Giving Account:
On Dealing with White Ignorance (Personally and Professionally), and Some
Thoughts on a 2004 Paper on Racial Profiling

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1. Introduction: Note to Readers

The larger context of justified concerns in which I wrote the present piece is that the Harvard
Kennedy School (HKS), Harvard as a whole, and many other institutions have made
insufficient progress towards racial equity. I came into this discussion in connection with a
co-authored paper from 2004 (M. Risse, R. Zeckhauser, “Racial Profiling,” Philosophy & Public
Affairs, 32, 131-170). The intended reader of the present piece is somebody who is curious
about what my take on this paper and the larger debate is now, and what my own trajectory
in acquiring greater awareness of the pains caused by racisms has been. I hope my journey
can illustrate that people in positions of authority must and can acknowledge our
institutional roles in miseducating ourselves, our students, and the public. It is imperative
also that white academics recognize the dividends of whiteness and our recalcitrance in
dismantling racism, and that elite academic institutions generally respond better to
experiences and perspectives of African Americans and other people of color. I believe my
more recent work as a philosopher, and as director of the Carr Center, has for many years
reflected a more inclusive approach to both philosophy and public policy problem solving.

That earlier paper, which grew out of a teaching exercise I was asked to join as a
beginning assistant professor, is a philosophical examination of the use of racial information
in police tactics. It was motivated by the thought that even at times when we urgently need better responses to racial injustice, questions arise about appropriate police responses to scenarios that themselves can only be explained in terms of underlying racial injustice. We explore what moral theories imply about scenarios where, in some context, statistics show that certain crimes are committed more by members of one group than by others.

Our argument condemned police abuse and exclusive or excessive use of racial information in police tactics and any use that fails to have a clear rationale in pursuit of basic security or is connected to police abuse of any kind – as so obviously it should. What was not clear to me back then is the true extent to which the shameful history of unfair policing has caused great harm to communities of color and is an ongoing challenge to making our society more just. Since I lacked that understanding, it was wrong of me to weigh in on this debate then, and I wish I had not done so. The exercise itself – which had been done for years before I joined HKS - was held at a high-level intersection of statistics and ethical theory, and should never have been conducted that way to begin with. Historical context was badly needed. Around 2000, many white liberals like myself plainly overestimated how much progress had been made on racial matters. In light of that it seemed possible to have a debate about policing without putting structural and institutional injustices front and center. To be sure, many scholars and activists did see matters more clearly back then, but those of us who did not turned out to make egregious errors in judgement.

That my co-author and I made a case for police to use “racial information” (no matter how qualified and constrained by the assumption that our inquiry would only ever apply if indeed certain correlations were observed) has justifiably raised suspicions among people trying to make sense of the rapidly unfolding racist events that in recent years have been
fueled by white nationalism, supremacy, and xenophobia. Structural racism has long been in the making but does not have to continue. Change starts with me. When I have written and spoken on race-related topics in the last many years and now, I have done so with a better understanding of the larger trends at work, and a profounder appreciation of the depth and rawness of the wounds from racism. Academia must serve communities of color better.

The present piece has been difficult to write. That is not even because I find it hard to admit that I went wrong in the past and that it took me longer than it should have to understand certain things. I have done a fair amount of learning since my days as a beginning assistant professor, much of it through interactions with students, colleagues and activists that greatly broadened and deepened my understanding. So I am not saying anything here that I have not for years been saying to my classes and others who wanted to engage with my work, or with whom I have discussed what it means for white people to seriously engage with racism and overcome their (our) own previous ignorance or detachment, also as a way of contributing to the collective account-giving this country so badly needs. But some of those who criticized me have done so plainly assuming my thinking was still where it was in 2004. More importantly, some who have taken offence have done so by way of spreading narratives that have little bearing on the truth. And that makes it hard to engage.

This piece details the circumstances of my own intellectual journey of understanding racial inequities better over the years, and the context of the aforementioned paper in the time it was written. This a personal statement and an expression of professional self-understanding, rather than a scholarly piece.

2. My Own Background
I grew up in a rural part of Germany, a region called Westphalia, in a working-class family. Before his retirement, my father was a metal worker and a truck driver. Before hers, my mother, who had trained as a physician assistant, cleaned houses. Our social context was rather homogeneous. When Belgian soldiers came to our village for a NATO exercise when I was about 6, that was the first time I heard anybody speak a language other than German. The first time I was in a classroom with anybody who was not Catholic was when I was 16. Everybody was white, both at my elementary school and later at high school.

