek permission to speak. And I will simply not do that anymore, not to myself or anybody who identifies with me.” (Gadsby 2018). To overcome that vague common sense of the margins, you need a different kind of doubting, one I propose to call *anti-authoritative doubting*. It is an angry form of doubting, in which you question your internalized authorities which stabilize the dynamic of self-deprecation, but without reproducing the violence inflicted upon you. For that, you need others: an audience, accomplices, a political movement.

- 29 *Black Lives Matter* (BLM), for example, was founded in 2013 in response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin’s murderer. It originally spread through social media initiated by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, later expanded into a global organization. Its “mission is to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes. By combating and countering acts of violence, creating space for Black imagination and innovation, and centering Black joy, we are winning immediate improvements in our lives.”⁷ It gained even more international attention after the killing of George Floyd this year. It also is an important movement of empowerment rejecting the centuries of slavery and racism archived in transgenerational trauma not only of ongoing inflicted real violence and systemic racism, but also of internalized *authoritarian self-doubts*. The *Me Too movement* is another example. In 2017, it started to spread as well through social media: women who had kept silent for years out of shame, blaming themselves for the violence they experienced, finally found their voices and could partly overcome the destructive self-doubts through anti-authoritarian doubting. One important aspect is to perceive and to recognize that you are not alone (remember what Peirce says about the individual). Through the shared experience and the public appearance, the derealized humiliation is turned actively into anti-authoritarian doubts and transformed into a re-realisation of the own position, in that it makes it possible to hold those inflicting the derealization, at least partly, accountable. It enables a shared mourning of the lost lives and the lost reality through a violence which makes those marginalized through derealization ungrievable. Furthermore, what connects people and generates political movements, is the *same shared anti-authoritarian doubt*, which includes anger, mourning, hope. Particularly the releasing realization that the own self-blame – the *authoritarian doubt*, beforehand considered too shameful to share, because it had been attributed to private, individual failure, becomes a publicly and politically perceivable problem. It is being shifted into the political arena, where it belongs. “To counter the scheme of lethal phantasmagoria [...] a new imaginary is required – an egalitarian imaginary that apprehends the interdependency of lives [...]. It is possibly a way of bringing another reality into being [...]. The ‘unrealism’ of such an imaginary is its strength.” (Butler 2020: 203). The process of anti-authoritarian doubting consists in allowing that reality of self-blame to be traced back to its external infliction; subsequently, it leads to the realization that it is an *imposed* reality, not owned by yourself; followed by the derealization of that imposed reality through externalization and protesting the structural violence of that given common sense. A process in which the structurally projected and effectively inflicted violence on marginalized groups is being rejected and returned to sender through protests – senders who outsourced their own uncertainties in order to perpetuate their fiction of vague self-certainty at the expense of others. As Butler puts it in the context of murderous violence against PoC in the US: “The practices of public mourning and political demonstration converge: when lives are considered ungrievable, to grieve them openly is protest. So when people assemble

in the street, arrive at rallies or vigils, demonstrate with the aim of opposing this form of racist violence, they are ‘speaking back’ to this mode of address, insisting on what should be obvious but is not, namely, that these lost lives are unacceptable losses.” (Butler & Yancy 2015). Vague common sense certainties as well as comfortable self-certainty claim an alleged existing universalism, the “norm of whiteness that supports both violence and inequality insinuates itself into the normal and the obvious” (*ibid.*). This common sense norm is being dismantled, producing uncertainty towards that belief-habit, thereby making it concretely graspable in its failure but also in its possible amelioration. But this presupposes an acknowledgement of those failures, a taking of responsibility and questioning privileges. When this is being negated, the reaction is anger and more violence on the side of the senders whose undelivered message has been returned to them.

