

LET'S THE REFUGEE SPEAK AND ACT *WELL* THE LIMITS OF POLITICAL IMAGINATION

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to problematize the agent-centred approach to the question of how the figure of a refugee allows to re-conceptualize what it means to be political. It takes under scrutiny scholarship that places refugees' agency, manifesting itself mostly in the acts of resistance, in the centre of attention and interprets it as a source of political. This literature, drawing heavily on the work of Rancière, scrutinizes the moments when refugees refuse to be reduced to silent, disposable bodies and, by acting and speaking, try to reclaim what has been denied to them – the right to speak and the right to be political actors. The present paper challenges this agency-centered approach. It argues that seeing agency as creating the possibility for political is only possible within a political context that already understands and produces agency to have a political potential. Thus such an approach stretches out rather than challenges the definition of political inscribed in the modern societies, societies that are produced on the constant exclusion and subordination of the other. Moreover, the paper argues that the pure focus on individuals' agency and political participation silences the question of structural violence strictly linked with economic and social spheres of life.