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Critical Steps towards a Creative Public Sphere for an Actually Existing American Democracy

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By

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Spelman College, B.A., 2001
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An Abstract of
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Starting with the democratic practice of neighborhood community building, in this work I argue that the public as the space of politics must also involve a space for the public creation of forms of life and not just the public as problem-solving entity, the check and balance of existing political forms or a sphere of political contest. This claim is supported by interrogating the importance of the concepts of space and place in political theory and the relationship of these terms to our considerations of social justice. I consider the positive function the ideal of a public sphere can play in a political theory that seeks to create new possibilities for political subjectivity while keeping in mind the often overlooked concept of place.

Using diverse resources from contemporary American political and social philosophy, feminism and theories of geography, I argue that most political theory with currency in our classrooms and academic debates has not met the challenge of democracy and the public sphere because of the tendency to separate notions of freedom from notions of equality. Beginning as a critique and diagnosis of our current political situation, both philosophically and practically, in the end several suggestions are made concerning possible sites of change.

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Introduction: On the Public Sphere

Be it the left or the right of academic political theories, the majority of our current efforts call themselves democracy. These theories with their oft-competing claims and prescriptions mark out of their differences using adjectives such as aggregative, deliberative, communicative, liberal and radical. Whatever the qualifier, they all purport to be forms of democracy. Just what these theories have in common to warrant the classification democracy is a point of continual debate. One element each of these democracies posits as essential is *the public*. If we follow the line of thought of the proponents of these theories, the basic question of what constitutes the public sphere is integral. Whether conceptualized as real or ideal, multiple or singular, agonistic or consensual, democratic politics and all the theories which hang their hats on its rack count the public as either something that already exists or must exist for democracy to be effective. In order for politics to exist, there must be a public.

Theories of the public and democracy can be grouped into three categories. First, there is the liberal democratic view of the public, as a sphere of voluntary social association. Second, there is the communicative democratic view of the public as being a space of rational deliberation about political problems. And lastly, there is the radical democratic view of the public as a sphere of agonism where subjects attempt to assert themselves and their worldviews. Although I borrow heavily from these theories, in this work I argue that the public as the space of politics must also involve a space for the public creation of forms of life and not just the public as problem-solving entity, the check and balance of existing political forms or a sphere of political contest. In this project, I investigate the different forms of democracy and their publics in the hopes of theorizing towards a creative public sphere. I consider the positive function the ideal of a public sphere (or spheres) can play in a political theory that seeks to create new possibilities for political subjectivity.

I find my impetus in wanting to theorize about the public from practices that are already happening in the social context of the United States. Since the mid 1980's there has been a large movement in public policy practice and social initiatives often grouped together under the name of *community building*. These practices and initiatives are largely neighborhood based, collaborative efforts between governments (both local, state and national), non-profit organizations, neighborhood interest groups and philanthropic foundations. Their aim is to use community assets in poor and wealthy, rural and urban areas-alike in order to "build community" and in many cases redress social problems. Studied by political scientists and urban planners, these efforts have been analyzed for their effectiveness in solving the problems they set out to ameliorate (which are largely economic in character), their creation of new social relationships and institutions, as well as their sustainability. But rarely have the key underlying assumptions about what the desire to build community means been analyzed. The goal of this project is not to give a social psychology of American community builders; rather it is to relate this national phenomenon to several of the crucial problems of political philosophy today.

Community-building efforts are indicative of a desire for greater political participation on the part of interested individuals who are creating new public spheres. This desire to be a part of the governing process of one's own life and what that might mean are philosophical issues. They are philosophical because they concern claims about the nature of the good life and the political structures that might support it. Much of the community building literature advances the position that government attempts to address issues of poverty, education and job opportunities have been largely ineffective.[1] Large segments of the population live in conditions that they find below optimum and have lost faith in the government's ability or inclination to help them. The literature explains the nature of "devastation" in urban and rural communities and laments the economic and social status of the residents of those areas.[2] Community building can be charted as yet another strategy along a long line of modern American efforts at rethinking political practices. There is no lack of literature about the merits, goals and ideal of citizen participation. But what seems to have shifted in this new era of participation is that the desire to participate has far less to do with securing voter or constitutional rights and exercising them. In fact, it could be said that the shift was a shift down and away from participation in national government to participation and self-direction of individuals in smaller, more localized units. This is an important development for any American political theorist to consider. Why the desire for locality?