- 30 In the case of *Black Lives Matter (BLM)*, not few whites in the US started to react by wanting to correct the name of the movement into *All Lives Matter*. In 2015, Senator Rand Paul stated the *BLM* movement would focus on the “wrong targets,” and that they should change their name “maybe – if they were All Lives Matter, or Innocent Lives Matter” (Marino 2015). Apart from the condescending tone suggesting that it were up to him to grant the movement permission and recognition (“maybe, if they were...”), the proposal to rename it into *Innocent Lives Matter* implies that the problem with the name *BLM* consist in wrongly including non-innocent, in other words: “guilty” blacks, suggesting that they themselves might have provoked being killed by police, implicitly blaming them for the violence inflicted upon them *and* indirectly legitimizing police violence against blacks. The same line of argument is being used against women who experience sexual violence, claiming they provoked that violence themselves. Others like Donald Trump stated that *BLM* is a divisive and racist movement – an absurd and reversed tit for tat, as in fact the division is caused by structural racism of the US state and the police. The *BLM* movement is a reaction *against that racism and division*, externalizing symbolically the formerly internalized violence, returning it to the sender, which Trump again tries to return back. As we have seen recently with the protests following the violent death of George Floyd: the refusal to hold still as the recipient of violence, instead mirroring back symbolically that violence through protests (most of which have been peaceful, even though rage is more than understandable) produces anger in those who are not willing to step back from their white privileges. (There is a countermovement called *Blue Lives Matter* which advocates killing law enforcement officers should be sentenced under hate crime statutes, and of course there are white supremacists promoting right away the slogan *White Lives Matter*.) How far people are willing to go to retain their privileges and not to allow change could be seen by Trump’s reaction to the recent protests this year when he tweeted: “When the looting starts, the shooting starts,” a quote from Miami police chief’s notorious 1967 “declaration of war” after refusing to establish communication with Miami’s black community, which led to massive upheavals (Rosenwald 2020).
- 31 So, one strategy to deny the acknowledgement of the reality of the protesters and of those already killed is to invoke a vague universalism seemingly (self-)critical and to dismiss the protests as irrational and unjustly foreclosing that shared universalism. It is an intent to blur the political claims of African Americans back into some vague common sense, a caricature of universalism which would continue to exclude them from that universalism. The other strategy is to create a climate of fear as Trump is

currently doing by directly threatening the movement with military intervention, legitimized by his assessment they were terrorists.

- 32 In 1962, James Baldwin writes that “a vast amount of the energy that goes into what we call the Negro problem is produced by the white man’s profound desire not to be judged by those who are not white, not to be seen as he is, and at the same time a vast amount of the white anguish is rooted in the white man’s equally profound need to be seen as he is, to be released from the tyranny of his mirror” (Baldwin 1962). But the latter makes a different kind of doubting necessary, which I am going to talk about now.
- 33 After the distinctions of various forms of doubting I proposed so far, Peirce’s notion of doubting seems, paradoxically, somehow vague, or examined more closely, seems to contain almost irreconcilable elements. So, he speaks of surprise which is unconstrained, but doubts also are part of experiences of actuality (what he calls secondness), and “when I feel the sheriffs’s hand on my shoulder, I shall begin to have a sense of actuality. Actuality is something brute.” (CP: 1.24). Then again, another important element he mentions is the social impulse. Laying out in the *Fixation of Belief* the different methods to establish a belief, Peirce writes (in the context of the *method of authority*) that “some individuals [...] possess a wider sort of social feeling [...], they cannot help seeing that it is a mere accident of their being taught as they have.” They cannot “resist the reflection that there is no reason to rate their own views at a higher value than those of other nations and other countries; thus giving rise to doubts in their minds” (CP: 5.381). The experience of those individuals is quite different from a brute actuality or a surprise. It is more of a susceptibility for the suffering of others. This point is being underscored by an important footnote Peirce added 1903 to the *Fixation of Belief*, in which he modifies his claim that “when doubt ceases, mental action on the subject comes to an end; and, if it did go on, it would be without a purpose” (CP: 5.376). And that important addition is that there is one exception, namely “that of self-criticism. Insert here a section upon self-control and the analogy between Moral and Rational self-control.” (CP: 5.376 FN P2 p. 233). And if “to criticize is *ipso facto* to doubt” (CP: 5.523), then self-criticism entails self-doubts, or, as I propose to call it: *acknowledging* self-doubts.
- 34 To understand better what Peirce has in mind, we have to take a look at his concept of self-control and of the self, which is deeply ambiguous (Salaverría 2007: 61-83). Some scholars like Richard Bernstein see a “serious incoherence in what Peirce says about the self. The nature of human individuality seemed to be a source of intellectual embarrassment for Peirce.” (Bernstein 1971: 198). Instead, others see potential in Peirce’s concept. Vincent Colapietro underscores its importance to “acknowledge reflectively the paradox of autonomy, the extent to which mastery over the self involves a series of surrenders to what is other than the self” (Colapietro 2006: 183). In the context of this paper, Peirce’s concept is fruitful *precisely because* of its inner unresolved tensions, which still reflect, at least partly, our current common sense and can thereby help to reveal underlying structures (which can be interpreted as a historical diagnosis).
- 35 The main tension within Peirce’s concept of the self is that he conceives of it, as we already saw, as intrinsically negative, he even writes that “individualism and falsity are one and the same,” that the individual is unreal, because it is “not whole as long as he is single,” that “one man’s experience is nothing if it stands alone. If he sees what others

