

Principles of Fighting in the Age of Nihilism

(Based on a Theory of Systems of Allegories)

Mohammad Mehdi Ardebili

Translated by Hossein Rouh-al-Amini

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“At the great day, only

They who are pricked boundlessly, laugh:

Only the sun.”

(*A great day passes*, Bijan Elahi, lines 14-16)

Before entering the exercises appendix section, it is necessary to briefly point to the achievements of this text, both in order to make the overall picture of the system coherent and to avoid misunderstandings as much as possible. Although brief attempts were made in the introduction to explain the nihilistic situation, this text has, in fact, assumed acknowledgment of the nihilistic situation as its prerequisite. As a result, its primary audience is one who has confronted, with mind, flesh, and blood, all the manifestations of nihilism (from epistemological nihilism to ontological and from moral nihilism to political) and has found no positive way out of the nihilistic situation and towards the creation of a meaningful and valuable life. It is only then that the slightest glimmer, even if unguaranteed and unclear, can be taken seriously. In a word, the point of departure of this text (both for the author and for the audience to whom it is written), is “desperation”. Grasping the presence of this desperation all over the text makes it possible to understand. Otherwise, the present endeavor is not even worth a glance. I imagine that most of the probable

misunderstood criticisms of this work, will be raised by the readers to whom it is not written: that is, those who know what they want from life and what needs to be done, who know the epistemic and moral right and wrong, who know what their political and economic goals are, and so on. They will probably find this work fanciful, pretentious, unbalanced (in parts too vague and in parts too lengthy and repetitive), with divergent style and tone (in parts like a scientific and theoretical text, in others like a rhetorical or poetic text, and yet elsewhere as if an epic or polemic manifesto), in regard to politics conservative, elitist, individualist, overly abstract and ultimately, irritating.

Nonetheless, we have made the meaning of life in the personal realm our primary problematic, and have focused on the question of a standard or a basis which could make one's life valuable and meaningful (whatever it may be, from pleasure-seeking to power-seeking, from love for a beloved to commitment to children or parents, from spreading awareness to progress in science, and so on). In the next stage, this making meaningful and valuable was connected with individuals' beliefological systems of allegories, and, of course, we presented our own specific system of allegories as well which is based on the idea of "fighting". Only then the issue of comparison between these systems can be addressed, "criticism" becomes possible, and we emerge out of our initial individualistic relativism. In such manner, we proposed a mechanism for distinguishing between justified and unjustified systems of allegories; a mechanism that is itself justified, meaning that it does not stagnate in dogmatism and unilateralism. And finally, we pointed out the practical consequences of a justified system of allegories in the domain of morality and politics. This was a brief general outline of this work, of which we will provide a more detailed summary in what follows. Having said that, we should also note that, as mentioned before, the present book is not a complete work, but rather only the

first edition of a preliminary list for a comprehensive plan, whose chapters need, one might say, to be expanded and elaborated - though not necessarily by the present author - in the form of an independent work.

This work was thus begun with the acknowledgment of nihilism and the meaninglessness of life and the absence of a justified criterion of value. In this situation, the only anchor or point of entry that it was able to find to commence its movement was that in the time of absolute dominance of nihilism and meaninglessness, the only justified and meaningful action is the very “fighting” against this situation. This idea, which also serves as the title of the work, proceeded through an extended and challenging path to demonstrate – via diverse topics, from logic, epistemology, and ontology to teleology, axiology, religion, morality, and politics – how this “fighting” can be explained in a justified manner. Presumably, the reader sees such a title on the face of a book and expects martial or political techniques on how to fight the enemy. Such a reader will, after seeing all these diverse and scattered topics, probably become frustrated and disappointed. But when the enemy is in “me”, when I myself am the product of the same situation I wish to change, how can one talk of fighting? Here the techniques are different so that at first it may seem that the target is me myself rather than the external enemy. This probable disappointment reaches its zenith after reading the chapters on morality and politics: the audience probably expects from reading a philosophy of morality to acquire principles that would enable one to easily distinguish vice from virtue, and from a chapter on politics, to present an ideal or effective political system and the means to fight the enemy and to change the existing political system towards the desired one. Although such a warning was given to the audience many, many times throughout the text, this disappointment is unavoidable. The reason is that, firstly, the history of proposed moral and political systems has ruined the audience’s

expectation, and secondly, if an audience feels this disappointment after reading this text, they probably have not yet fully understood and acknowledged nihilism. Therefore, this disappointment and even more intense disappointments, are the product of the audience's more indirect and delayed confrontation with nihilism itself and the desperation evoked by it – that is, instead of starting this text while already carrying hopelessness and desperation, the audience might be affected by them while reading the text. The audience, of course, has the right to avoid such disappointment and might even mock or insult this text and its author and try to look for ways out of this disappointment and desperation. In my opinion, however, this disappointment itself is the precondition for entering the depths of the system presented in this book, and it was supposed to accompany the author and the audience in all the stages of the system, even to the last pages. Perhaps it is only now that the meaning of such frequently repeated terms as “desperation” or “dominance of nihilism” can be fully understood by the audience.

