

EDITORIAL

Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences would not be possible without the numerous encouraging essays we receive, and the reviewers who put in their time to review them. On behalf of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study (Shimla), I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all of these scholars. I also have to put on record my sincere gratitude for the support that the volume received from Mr. Prem Chand, Secretary, and the Chief of Publication Division of IIAS, and his team, during the entire period of its production. Words would not be adequate to depict his perseverance.

This Volume of SHSS has five essays, and we thank the corresponding authors for their contributions, and for their patient revisions in the light of the reviewers' comments. This acknowledgement is particularly in order given that these essays have had a long journey, some of them of over three years, from the time of their submission to their finally being here. Fortunately none of our contributors lost their patience.

The first essay by Gregory Kirk argues as to why friendship is not merely a personal need but must be rather construed as a structural necessity for a healthy political life. Navigating through the works of Plato and Aristotle, Kirk's essay foregrounds the notion of friendship as a 'middle-term between the personal and the political' (p. 2). He argues for the cardinal role that friendship plays in the 'existential maturation', a notion that he brings into contrast with the natural process of 'biological maturation', highlighting the mode in which it is 'integral to the cultivation of our responsible political identity' (p. 11).

The next essay is an "opinion-article" by Syed Sayeed and raises an important question concerning the nature and the role of a 'public intellectual', within the context of a democracy. His normative exploration then positions the philosopher qua public intellectual. The essay innovatively construes the category of the 'public intellectual' in terms of one's 'willingness to think for others' in order to generate a shared understanding of one's ontic situatedness, instead of conceiving it in terms of any specific intellectual capacity or capability, or an individual's expertise per se. Syed positions the public intellectual as someone who is willing to think 'about public

affairs and issues of common or collective interest, and/or helps others engage in such thinking themselves', and then, against this horizon, goes on to sketch the figure of the philosopher in this role (pp. 23-24). His essay argues that the 'essence of intellectuality' that marks the public intellectual, 'is not knowledge' but rather her stance 'of resistance in the cause of autonomy' and thus, he sees the public intellectual as performing an indispensable function within a democracy.

The third essay in this volume is by Patricia Fagan, who takes us into the Homeric world to elaborate on the pivotal, and unique, role played by the simile in Homeric poems in particular, and the traditional narrative poetry in general. Patricia takes up the specific simile of the "horse" that is invoked by Homer in his *Iliad*, in relation to the heroes, Paris and Hektor, to highlight the unique elements of the simile, and the function that it performs in orienting our interpretation of the text. In the context of her chosen simile of the horse in the *Iliad*, she shows how it redirects 'our interpretations of Paris and Hektor to ensure that we understand what the poem needs us to understand about these heroes and their stories' (p. 52). She argues that such a "redirection of our interpretation" is brought about precisely by structuring the simile in a specific manner wherever it occurs in the *Iliad*. Towards this end, her essay further provides a resolution to the difficulty that interpreters of the *Iliad* have in addressing how the simile applies to 'both to the easy-going and questionably heroic Paris, and to the responsible and manifestly heroic Hektor' (p. 53).

In the essay that follows Patricia's, P. G. Jung argues for the need to re-construct the nature of scepticism that Socrates possibly faces, suggesting that we need to distance concerns of 'epistemological scepticism' from the variety of scepticism that Socrates faces, which as he argues is, in contrast, deeply ontological. By traversing through Plato's dialogues, he argues that such a repositioning of the Sceptics' challenge in ontological terms in relation to Socrates enables us to see a distinct political dimension within the Socratic epistemological framework, and then helps us appreciate the Socratic vision of, what he calls, the 'liberalization of knowledge' (p. 79).

The last essay of the volume by Eric Nelson reflects on the hermeneutical problems of intercultural engagement towards the possibility of a distinct modernity and cosmopolitanism. Within this broad canvas, and as an illustrative case of the possible challenges faced by such an endeavor, Eric's essay traces Buber's responses to Gandhi on issues concerning the necessity of modernization and the possibility of alternative modernities; the appropriate

relationship between the prophetic and the pragmatic, or that between religion and politics; the legitimacy of resorting to the use of force and violence in resistance to oppression and persecution; and the fate of the Indian and the Jewish peoples in their specific geopolitical circumstances. Eric's essay foregrounds the fact that Buber's interpretation of Gandhi's position on these issues was itself structured upon his own position of prophetic Theopolitics, which as Eric argues, was construed by Buber as an ethical demand that could not be politically realized. Such a stance on the part of Buber forecloses any possibility of accepting any universal application of ascetic and ethical perfectionism, as Gandhi's view seems to suggest. Eric's essay is suggestive of the fact that one's own situatedness, and one's broader operative conceptual framework, necessarily colours one's perspectives, thereby posing a fundamental challenge to an intercultural hermeneutical engagement.

However, before we enter into the world of perspectives offered by these essays, a word must be said about the date of publication of this Volume. Though the volume is marked as an Issue for 2014, it is being published in 2020. The essays in this volume were all received from 2017 onwards for reviews.

PRAVESH JUNG GOLAY