People of color barely entered our lives other than through the occasional book, or through newspapers and TV screens. Living in far-flung parts of the world, as seen from where we were, people of color seemed “exotic”, at best vaguely connected to the lives we needed to lead. They took on some degree of concreteness mostly through things like charitable collections at Christmas for missionary work in Africa. One might say all this must have bred condescension. Perhaps, but I’d also say that term fails to do justice to the sheer passivity that captured how we felt connected to the lives of people of color. I suppose all of this was different in larger cities even in Germany. And most likely it was different in European countries with a more recent colonial past, which has ways of shaping historical and political understanding, not to mention demography. But Germany only very recently, and so much belatedly, started to reckon with its own colonial past (which ended with the First World War) and thus to see itself connected in parts of Africa or Asia in ways different from what was conveyed to me as a child.

Both my parents are immensely talented, but people of their background had no chance to attend the kind of high school that led to university studies (Gymnasium). By the time I was in elementary school (in the late 70s), things had changed: educational
opportunities for working class children had improved noticeably (though to this day Germany displays fairly low degrees of social mobility in the aggregate). But my parents were not ambitious about schooling, and the headmaster was lukewarm about my going to a *Gymnasium* (which involved commuting to the city, Paderborn, 8 km away). Still, for reasons I can no longer reconstruct (it had something to do with me wanting to attend the same secondary school as a friend), I was headstrong about it. Later I became the first in my extended family to go to university, and opted to study philosophy and mathematics.

I came to the US in 1993, to spend one year as a visiting student. I never thought of myself as an immigrant then, but one thing led to another. With two interruptions (during which I lived in Israel and Singapore, respectively) I’ve been here ever since. My wife, who is Japanese, also first came to the US for educational purposes. In her case too, one thing led to another.

When I first arrived, everything felt strange and different. My school English – which I started to learn at 13, as a second foreign language - had served splendidly to discuss Shakespeare or Salinger, but did not equip me well to order a sandwich in a crowded deli. (“With everything” is a phrase that often came in handy.) Eventually, I earned a PhD in philosophy, ended up at Harvard, and, in 2008, became an American citizen. And while I had become interested in political philosophy through political activism in Germany, around social and environmental causes, my early academic work bridged philosophy and economic theory, and was quite mathematical. It was only after I took my first job – as assistant professor at Yale – and then after my arrival at Harvard in 2002 that I reconnected to the practical problems political thought must address. In time I wrote about many of them, from immigration, climate change, future generations, taxation and trade to human-rights related
matters. And as I wrote more and more about moral questions as they arise in the context of globalization, I also came to see sustained engagements with academics and activists in their own contexts around the world as essential to my work.

To be sure, questions concerning race as they arise in the German context, and thus before the background of the Holocaust, were much on my radar, partly because the German schools make sure of that, but partly also because I lived in Israel for a year before my PhD. Still, for a long time, questions concerning race as they arise in the US did not appear on my radar. The dominant recent figure in American political philosophy is John Rawls, who barely discussed race. For a long time, neither did those who, like me, entered the field through his work. Rawls’s goal was to develop a vision of an ideally just society, which naturally would not feature racial injustice. Charles Mills’ 1997 book, The Racial Contract, is field-defining but has taken twenty years to re-shape the field, still in too rudimentary a manner. Philosophy of race long was, and in many ways continues to be, an outlying subfield, rather than what it needs to be, both in the US and at the global scale: a contribution to a better understanding of our current reality, how we got there and how we can move beyond it, to a better place. Back then, I did take an early interest in questions of reparations (and in that context had my first encounter with some of the greats of black political thought, both historical, like W. E. B. Dubois, and present, like Charles Mills) but without a deeper understanding of underlying structural and institutional racism that renders questions about reparations even more urgent than the history of enslavement does by itself.