However, on the contrary, by pre-accepting this desperation and disappointment, this work's claim is that it has been able to show or even create a glimmer. Where all epistemic, biologic, and moral criteria have collapsed, this system attempted to offer another criterion, from another source, and towards this, despite acknowledging and even utilizing all the criticisms against subjectivist individualism, it placed its anchor in the subject (of course in the critical sense that was mentioned). Every fight is essentially a fight of the subject. However, in order not to fall into all the plagued experiences of subjectivism, that is, to avoid falling into Don Quixote-like dogmatism or epistemic solipsism or individualistic hedonism and so forth, it had to create the first draft of a novel kind of logic that is plastic¹ in

¹ The concept of plasticity was proposed and elaborated to the level of generating a plastic logic in the chapter “Methodology”. The formulation of these notions was inspired by and based upon Catherine Malabou's concept of plasticity. —Trans. note.

one sense and alloyed in another. Furthermore, while acknowledging the collapse of any form of criterion, this work attempted to provide indicators for justification. Here, it had to propose a general outline, titled “theory of systems of allegories”, to include all the existing conceptual, practical, and biological approaches and systems (even itself) in it, so that it could use these justification indicators for all systems of allegories. A justification whose primary goal is not to fall into either single-voiced dogmatism or cacophonous relativism, both of which block critical, meaningful, and justified dialogue.

After outlining the general terms of the theory of systems of allegories, this work itself entered a new level of discussion and positioned itself in one of the rooms of the mansion that it had designed. It presented, that is to say, its own specific theory of the system of allegories, both theoretically and practically. At the theoretical level, in the chapters on epistemology and ontology – without relying on any axioms and merely by creating some presumed postulates, and of course by relying on the very “decision to fight” itself – while demonstrating the internal obstruction of any form of “cognition” and criticism of any form of guaranteed reliance on it, by rising above Hegelian dialectics, the text arrived at a kind of plastic dynamic idealist ontology. With regard to epistemology, setting “experience” as the standard, it attempted to depict sense and feeling differently, and with their aid, come to the triple concepts of mind, body, and emotion. But as the audience will probably complain, this initial discussion did not lead to a comprehensive system of allegories of epistemology. We presented this epistemology only as an entry into our new interpretation of “consciousness”. Indeed, considering our claim regarding the essential obstruction of cognition and its unreliability and acknowledgment of epistemological nihilism, the epistemology chapter has actually acted against any form of conventional epistemology system. Therefore, we postponed its discussion to the beliefology

chapter, where, through the examination of two super-systems of allegories, i.e., religion and science, we proposed our conception of how to justify a belief system.

At the practical level too, before entering the realm of morality and politics, we had to design a teleological system so that with its help we could restore the dignity of the misappropriated concept of “value”, and with the help of a distinction between “telos” and “direction” we offered a kind of axiology that could survive postmodern criticisms against any form of evaluation. It was with the help of this teleological and axiological system that it became possible to rearrange a kind of philosophy of morality and politics, which of course, had to differ from conventional morality philosophies (providing specific procedures to clearly distinguish vice from virtue at the moment of action) and conventional political philosophies (providing the ideal political system and specifying the steps to achieve it).

However, this system, contrary to the simplistic labels that it will probably receive initially, is not only not incompatible with political action and presentation of ideal system, but it could actually justify both action and presentation of positive political system based on its principles. The issue here is that an ideal political system is always the product of collective wisdom, of the imagination of living subjects, and the level of presentation of it is different from the level of presentation of the idea of the political. Instead, by proposing the three elements of consciousness, preparedness, and decisiveness, this system attempted to provide a degree of meaningfulness for living and valuable justified action, so that the wandering helpless subject can make its living meaningful with its help. It is only after that that the subject can, in a defensible and justified manner, enter any form of strategic collaboration with existing political activities or even create new alternatives for political action and ideals. The significant issue here is that of the entirety of activities towards freedom and justice (in all the liberalist and socialist

interpretations and their existing derivations and alternatives), none can make life meaningful and justify fighting. Instead, it is the meaningfulness and justified value of the living of the fighting subject that can make political activity valuable and justified.