cannot, we call it hallucination.” (CP: 5.402). In other words: without others, the self’s experience is nothing, unreal. Now, it is one thing to concede – in my view: correctly so – the dependence of the self and its reality on others. Interestingly, Colapietro refers to Butler’s analysis of the paradox of autonomy which he also sees at work in Peirce’s concept of the self, when he writes that “I am able to give laws to myself only to the extent [...] that I am always already given over to others and, as a consequence of this, given to myself not only by others but also in terms inherited and authorized by these others. [...] The roots of autonomy are to be traced to heteronomy.” (Colapietro 2006: 183). However, it is another thing to describe the development of the self in terms of sin and self-reproach. But for Peirce, self-control and self-reproach “seem to be the fundamental characteristics which distinguish a rational being. Blame, in every case, appears a modification, often accomplished by a transference, or a ‘projection’ of the primary feeling of self-reproach.” (CP: 5.418-19).⁸ In several instances Peirce describes humans as sinners and urges to acknowledge this fact to overcome self-righteousness (CP: 5.583). Peirce was a child of his time and his position is that of a “christened *contrite fallibilism*” (CP: 1.14; Colapietro 2006: 198).

- 36 Now, the problem does not consist in the critique of hubris and self-righteousness, but in the method Peirce advocates to overcome it, which would be *authoritarian self-doubting*, for it surrenders to a higher (in this case: religious) authority which itself remains unquestioned. To be clear, the problem with authoritarian doubting doesn’t lie in faith, but in inherent structural violence leading to shame, guilt and self-hatred – which aren’t good advisors. One can see the problem evidently with religious fundamentalists who identify with the alleged absolutely certain authority to outsource their own uncertainty. In order to maintain their fantasy of self-righteous-certainty, the feeling of self-reproach is being transferred and projected onto others as blame (Peirce himself writes about), furthermore it is accompanied by the feeling of entitlement to exert violence over others. There is a deeper societal level in this which is highly problematic, for fundamentalism instrumentalizes faith for its own will to power: It is the internalization of questionable commandments partitioning the world into good and evil, ascribing the evil e.g. to the body, to blacks, to women, to women’s bodies, to black women’s bodies, etc. That is, a specific historical common sense veiled as an indubitable authority is being used to reproduce structures of violence and exclusion. It works just as well without abusing religion. It seems as if Peirce considered the tenacious self-righteousness – or the self-certainty – as so intransigent that it needed a proper dose of punitive self-reproach to be overcome. As a consequence, unfortunately, the baby is being thrown out with the bathwater. Or, to use a different metaphor, self-righteousness and self-reproach simply are opposite sides of the same coin. It is strange that Peirce underlines so much the uncomfortableness of doubting to then replace it with self-flagellating self-reproach and severe self-criticism as a more viable option. How could he think that people would choose that path if they hang on so much on beliefs and certainty? Even more so as he took into account the mechanisms of projection and transference? If self-certainty is built on violence and structural indifference towards others, then self-reproach will only reproduce that violence. The reasonable dose to set against erroneous beliefs and certainties therefore is not a *more* violent, but a *less* violent form of doubting which I propose to name *acknowledging doubting*. It is a form of doubting which acknowledges its entanglement with violent power structures without (re-)producing new ones. If, for example, you want to acknowledge your own structural racism, it doesn’t help to self-reproach

yourself as a guilty sinner or an evil-doer. Guilt, that you can learn from Nietzsche, revolves around itself. In that, it remains egotistical. Instead, what is needed, is a sense of radical responsibility that takes into account others by really listening to them, by doubting your own self-certainty, thereby overcoming a model of the unassailable self, which in itself not only is problematic *but also limiting the potential complexity and joy of the self*. This kind of responsibility not only frees from authoritarian doubting and its adhered false notion of the self, thereby freeing the self itself from its limiting self-image. It also enables oneself to open up to new experiences, beforehand ignored. If, however, you are caught in self-reproach, you won't be able to perceive other, more complex and joyful options, because you are too busy dealing with your guilt. *Acknowledging doubts*, instead, are free of self-punishment and shame, they come with mourning and responsibility: Mourning the loss of your erroneous certainties, but also mourning what the practices of exclusion you formed part of did to others. Therein lies beauty.