Perhaps most importantly, I failed to see America’s race problems as anything I, of all people, should get invested in deeply. Having come to the US effectively though not very clear-mindedly as an immigrant, I failed to see racial injustice in the US as my responsibility.
What I needed to overcome was perhaps not so much *white fragility* in conversations about race (to put it in terms of a widely-discussed 2018 book of that title by Robin DiAngelo), but *white recalcitrance*, an instinctive reluctance to understand certain problems as my problems in the first place. What contributed to that outlook is also that the perspective on life my family in Germany had was so distinctly not one of privilege. This was because of our socio-economic situation (working class and farmers), but also because of the prevalence of mental and physical illness, one effect of which was that we held family gatherings with multiple wheelchairs present. All this shaped how we saw the world and our place in it. That place was decidedly not felt to be one of privilege, and accordingly did not invite any critical assessment of how one’s privileges might be justifiable. Every member of my family would react with an incredulous stare at the thought that it would be incumbent upon any of us to acknowledge privileges.

3. The Dividends of Whiteness and White Ignorance

The longer I lived in the US, the more I realized that, perhaps *because* of my humble origins, I kept overlooking something important. I increasingly came to note the *dividends of whiteness*. Much of American society is organized in such a way that the able-bodied, white, straight male is the “normal” type around whose perspectives much social interaction, economic opportunity and legal protection is organized and vis-à-vis whom everybody else must find room. And since there are millions more poor whites than low-income blacks, they deem anti-racist activism as illegitimate and reject racially redistributive policies as anti-white, precisely because of their “socio-economic situation.” Even though I arrived in the US at the age of 22, I was able to “slot in” in ways many other arrivals cannot, and in which even
many whose families have been around for generations cannot. I could navigate public spaces, at least in most locations I actually wanted to go to, without fearing I was eyed with suspicion or moving around in spaces not intended for people “like me.”

To put all this differently, what became increasingly clear to me over the years is that my own immigrant experience also reflects the political work of the state to promote American exceptionalism and to render invisible (domestically and globally) all evidence of genuinely structural oppression of minorities. Precisely that perspective is one pillar of the white backlash to racial justice and the necessary efforts at coming to terms with the American national biography. Like many others I wanted to think it was my hard work that led to advancement. But I failed to see (white recalcitrance indeed) that we do not compete on a level playing field. Lacking privilege in some dimensions or in relative standing in one’s original context does not mean one would not be privileged in other ways that matter deeply. (But as many will agree who have gone through a similar process, lacking privilege in some dimensions makes it rather hard to see one’s privilege in others.) I reluctantly came to realize that a kind of “white ignorance” characterized my mindset.

“White ignorance” (a term developed systematically by Charles Mills) denotes an ignorance not contingently but causally linked to whiteness. It can amount to absence of belief, false belief or a pervasively deformed outlook. Here whiteness need not be biological but is socially constructed. According to Mills, the most common forms of white ignorance include nominal acceptance of non-white equality (biologically speaking), coupled with prejudicial views along other axes, such as cultural or economic ones, and broadly non-racial conceptions of social causality. The heart of white ignorance is refusal to recognize how the legacy of the past, as well as ongoing practices, continue to incapacitate people of color
despite nominal equality. White ignorance generally either denies any advantage from whiteness or attributes it to differential effort (“Italians could make it in the US, why can’t blacks?”). My story fits right in.

It took me a long time to see especially the depth and rawness of the wounds from racism in the US, and how day-to-day encounters keep them open. I came to understand all that better through many conversations (and through some very close personal relations) with those who never had the luxury of not thinking about race. A friend – a white woman married to a Hispanic man – once told me that on one occasion she put herself into the sightline of a salesperson who was following her well-dressed Hispanic husband with their eyes. And she was shocked by what it felt like to be on the receiving end of that cold, suspecting gaze. The succinctness of this experience also sums up my own learning about one type of dividend of whiteness. It never happens to me that I go into a store and feel like I am suspected of stealing. And while I have had several rather unpleasant encounters with police myself, I do not worry that, if anything happens and a suspect is needed, they turn to me first. That is an enormous luxury that many, many people do not have.

What I was just describing were initial efforts to better understand myself, and my social status, in relation to how others fare in the web of social and political relations of which I have been a part. I hope this offers something of a window into why the journey to racial awareness can be longer than it would ideally be for white people. Too many are unaware of the numerous discriminatory mechanisms society has always put in the way of minorities. Much American history must be relearned and retaught, to overcome the unqualified rhetoric of greatness, glory and the realization of freedom that keeps too many from opening their eyes to the realities others inhabit. This is obviously hardly an innovative idea, as the
notion of teaching racism has been politically and institutionally rejected time and time again, which by itself is part of the structural racism that undergirds historical and contemporary inequality.¹