Here a criticism may be posed: how is it possible to grant such centrality to “consciousness”, while we have [already] criticized any form of cognition? To assign such a position to “decisiveness”, while we have [already] criticized any form of decisive practical rule? This question has of course received its answer in the text itself, but here and as a brief epilogue with the aim of minimizing misreading, misunderstanding, and misappropriation, we must mention that the consciousness of which this system speaks is fundamentally different from cognition or episteme in the conventional sense. As discussed in the epistemology chapter, common sensically, an episteme is a manner for the cognition of an issue (be it human, God, or the world) and offers ways to defend this manner. Yet today, this conception of episteme has been dissolved by the acid of nihilism. The consciousness that we suggest is, however, a kind of attentiveness to the states and sentiments of the subject (under which all other issues, including human and the world, are subsumed: that is, observing the necessity of things and also penetrating into the depths of things by mediation of the depths of the subject). In this sense, consciousness is not a type of “knowledge”, but rather a kind of continuous conscious attention to subjective experience (in all its dimensions, which extends even to the objective and intersubjective realms as well) and nothing more. Furthermore, a section was dedicated to the justification of decisiveness despite undecidability, to show how one can, despite absolute undecidability and ever-increasing hesitation, perform an action decisively and afterward, without falling into the sickly mental habit of “remorse”, take absolute responsibility for the necessity of the action.

It was demonstrated, however, that mere consciousness is not enough to realize this decisiveness, and the subject needs to have cultivated a kind of “preparedness” for accepting responsibility and paying its price. Of course, this triad (consciousness, preparedness, and decisiveness) is not possible with such weak, wretched, helpless subjects. Therefore, comprehensive techniques have been designed to strengthen and prepare the subject for accepting such a momentous task (which God, nature, and even humans have sidestepped, and nihilism is the result of this sidestepping). The author hopes he can one day publish these exercises as one of the volumes of the present system in a “comprehensive system of exercises”. But for now, in the appendix section of this list-like work, which will appear immediately after these lines, a brief outline of the main topics of the exercises, along with concise instructions and their corresponding allegories, is presented: at the introductory level and in two categories of consciousness and preparedness exercises.

In the end, regarding the achievements of this system, we should avoid both unwarranted exaggeration and self-doubting humbleness. The truth is that, upon falling into crisis and in utter confrontation with his own helplessness and desperation, the author first tried to find/create an answer to his “personal” problematic. It was only after such trial that he attempted to, without falling into delusions or false expectations, consolidate his personal answer and project it to the public domain, with the hope that at least one other subject would relate to this answer, whence an intersubjective co-problematic realm for creating answers and other alternatives could perhaps ensue. The rest of the story is neither up to the author nor is it in his power, but depends on the forces of the world and the necessity of relations and activities of the subjects. In this sense, the publication of this work is a call that seeks to summon the imagination of its co-problematic audience.

In a word, recalling the allegory of “apple-eating worms”, we are creatures who know neither where they have come from, nor where they are going, nor even where they are. We do not know to what degree that which we imagine as our experiencing of the world is common and collective and to what degree it is [personal and] individual, to what degree it is caused by our cognitive system and to what degree by the world, and even further, how much truly separated we are from the so-called outside world. For this very reason, despite the presented outline of epistemological issues, our anchor, that is, the value of our living, is not placed on knowledge (always incomplete and imperfect and essentially contradictory as our knowledge is), but instead on the creation of the possibility of living meaningfully. Here, the subject is the main key. Subjects, in confrontation with their living (not merely their world), forge the possibility of the creation of meaningful experience. So far, the outline of our system of thought is inevitably solipsistic and individualistic. This is because, contrary to many solutions, we attempted not to delegate meaningfulness and valuableness of the subject's living to an unarriving tomorrow, an ideal society, an illusory nowhere, or the advent of an imaginary savior, in order to avoid resorting to any excuses that would postpone the confrontation with the primary issue to the realization of utopia and sidestep the burden of responsibility. Instead, the subject is to make his or her own life meaningful now. The need to explain this point forced me to problematize the “now” itself, which in turn led to a novel interpretation of time, which I named “pliant time”². But that's not the whole story. We made use of two ideas in order not to stagnate at this individualistic level. Firstly, with the help of the submitted alloyed and plastic logics, we demonstrated that it is possible to simultaneously internalize contradiction and presume the correctness of two

² This term is coined by the author and explained in the book, in a critical confrontation with three conceptions of time: linear, circular, and spiral. The original Persian-Arabic term is *tavaroxi*, the adjective form of *tavarox* “to become pliant” which also evokes *tarix* “history”, so much so that a more precise representation of the original term would be historical-pliant time. —Trans. note.