- 37 At first sight surprisingly, Peirce unfolds the concept of self-control and self-reproach in conjunction with moral and aesthetic ideals. But as far as I can see, there remains a problematic gap in between Peirce's diagnostic description of the painful experience of doubting or, for that matter, self-reproach on the one hand, and of the therapy (to put it in those terms) of reconstructing reality in form of hypothesis-building and inquiry on the other. Doubting, self-criticism and self-reproach are the starting points to signal that something is wrong. But then the formation of hypothesis and inquiry starts, which Peirce famously coins as abduction, the reasonable guessing of something new. What happens between doubting (or self-reproach) and abduction? The intermediate stage is missing.
- 38 Peirce's negative model of the self is strangely unconnected to its aspiration to an aesthetic ideal, which almost sounds platonic. While self-control is "purely inhibitory [...] and originates nothing" (CP: 5.194), suddenly the ascent of self-control from one higher step to another, leads to a surrender to first moral, then aesthetic ideals. "When a man trains himself, thus controlling control, he must have some moral rule in view, however special and irrational it may be. But next he may undertake to improve this rule; that is, to exercise a control over his control of control. To do this he must have in view something higher than an irrational rule. He must have some sort of moral principle. This, in turn, must be controlled by reference to an esthetic ideal of what is fine." (CP: 5.533). And this aesthetic ideal, "by modifying the rules of self-control modifies action, and so experience too – both the man's own and that of others, and this centrifugal movement thus rebounds in a new centripetal movement, without limit." It leads even to "self-surrender" (CP: 5.402, n. 2; Colapietro 2006: 201).
- 39 Usually, in pragmatism doubting is being conceived as a disturbing, uncomfortable state. To not only get a grip of the violent blind spots (are those really blind spots?) but also to enable the emergence of the new, another notion of the self, another notion of doubting is necessary, unfolding the intermediate ground between self-reproach and certainty. Now, abduction is for Peirce the "only" operation that "introduces any new idea" (CP: 5.171). It as a process of following a hunch without yet having a rule for it, the rule later being established in scientific inquiry. It also is related to Peirce's notion of musement, a free and unconstrained pondering over an idea, "pure play" (CP: 6.458). As is well known, in this Peirce has been inspired by Schiller's aesthetic and his concept of play (Deuser in: Peirce 1995: 519). Musement helps in drafting new hypotheses, it

exceeds the routine of habits. But again: What happens *between* doubting and abduction/musement? The structure of doubting which is needed to overcome the *methods of authority* and *a priori* (including the danger of false self-certainty) can be described as *anti-authoritarian doubting* for those being marginalized and as *acknowledging doubting* for those privileged within a society.