It is worth dwelling a bit more on white ignorance, especially the difficulties in overcoming it. The work of playwright and essayist James Baldwin (who died in 1987) continues to be a source of clarity and insight on American race relations. In 2016, filmmaker Raoul Peck produced I Am Not Your Negro, a movie based on Baldwin’s unfinished manuscript Remember This House. Peck explores the history of American racism through Baldwin’s reminiscences of civil rights leaders Medgar Evers, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. (all of whom were assassinated). At some point the movie offers an excerpt from Baldwin’s June 13, 1968 guest appearance on the nationally televised Dick Cavett Show. Another guest was Paul Weiss, a distinguished Yale philosopher. Weiss reprimanded Baldwin for dwelling too much on race. Instead of perpetuating how people slot into racial

¹ To say a bit more about what I’m talking about here: Typically, neither my college students nor my Kennedy School students have heard of the 1921 Tulsa race riots, one of the single worst incidents of racial violence in American history. Typically, they are unaware of how the abolition of enslavement did not lead to anything like a level playing field, but to a new system of oppression held up by the constant possibility of lynching and increasingly by mass incarceration. Typically, they are unaware that many social policies that allowed others to build wealth across generations were not normally available to African Americans. Redlining would render whole neighborhoods ineligible for certain services; the G.I. Bill did not offer support to African Americans on equal terms with whites, as Ira Katznelson has demonstrated in his book When Affirmative Action Was White. And, to mention one additional example, when Social Security was introduced during the New Deal, agricultural and domestic laborers were excluded. Such jobs were normally filled by African Americans. Khalil Gibran Muhammad’s Condemnation of Blackness shows in detail how African Americans were persistently excluded from social policy reforms that brought welfare benefits to many other groups. Even many of America’s brightest do not learn of such matters at school. Nor do they learn that photos that capture the completion of railroads in the 19th century only included whites and left out Asians and Native Americans who often were more numerous. Memory culture is deeply steeped in accomplishments of whites, often at the expense of people of color. The ongoing presence of monuments for confederate heroes in the American South is only the tip of an iceberg. The kind of work done by Bryan Stevenson’s Equal Justice Initiative through the Legacy Museum and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice (often referred to as the Lynching Memorial) in Montgomery, Alabama, and the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC stand paradigmatically for many efforts to help Americans work through the painful history of their country.
memberships, they should explore other ways of relating to each other (e.g., qua being fellow scholars). A white American, Weiss suggested he and Baldwin had more in common qua scholars than either would with a person of their own color who despised scholarship.

Baldwin had left the US in 1948, in his mid-twenties because he could no longer stomach racism and homophobia. He spent most of his adult life in Paris. Viewers sense Baldwin’s profound weariness being confronted with yet another situation where he must explain himself, as well as the history of his country as it has affected people of color. Responding to Weiss, he vividly describes the “social danger” encroaching upon black people in daily interactions (with police or at the workplace), as well as in organizational structures all around (churches, unions, availability of education and loans, etc.). For him, as for many people of color, not having to deal with race was an unobtainable luxury.

In his review of I Am Not Your Negro, critic A. O. Scott commented on the exchange between Baldwin and Weiss that “the initial spectacle of mediocrity condescending to genius is painful, but the subsequent triumph of self-taught brilliance over credentialed ignorance is thrilling to witness” (New York Times, February 2, 2017). Scott’s assessment of Weiss is excessively harsh, in fact condescending in its own way by suggesting the tasks required to improve racial relations are plain for everybody to see and that Weiss’s approach is so obviously misguided that, even at the time, every clear-minded and well-meaning person would have acted differently. (Were this so, progress would be made faster.) The valid point in Scott’s assessment is, however, that Weiss’s generic humanism that would want to end racism by asking people to cease to define themselves along racial lines, is at best naïve and at worst a serious obstacle to genuine improvements. In that sense Weiss’s statement reflects white ignorance. At the same time, the sincerity with which he articulated his
humanism reveals how difficult it is to overcome white ignorance. Even - and perhaps especially - for a reflective and conscientious person it will be a difficult step to self-diagnose this way. For myself I very much see some of my struggles in how Weiss failed to do justice to what Baldwin was talking about, and to what he, like so many others, was living through.


