



cutting through complexity™

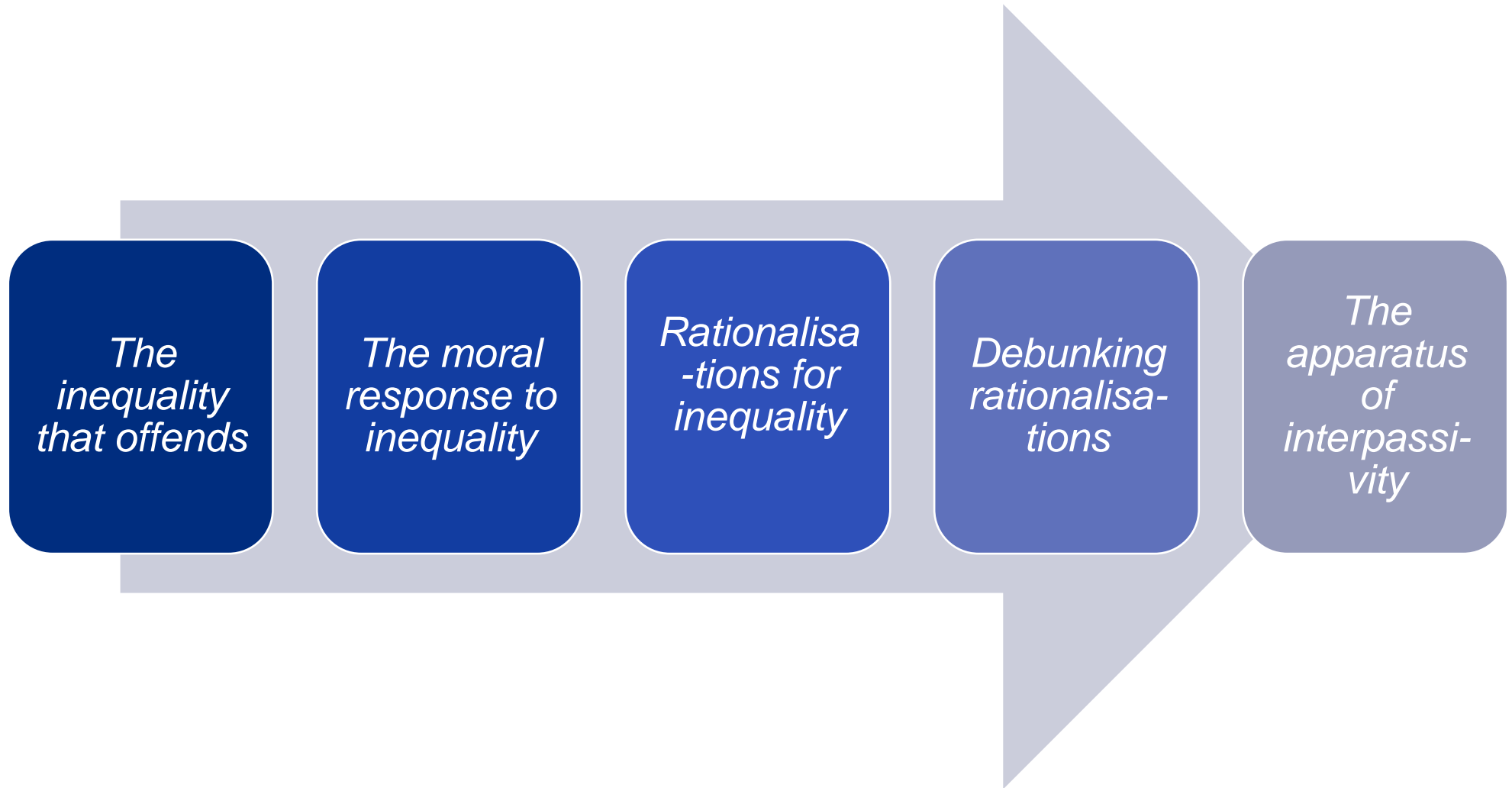
Why the world is still unequal

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Agenda



The inequality that offends

Morally undesirable inequality

1. Economic
2. A relative judgement
3. Lower vs higher end

Preliminary definition:

The unequal distribution of exchange capacity and material security in such a way that some people suffer from it, and are unable to attain 'the good life'

The moral response

The moral response

- Addressing inequality needs no rational motivation

To say that obligations 'happen' is to say that obligation is not anything that I have brought about, not anything I have negotiated, but rather something that happens to me. Obligations do not ask for my consent. Obligation is not like a contract that I have signed after having had a chance first to review it carefully and to have consulted my lawyer. It is not anything I have agreed to be a party to. It binds me.

Obligation calls, and it calls for justice, but the caller in the call is not identifiable, decidable. I cannot make it out. I cannot say that the call is the voice of God, or of Pure Practical Reason, or of a social contract 'we' have all signed, or a trace of the form of the Good stirring in our souls or the trace of the Most High. I do not deny that these very beautiful hypotheses of ethics would make obligation safe, but my impiety is that I do not believe that obligation is safe.

(Caputo, 1993:7; 15)

The rationalisations of inequality

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1. Inequality is the outcome of fundamental economic freedoms.
2. Inequality in holdings is the result of differences in "merit", "talent" or "skill".
3. Inequality serves society as a whole by capitalising on the by-products (wealth and opportunities) of self-interested behaviour.

The rationalisations of inequality

- Culminates in "scandalous" attitudes:

"Am I getting paid on a fair basis for what I'm having to deal with in this company? Must I run this company and deal with all this nonsense for nothing? I'm at work. I'm not on strike. I'm not demanding to be paid what I'm not worth," Mr Griffith said.

'F* the poor!' is the message from a top executive at African Bank**

The apparatus of interpassivity

Žižek on ideology

- No longer: *"They do not know, and yet they are doing it."*
- Today: Enlightened false consciousness – *"They know very well what they are doing, but still, they are doing it"*

Interpassivity

- The problem of "illusions without owners".
- The required attitude or conviction is realised through external agents.

Analogy 1: The Tibetan Prayer Wheel



...the wheel itself is praying for me, instead of me – or, more precisely, I myself am praying through the medium of the wheel. The beauty of it is that in my psychological interior I can think about whatever I want, I can yield to the most dirty and obscene fantasies, and it does not matter because – to use a good old Stalinist expression – whatever I am thinking, objectively I am praying.

(Žižek, 1989:34)

Analogy 1: Horseshoes and evil spirits



Conclusion

Task 1: Obligation's Poet

- Debunk rationalisations

Task 2: Revived public realm

Task 3: Experiment with new bases for interpassivity

- Insatiability versus an assumed point of material comfort for attaining "the good life"
- Individuals as self-interested utility maximisers versus range of motivations
- Markets are stable and efficient versus markets need help

New routines

- Cap executive pay
- Cap advertising budget
- Progressive tax, estate tax
- Having Remuneration and Audit Committees reporting to Social & Ethics Committees

Questions





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