contradictory answers to a question, on the condition that the question itself can be made more inclusive. In other words, we have provided an outline of meaning-giving in which, whether the whole world is in the mind of the individual subject (that is, if it is the case that not only the outside world, but more importantly, all other human beings are, for instance, the illusions of an individual subject), or other subjects (in any form, and placed on any spectrum with any coordinate axis) exist outside the subject, the meaningfulness and axiological anchor of fighting would not be undermined. Secondly, the subject's need for the other was proved, not merely based on the traditional claim of need due to survival and satisfaction of desire, but instead for telos of the third level of meaningfulness, that is, on the one hand, through the value of synergy of collective imagination, and on the other, the necessity of the presence of the other (whether internal or external) to avoid any dogmatization of the system of allegories (of course in a plastic manner, and again regardless of whether this other or collective is in the subject's mind or is independent of it). Thirdly, in order for this necessary initial individualism in the objective realm (by all the alternative narratives in different spectrums of the coordinate axes) not to end up with dogmatism or solipsism, the idea of “justifying” a system of allegories is presented precisely with the aim of negating the self-closure of the system of allegories of subject, as well as making it open to the expanding alternative possibilities (from both the “internal other” and the “external other”), and formulated its characteristics and stages.

If the question is posed that why in this work, which claims such comprehensiveness and holism, no discussion is found about the concrete issues of gender, ethnicity, differences of languages, geography, and other important identifying issues of this kind, we will answer that it is simply because such discussions, like their similar discussions in economics and politics (focusing on political systems or different

economic systems), have no place at this level of discussion at all. Of course, the examination and analysis of these factors is quite important, but compared to the problematic of this work, it retains a secondary priority. Because this work, instead, tries to show how a subject can (or at least has the possibility to) always and everywhere live and realize a meaningful and justified life. To achieve this, in the first step the subject actually should be able to turn him- or herself into a fighting subject, and in the principles that give meaning to their life, remove the focus from factors such as ethnicity, language, political system, economic system, gender, and the like, in a critical manner and of course with difficulty, and rearrange them under the primary issue. Nihilism has already destroyed all these refuges. Subjects know that their meaningful living is not dependent or conditioned on any particular or chosen nation, any particular or chosen language, any particular political system, any particular economic system, any particular gender, and so on. It is only then that they can, with the consciousness and preparedness they are equipped with, deal with the concrete issues of contradictions and possibilities of their ethnicity, race, culture, and language, and even problematize both the ways out of an established political or economic system and even the establishment of an ideal political or economic system. In fact, the issue of “the meaning of life”, while focusing on the subjectivity of the subjects (before and beyond their religion, nation, language, etc.), is not about the modern idea of an abstract and imaginary human being without nation, language, gender, and color; it is rather about the only possibility of freedom, the only possibility of the subject becoming subject as a rosary thread between all the different material, identitarian, and historical conditions. As a result, it acts like an anchor or lifeline through which the subjects can pull themselves out of stagnation in the swamp caused by prioritizing second-rate issues, and indeed through this perspective, return to those issues again and even provide creative, committed, and fair solutions for those who have not chosen fighting and are stuck in that swamp to

enable them surmount their issues. Accusing such fighting subject of political passivity or ethnic-gender disregard and the like is, however, the easiest way to avoid confrontation with the core problem and distort the meaning of fighting. And, of course, it is the best excuse for stagnating and fumbling endlessly and in vain in these plural swamps.

It is only here, after such effort, that we can talk of “hope”. The issue here is not the fulfillment of people's wishes, but precisely the “possibility of hope” itself. Although in this system from the beginning it was a kind of hopefulness that pushed the fight forward, but as was acknowledged before, this fight is a fight at the height of hopelessness. And what strength it takes to fight at the same time that we acknowledge such degree of hopelessness, desperation, and astonishment?! Only now, after the publication of this work in which the audience’s imagination is summoned, can we talk about the possibility of hope, as the outcome of confronting a comprehensive theoretical and practical system of allegories, criticizing it and recognizing, extracting, and awakening its possibilities. Hope for the creation of new possibilities which make the very living of the subjects meaningful, in the fleeting opportunity of the now which is as long as eternity: that is, the possibility that one, despite having lost the head, could perhaps in that very moment make yet another move³.

³ As *Hagakure, The book of the Samurai* puts it: “Even if one’s head were to be suddenly cut off, he should be able to do one more action with certainty.” —Trans. note.