I joined HKS in 2002 as an assistant professor, hired to teach in the Master of Public Policy (MPP) program. I had left the safety of my professional niche to enter a new part of academia. Though there are important exceptions to this, the culture especially of analytical philosophy in better-ranked departments is not supportive of the engagement with the world people inhabit that is the hallmark of teaching at a policy school. This disconnect continues to be a problem in the education of moral and political philosophers, as it was in mine. MPP “ethics” classes involved a broad set of topics at the intersection of philosophy, politics and law. It always was a difficult class to teach, and initially required much on-the-job-learning about a variety to topics. For some of that I was well prepared, but for some I was not. What is more, my ability to distinguish the one from the other was underdeveloped. That had much to do with my insufficient appreciation for the role of race in American politics and history back then.

For the sake of increasing multi-disciplinary approaches, there were then joint sessions between ethics and statistics (organized around use of racial information in police tactics), to which I was asked to contribute. As a new junior faculty, I was eager to carve out a place for myself. The background was that, under Rudy Giuliani and Michael Bloomberg as mayors of New York City, CompStat-driven crime-fighting had generated a discourse around
use of racial information by police that at the time of my arrival had been going on for years. That discourse involved a host of normative and empirical issues, concerning both the present reality in criminal justice and narratives about how that reality had arisen. The framing of our paper came from this exercise. The specific question we investigated, and the assumptions we made, arose from the way this teaching unit was organized. The ask of philosophers was to investigate what moral theories say about the conditions under which use of racial information ("profiling") is legitimate. Such use would obviously be illegitimate if it were not rational, that is, if crime patterns had not been tracked thereby, and or such tracking had not been effective in fighting crime. But that did not automatically mean that a rational basis made it philosophically legitimate. Our task was therefore to explore what moral theories imply about the legitimacy of using racial information if such use indeed were rational, in the specific sense of being instrumentally effective.

The underlying challenge that makes this kind of project important was how to think about scenarios where rights to security conflict with rights not to be unduly burdened by police tactics designed to advance security. Since observed correlations would presumably hold because of historical injustices, those targeted by such measures would normally be embedded in a history of past and ongoing discrimination. The available literature on the philosophical aspects that had been used for this exercise was not good: better material was needed. But I did not possess good judgement as to what should be considered to that end. I ended up engaging with this task as an exercise in spelling out ethical theories deploying a barrage of distinctions not informed by enough historical and contemporary experience or literature, about underlying structural racism or perspectives of vulnerably communities. I did not understand the extent to which categories of criminality are themselves historical
and political in character, reflecting past and ongoing exercises of power. I lacked both independence of mind and knowledge to take a big step back to ponder the context in which HKS was holding this exercise, and to appreciate the extent to which a historical lens was needed, as was the presence of teachers in the classroom who could reflect the experience of minority communities with the police and the ways it had historically shaped their lives.

Richard Zeckhauser and I put together materials and eventually those grew into a research article aimed at professional philosophers, using the sterile and unaccommodating style of research journals. As far as arguments regarding use of racial information was concerned, this ended up not being an innovative paper (since all intellectual efforts went to illuminating ethical theory), but one dealing with a debate as it had existed for years by way of exploring what moral theories had to say about it. All considerations discussed were already part of the debate. Our task was to bring some order to them – which we did, but, again, without questioning the framing with which we were operating. It was a misguided effort, embedded into a teaching exercise that should have been designed differently all along. We failed to serve our students thereby and failed to put them in turn into a position to serve their communities well. I lacked the judgement to see that.

One purpose of our paper was to distinguish legitimate use of racial information from two other issues: police abuse and over-use of racial information. We made two moves that in hindsight I can see are problematic, reflecting the shortcomings of my understanding at the time. First, the paper thought through philosophical theories under particular factual assumptions. We thereby used a widely-deployed methodology but without recognizing the need to embed, at greater length, the statistical facts into their complex history. To be sure, those who work on normative questions tend to make explicit for what kind of situation their
question arises, which in this case is the observation of a certain correlation. In the legal domain, in particular, this kind of approach is very common, and does not involve endorsing the assumptions that frame the inquiry. In trials, for instance, there is a fact-finding stage and a stage where legal theory is applied to established factual scenarios.

For that reason, legal theory done in isolation from trials proceeds by stipulating the factual assumptions under which it does its investigation. While this is indeed a common approach, I have long thought a more productive integration of factual and normative assessments (an approach for which, my work on global justice is known, most recently On Trade Justice) is more helpful. Otherwise one uses problems to illuminate theory, rather than vice versa. That is especially so in a context where facts are contentious and must be embedded into a complex history. One way in which the debate to which we contributed failed minority communities was that this matter did not get much more priority.