- 40 However, another form of doubting is required for the scientific inquiry Peirce champions. I propose to call it *imaginative doubting*. It is necessary because the scientific community neither is free of authoritarian nor of priori (in the Peircian sense) elements. It is a politically highly contested site, not at all neutral, only one example being politics deciding which research receives funding or not, another one being what is considered reasonable or not depending on the current common sense. Who is considered apt to become part of the scientific community is as well highly biased and contested (just take a look at the statistics of the percentage of female professors, particularly in Germany). Now, how can you criticize and overcome that common sense, when it is invisible to us, being naturalized, seeming neutral and self-evident? Of course, some structures aren't invisible, many people simply are not willing to cede a portion of their own power to others. However, some, although few, are. These structures sometimes are difficult to grasp, as they are vague, and that vagueness is fortified by the indifference of self-certainty. But, strictly speaking, it is *impossible and unrealistic* to separate the *methods of authority, a priori, and science*, as the latter is permeated by the formers. To overcome and disrupt those structures, and at once to develop new and better perspectives – *in scientific and in political terms* – it is indispensable to *endure* exactly that phase in which doubting and abduction meet, which in Peirce seems to be a grey area. Although one should rather speak of a very colorful area, because this is where the aesthetic and the play join in the doubting (Salaverría 2012, 2017). This meeting area is what I describe as *imaginative doubting*. Depending on your position in society, it will be mixed with *acknowledging* or *anti-authoritarian doubts*. But, most importantly, it is not a phase or state too easily done away with. Some studies sustain that view, emphasizing that “doubt engenders the potential of theorizing creatively by motivating abduction’s search for possible explanations to an experienced anomaly” (Locke, Golden-Biddle & Feldman 2008: 908). These investigators prove with several empirical examples that the generating of new thinking in science often correlates with endured phases of doubting and uncertainty. They describe “three reactions to experiencing doubt: (1) Ignore doubt or dismiss it as unimportant; (2) turn it into self-doubt – there’s something wrong with me; there something wrong with my project; (3) engage it, explore it, use it” (*ibid.*: 911). It is the third aspect, which is mainly underrated. As they underscore, doubting “requires, in part, the ability to turn toward or embrace not knowing.” Even in science, pressure exists to deliver positive results. But processing new, with Thomas Kuhn, paradigm-changing discoveries/inventions, takes time. Therefore, we “have to unlearn how we typically respond to doubt” (*ibid.*: 911f.). It is necessary to recognize the “constraints of our interaction with the world.” Thus, “the practice of nurturing hunches is an important way to foster musing” (*ibid.*: 914). As the examples of their empirical studies show, “doubt has information value.” All of the researchers they investigated “responded by turning toward, rather than away from, not knowing, and toward the situations that engendered it, and they each gained important information as a result” (*ibid.*: 913). It then becomes more probable to leave behind old belief-habits. Exploring new paths “requires, in part, our willingness to disrupt belief, represented as the

prevailing order” and to “worry less about making or trying to avoid mistakes” (*ibid.*: 914f.). Instead of “closing down doubt” it is therefore necessary to “make doubt generative.” And, for that, it is necessary both to disrupt the given order and to “court doubt” (*ibid.*: 915, 916). They give a good practical example: Just consider “the colleagues who listen to us compared to those who shut down discussion by dismissing our ideas.” Science institutions still tend to “overemphasize validation and the avoidance of mistakes.” They tend to maintain the given common sense and accompanying self-certainty. To overcome that, it is crucial to “continue to court doubt; continuing to ponder, nurture our hunches, and to avoid premature closure” (*ibid.*: 916). The goal of abductive reasoning should be to “soothe” the doubt “rather than ‘destroy,’ for an abductive hypothesis has to be put to test before converting itself into a fixed belief” (Atocha 2015: 148). In the German discussion of the topic, Uwe Wirth has outlined, as Vera Saller underscores, that “abduction is not any longer surprising if we become aware, that what we do is changing the contextual frame. Hence, ‘reasoning backwards’ aims at discovering either a singular cause or a general rule, which has to be selected or invented. In this sense abduction is the process of ‘context sensitive code-selection’.” (Wirth 2005: 203; Saller 2016: 187).

- 41 This is similar to what Rancière has in mind, when he outlines that the “political” is inseparable from aesthetics (Salaverría, 2014, 2017). The political Rancière speaks of points at crucial moments of public disruption, empowerment and change for people beforehand excluded, in difference to what he calls police (the settled institutional political practices), namely, in the sense that the given context, in Peirce’s sense the common sense, is being thwarted. You cannot criticize and change the rules of chess within the chess game. Likewise you cannot criticize the common sense within its given implicit rules. And, as importantly, you need to become permeable to perceive those parts of the world which previously had been almost imperceptible to you. You will never learn to see them through self-reproach or through merely uncomfortable doubts. Neither will you lean to see them through detached musement. There is struggle and conflict in unlearning your old habits, in dehabitualizing, at the same time it is a form of “transformative inventive critique” (Sonderegger 2019: 137). There is an important component of *dissent*, precisely in the sense of disagreeing with former beliefs-habits of yourself and of others. The musement Peirce speaks of is much too harmonious to take this into account. The necessary disidentification from old belief-habits, and for that matter, from your older version of the self, entails a moment of suspension of identity, particularly of self-certainty. Loosely speaking with Kant’s *Third Critique*, this means leaving the security of taken for granted criteria behind in search for a new calibration, which makes the beforehand imperceptible criteria (we usually think and judge with) experienceable, thereby malleable (Salaverría 2017: 177ff.). But, contra Rancière for whom those political moments of disidentification are rare and exceptional, and contra Kant who conceives of aesthetic judgements as too detached from acting and struggling bodies, I propose to think of imaginative doubting as part of a *critical* common sense formed against the dominant common sense. Imaginative doubting is essential not only for those participating in investigative activities, be it philosophy, other sciences, or art. It is also crucial for political fights such as the BLM or the Me Too movement, as they make the vague taken for granted common sense certainties not only questionable but also *graspable*. Apart from claiming their rights, they also do the work of “return to sender,” by laying out in which ways the common sense, holding on to an alleged universalism, is not staying true to its principles. But, to

