

United States thought the election of Barack Obama had signalled the arrival at a post-racial US society, Burke, in these days of Donald Trump, explores the ideology underpinning such thinking.

While some words and actions can be easily labelled as racist, colorblind racism is not always so overt. Burke emphasizes that systemic barriers and concrete acts of racism still hold people back and allocate privileges to white people. Contrary to what many contemporary scholars and sociologists assert is a ‘post-racial’ age, Burke argues that the well-intentioned trend of ‘colorblindness’, or disregarding the importance of an individual’s race, leads in fact to racial equality. By downplaying the harmful impact that overt and subtle racism has on racial minorities, colorblindness simply masks the prejudices that are still present in contemporary US society. Replacing ‘Black Lives Matter’ with ‘All Lives Matter’ can, in fact be colorblind racism.

*Colorblind Racism* has five chapters. In the first the author defines colorblindness as a wilful ignorance about the continual significance of race and racism. Burke then traces (second chapter) colorblind racism’s historical trajectory, observing that colorblindness is not entirely a post-civil rights era phenomenon. Its ideological roots were established well before this period. Colorblindness (third chapter) is then examined in an array institutional contexts such as healthcare, immigration policy, social science research, politics, and criminal justice. In the fourth chapter, Burke shows the ‘common sense’ understanding of colorblindness is often an enabler of race-based inequality. Finally, in chapter five, the author issues a call-to-action for researchers to remain committed to empirically grounded analyses of colorblindness.

I strongly recommend this provocative analysis of colorblind racism. One can argue, of course, that the key limitation of *Colorblind Racism* would be limiting the focus on colorblindness to a US perspective and thereby overlooking its manifestations in other countries.

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Daniele SANTORO and Manohar KUMAR. *Speaking Truth to Power: A Theory of Whistleblowing*. Cham: Springer 2018. 203 pp.

*Speaking Truth to Power* addresses an ethical and political problem that is current, controversial, and which surely catches the eye. Related headlines and political novels are innumerable. Moreover, there are about half a dozen recent movies on the topic (not a small feat even by Hollywood standards). To name just a few: *Erin Brockovich* (on corporations environmental malfeasance), *Zero Dark Hour* and *The Report* (black sites and torture), *The Runaway Jury* (arms control), *The Insider* (tobacco industry), *The Street Lawyer* (insurance scams), *Fair Game* (Bush era administration espionage leaks), and documentaries on WikiLeaks and Snowden, Pentagon Papers (military secrets), among others. The genre has become a classic since the book and the movie *All the President’s Men* (1976). There are also YouTube channels on the Top 10 whistleblowing movies, and it is an Amazon subgenre. We could hardly find a more fashionable topic.

Curiously, academia at large, and political philosophy in particular, are lagging far behind. This is a welcome book, therefore, on a theme that is often mentioned but seldom the main problem addressed in a book-length text – and in fact we do not know any other such book.

To those unfamiliar with the expression, and to use the author's own definition, 'whistleblowing' is the metaphorical expression that designates "[...] an act of public disclosure, carried out by an agent having privileged access to confidential or classified information of a private or public organization, concerning present or past wrongdoings or an abuse of state power of immediate or potential harm to the public interest" (38).

This book was written by two authors, Daniele Santoro and Manohar Kumar. The two scholars, an Italian and an Indian, met at Luiss University and found a common interest. Both authors wrote previously on the theme. Santoro wrote a working paper "The Protection of Whistle-blowers in Europe" (2016) and Kumar's PhD thesis is entitled "For Whom the Whistle Blows? Secrecy, Civil Disobedience, and Democratic Accountability" (2013). Kumar also published two articles for the project "A Change of Direction: Fostering Whistleblowing in the fight against Corruption in Europe" (2017). Together, they have co-authored a report for an ONG entitled: "Blowing the Whistle on Corruption" (2014), and two journal papers "Justification of Whistleblowing" and "A Right to Protection for Whistleblowers" (2017).

Taking the cue from mystery novels and Hollywood movies, the obvious point is that whistleblowing is good and justified, and companies and government are bad and malicious – a case of David *versus* Goliath (which is sometimes outrageously true).

Whistleblowing actions have earned a considerable amount of recognition in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. This is not just a book about cases or the history of whistleblowing. The main purpose is to define a proper theory of whistleblowing with the aid of diverse conceptions regarding the public interest, the impact of security, and the distinctive forms of dissent that contribute to transparency among democratic societies.

The authors' approach is far more nuanced than newspaper headlines or Hollywood. They explain their discomfort with such a simple view when observing cases such as WikiLeaks and Hillary Clinton's purportedly cavalier view of national security. "Can truth of public relevance be at the same time against the public interest?" (2). This is what causes the core perplexity of the book and makes the practice of whistleblowing in urgent need of an ethical and a political philosophy theory. As the authors state in Chapter 1, this "[...] puzzle was one of the animating ideas of the book" (2). In the reviewers' opinion, however, such tension that could have made the book a compelling read is not always maintained throughout.

The authors defend the following thesis: "whistleblowing is a form of civil dissent" (1; see Chapter 6.1 and 6.4, especially 151-154; 163-168). This form of civil dissent is in need of legal protection. This also means that it is not (merely) a case of objection of conscience, or of civil disobedience (154-163).