Second, what we aimed to explore was not the justifiability of “racial profiling” as some readers will have experienced it, the essence of which is police making decisions fully based on racial information without there being any apparent rationale to it and often executing them in abusive fashion. Instead, we aimed to consider under what circumstances, if any, racial information – or more abstractly, information about group membership - can be used as one factor, and thus to partially inform police tactics if indeed use of such information is instrumentally rational in pursuit of basic security.

This question will normally arise in situations where decisions about whom to search or investigate must be made quickly or concern a large number of people not all of whom can be searched or investigated. We distinguished this matter from both overuse of such information and police abuse, in an effort to disentangle issues that in practice arise together.
Given my education background and the framing of the task, all this seemed appropriate to me then. But what that meant was indeed that we disentangled features of a process that are always mutually intertwined and dynamic, giving a rather abstract treatment to issues that in practice always come together, especially in a country with a deep racist history. It was the wrong approach. I ended up imposing theoretical approaches I knew how to handle upon problems I did not understand well enough, and I failed to grasp that at the time.

But what is also true is that this paper was not written to influence policy, and predictably did not. With its many qualifications and abstractions for the sake of its theoretical purposes and with its lengthy explorations of arguments it is not the kind of paper that could or should. That is something my co-author and I were aware of, lack of judgement on my side otherwise notwithstanding. While we wrote our paper, Fred Schauer wrote a book on profiling for a general audience (Profiles, Probabilities, and Stereotypes, 2003). Schauer emphasized that in practice race is overused in classifications, so there is good reason to push back on it severely. Our paper is fully consistent with this outlook, but our focus was on the theory-end. Our paper did trigger some discussion among philosophers interested in the underlying rights conflict; a follow-up paper I wrote on my own (published in Criminal Justice Ethics 26.1, 2007) engaged with some of that. But all of that then happened, in my own mind, within the confines of the framework of the original paper.

To be sure, that our 2004 paper did not have any bearing on policy does not excuse its flaws. It does not excuse that the debate back then had the wrong focus and priorities, and that my path to a deeper understanding of the rawness of the wounds from racism has been longer than I wish it had been, and than it should have been. The goal must always be intellectual work of the highest order, and the problems I recorded here are intellectual
shortcomings. I lay them out as part of a project of clarifying standards for my own future work, whether the narrowly philosophical as here or in my areas of work more closely connected to policy domains. To repeat, since I lacked much relevant understanding and judgement, it was wrong of me to weigh in on this debate, and I wish I had not done so. And I wish HKS had framed its engagement with police tactics differently, years before I was drawn into this exercise. When I have written and spoken on race-related topics in the last many years and now, I have done so with a better understanding of the larger trends at work, and a profounder appreciation of the depth and rawness of the wounds from racism. Most importantly, academia must serve communities of color better.

5. The Bigger Picture in Political Philosophy

Overall, the agenda of political philosophy must also be rethought, since it is also to a large extent the result of white ignorance. It is fair to ask what it says about Western thought that Thomas Hobbes’s seminal articulation of social contract theory in his *Leviathan* captures the state of nature by referring to the fact that “the savage people in many places of America (...) have no government at all, and live at this day in that brutish manner;” that John Locke in his *Second Treatise of Government* exclaims “in the beginning all the World was *America,*” denoting a place where cultivation had yet to happen; that there is some plausibility to arguing that Kant played a major role in tidying the notion of race for serious discourse; that G. W. F. Hegel’s formulation of his famous master-slave dialectic may well have been informed by an awareness of the Haitian revolution while he remained bound to a Eurocentric worldview; or that John Stuart Mill applied his insights about the connection between good governance and individual self-government to the UK but not India.
These are some of the texts that still shape the field. That they do so makes it hard to move ahead since the foundations are steeped in coloniality, a subject on which I also write a bit more in my forthcoming book *On Justice: Philosophy, History, Foundations*. “By opening our eyes, we do not necessarily see what confronts us,” philosopher Iris Murdoch noted in *The Sovereignty of Good*. And she added: “It is a task to come to see the world as it is.” In this context too, one of the many things that need to happen is for people like me to acknowledge our role in miseducating ourselves, our students, and the public. Change does start with me.