do that work (which really should be done by those benefitting from false self-certainties), the frame of what counts as real and as unreal, as worthy of contestation and not, has to be redefined; the frame of perception needs to be opened up, through imaginative doubts, which are developed, fought for, and lived through in the exchange within critical communities of activists, artists, writers, philosophers, not by single individuals. And maybe this is something we can learn from the Corona Crisis: that unshakable certainties are much more malleable than we thought, and that it is possible to transform that insight into a good thing, into a good doubt.

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NOTES

1. "The indifference toward the suffering of refugees at the EU's borders, or rather the EU's exercise of its 'power to make live and let die [...]' fits well with the logic of disaster nationalism that the hollow rhetoric of solidarity barely manages to disguise: every state is on its own, the virus is 'othered' as a foreign threat [...] or 'invasion,' and the closing of borders intensifies the 'border spectacle' [...] that is supposed to assure citizens that their government has everything under control." (Celikates 2020).
2. Gramsci famously coined the concept of cultural hegemony in conjunction with common sense from which he differentiates another – potentially critical form – of common sense, disclosing

some parallels to pragmatist philosophy, particularly Dewey's (notwithstanding Gramsci's polemic rejection of pragmatism "as only contributing to a Rotary Club movement"). As Brendan Hogan puts it, both "converge in proffering a vision that registers the hegemonic character of 'forms of life' at a level basic to any understanding of human philosophical anthropology or human agency." For a comparison of John Dewey and Gramsci on this issue see Hogan (2015: 108); Gramsci (1971: 373), cited in Hogan (*ibid.*).

3. Sonderegger (2019); another postmarxist approach with pragmatist elements is being pursued by Jaeggi (2018).

4. For the fluent transition between instincts and habits and their relation to Peirce's notion of common sense, see Boyd & Heney (2017).

5. For a highly detailed semiotic-theologian discussion of certainty, see Linde (2013).

6. For a semiotic discussion of this problem see Pape (1998).

7. Online: [<https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>].

8. Alfred S. Silver draws a parallel between psychoanalytic terms of transference and projection in Freud, Klein and Peirce in Silver (1993: 382-402; particularly 400).

ABSTRACTS

The tension between the need for critique and its (often unperceived) limits through our given common sense, a tension Charles S. Peirce describes as critical common sense, hasn't lost its actuality. Vague certainty is one root of this tension, which the paper unfolds by distinguishing two forms: while the first one grounds common sense as a form of life, the second one, self-certainty, represents the purpose of endeavors, and it serves, speaking with Pierre Bourdieu, as a form of distinction (1). As part of an indifference towards power structures of exclusion, vague certainties contribute to what Judith Butlers describes as the violent derealization of others, which is being discussed in the light of the *Black Lives Matter* and *Me Too* movement. (Self-)certainty, as is being shown, is not (merely) an epistemological matter, but encompasses the fields of the political and aesthetic. Accordingly, as a crucial part of political critique and practices to counter (self-)certainties, a differentiation of doubting is required – the paper proposes four different kinds: authoritarian, anti-authoritarian, acknowledging and imaginative doubting. They help understand the political struggles of re-realizing formerly derealized positions within society (2). Particularly through imaginative doubting, some shortcomings within Peirce's notion of the self (and, for that matter, within the pragmatist notion of doubting) are being overcome by showing how to link it to creative processes of abduction, which in turn have consequences for political matters by unsettling implicit consent, or, in the words of Jacques Rancière, the partition of the sensible (3).

AUTHOR

HEIDI SALAVERRÍA

Independent researcher, Hamburg

heidi[at]salaverria.de