The book relies on a neat separation between 'civic' and 'political' whistleblowing, a distinction they deem 'crucial' (5). Chapters 2-3 may be said to be about civic whistleblowing, that is, private disclosure justified by ethical concerns, and Chapters 4-6 about political disclosure, justified by being a correction of a non-ideal theory of democracy.

Chapter 1 serves in fact as an introduction. Chapter 2, entitled “What is Whistle-blowing?”, is what one might expect to be the kind of conventional title beginning a book. Unfortunately, this is somewhat misleading. Most of the text is a brief account of some (most of the?) relevant landmark cases in legal history since Thomas Paine’s intervention (12ff.). It also presents an account of the reflection by past philosophers and political theorists (often side-remarks on the topic). It is based on Kumar’s PhD dissertation, and it is well-informed and very readable. He carries the authority of these past thinkers to the final section, making a case for the legitimacy of whistleblowing, but is nuanced enough to acknowledge that neither Kant (18) nor Bentham would have supported such a case without many reservations. The notes on Arendt and Rawls (23) are insightful. The only slip, so to speak, is the resort to *Parrhesia*, which is presented at the last stage of the evolution of the Whig version of the history of whistleblowing, according to the perspective of Michel Foucault – only to become later the real Greek practice, so simplified and out of context that it will certainly either surprise Hellenists and other scholars in Ancient philosophy.

This is not, however, a mere slip of the tongue. Section 2.4 tries to make a comprehensive definition, choosing elements between the moral choice view (2.4.1. on the legacy of Sissela Bok [1980] and more recently Brenkert [2010]; the standard [business] theory of George [2014], etc.), a case of complicity, or integrity, that makes whistleblowing a civic duty on moral grounds. But the final section of the chapter tries indeed to make a comprehensive description of whistleblowing, both civic and ethical and political, disentangling its elements. The legitimacy of political whistleblowing is maintained by resorting to the claim that it is an important element of democratic theory, tracing its origins to ancient Athenian democracy in Periclean times.

Chapter 3 is probably the most successful chapter of the book, making the case for civic whistleblowing as a necessary answer to the threat of corruption. It also paves the way for a concept of the legal protection of whistleblowing as an answer to a similar danger in the political arena. It delves briefly into the idea of common good and public interest.

Chapters 4-6 deal with political disclosure. This can supposedly be read independently (although its absence would surely make the book far more readable, as well as impoverished). It is the most original part of the book. To simplify considerably, the authors confront the standard liberal view as represented by Bernard Williams’ paper (1996) that defends the “anti-tyranny argument” (99; though one could just as well quote Lord Acton’s saying that absolute power corrupts absolutely), but present the dilemma that democracy must be defended by espionage, and surveillance against mafias, drug cartels, etc.

I am far less convinced than the authors of the “[...] pitfalls of state secrecy justifications” (101ff.). In fact, my research into the Cold War period, and the more recent ‘return to anarchy’ (Gaspar 2019) make me think that the dilemma is often decisively real, because it is as clear now as it was in the post-war years that the potential for destruction will make the next World War the last one. No epistemic theory for how well-formalized that may be, from x and y to z (135), will replace prudential decision.

## BOOK REVIEWS

That is not to say that the authors defence of democratic controls over “unrestrained secrecy” (118) is not a necessary corrective to current practices and justifications of secrecy, which the authors present in Chapter 5.

Chapter 6 is a map of the current theories, which charts the most important alternatives and explains why the authors prefer to consider whistleblowing as a case of civil dissent – as promised at the beginning of the book.

In fact, *Speaking Truth to Power* is organized like an essay collection. Each chapter has its own abstract, keywords and reference list. We are missing a common reference list because the quotes are in most cases in-text references, which makes it difficult to locate them. It does, however, have an excellent word index.

The book, nevertheless, represents the most important contribution on the theme, pregnant with important consequences concerning non-ideal democratic theory and the criteria of public interest.

On a critical note, the book seems at times to gather redundant information. The most obvious example would be all the different conceptions of different authors that end up refuting each other, and all the formulas (those that appear in small print after each theory) which serve as complementary explanations to the book’s theories. All of these formulas try to follow an almost scientific rigour, using even schemas and variables as if they were trying to prove some theorem. This quasi-mathematical way of presentation does not add to the rigour of the arguments, but risks tiring the reader.

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Deirdre Lauren MAHONY. *Hannah Arendt’s Ethics*. London: Bloomsbury, 2018. 228 pp.

Deirdre L. Mahony’s book focuses on the ethical thinking of Hannah Arendt, the famous (but also infamous) philosopher, political theorist, historian, Zionist thinker, correspondent of Karl Jasper, and Martin Heidegger’s (perhaps naïve) disciple. Arendt was an *émigré* to the United States, fleeing Nazi Germany. In the US, she wrote and taught at many first-rate universities, never quite finding a new home despite her celebrity.

But, as the author of this book recalls, and despite the fact that her name is always involved in controversy, sometimes even fierce and bitter (1, 2), she coined or reinvigorated with new meaning expressions that have entered our political discourse. Some of these expressions, such as ‘totalitarianism’, are currently used by everyone. It is therefore not surprising that academic literature, journal papers and book-length texts, as well as non-academic portraits (including biographies and a film) about her thought are almost countless. Among the most important of these studies we may name those by Danna Villa, George Kateb and Margaret Canovan.