The practitioners of community building are not attempting to secede from the Union. They do not desire to overthrow the American representative democracy or live in separatist communes. Perhaps they do not think such moves are possible or desirable. What they have done instead is left the bureaucracy of American government in place and attempted to overlay it with new forms of politics at the levels of neighborhoods and cities, smaller units that seem to offer more opportunity for political subjectivity, if individuals choose to exercise that power. Just how effective such a shift is, is a matter to be debated.

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[1] Cf. R. Gregory Bourne. "Community Problem Solving and the Challenge of American Democracy." National Civic Review, vol. 88, no.3., Fall 1999.

[2] Cf. Peter Medoff and Holly Sklar. *Streets of Hope: The Fall and Rise of an Urban Neighborhood.* Boston: South End Press, 1994.

Inspired by these two interrelated phenomenon, the American problem of individual political participation and the political potential of localized community building, my project concerns the political subjectivity of individuals in our current social situation and possible sites of change. It is my contention that most political theory that has currency in our classrooms and academic debates has not met the challenge of democracy and the public sphere as they relate to our current situation.

There are several foundational assumptions of my thinking about political subjectivity. I am committed to the ideal of political equality and the notion that social and political change should be on the agenda for all of us who believe in equality. That means that I work with the idea of an end in mind. That I can imagine a utopia where we are all equal and can exercise meaningful control over our own lives and destinies. That said, I am no dreamer and realize that there are dangers to such utopian thinking. In particular, what may be my heaven might be someone else’s hell. There may be unforeseen consequences to my grand dreams that would end in dominations and oppressions I have not considered. However, unlike many a poststructuralist, who shared this worry of dominations unknown, and thus shied away from positing future goals for society, I have decided that such goals are necessary to the endeavor and that they must be there if we are to advocate any change at all.

I see this task as a sort of “visionary pragmatism.” Patricia Hill Collins takes up this term from James and Busia[3] in her *Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice* in her discussion of the efforts of Black women in the community in which she grew up who attempted to instill in her hopes for a better future while preparing her for a hostile world which would not easily be changed. She writes,

> The notion of visionary pragmatism more closely approximates a creative tension symbolized by an ongoing journey. Arriving at some predetermined destination remains less important that struggling for some ethical end. Thus, although Black women’s visionary pragmatism points to a vision, it doesn’t prescribe a fixed end point of a universal truth. One never arrives but constantly strives. At the same time, by stressing the pragmatic, it reveals how current actions are part of some larger, more meaningful struggle. Domination succeeds by cutting people off from one another. Actions bring people in touch with the humanity of other struggles by demonstrating that truthful and ethical visions for community cannot be separated from pragmatic struggles on their behalf.[4]

Striving for the political end of equality is the goal of this work. I do not presume that we will ever agree on what that equality entails nor will we ever reach consensus about what politics should be or how individuals ought to act, but I do not find attempts at thinking about these things mere thought experiments. I believe the adage that all living is an experiment and requires us to debate and contend with the world and each other over what that means and what it may come to mean. What follows are a series of attempts to think through contemporary political philosophy pertinent to understanding the public sphere and assess its limits and possibilities. The importance of the chosen thinkers and topics for this task are explained in each chapter. Each chapter builds upon those that precede it but can also stand alone.

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[3] James, Stanley and Abena P.A. Busia, editors. *Theorizing Black Feminisms: The Visionary Pragmatism of Black Women.* London: Routledge, 1993. From the introduction, “Black feminists are simultaneously envisioning incremental changes and radical transformations not only within Black communities but throughout the broader society as well. Ultimately, the humanistic visionary pragmatism of theorizing by Black Feminist seeks the establishment of just societies where human rights are implemented with respect and dignity even as the world’s resources are equitably distributed in ways that encourage individual autonomy and development.” 3.

[4] Collins, Patricia Hill. *Fighting Words: Black Feminist Thought and the Fight for Social Justice. p. 189-190*

In Chapter One, I pose the problem of the public in light of two paradigmatic philosophical debates – liberalism versus communitarianism, and redistribution versus recognition. Using wide-ranging resources in contemporary philosophy, concerning the nature of freedom, the limits of rights and the importance of social recognition, I claim that our contemporary political philosophy often neglects many of the democratic practices that happen in the United States and argue that the practitioners of community building offer us a new lens with which to look at our theories of democratic participation. I end the chapter with methodological considerations.

In Chapter Two, I use the influential work *The Public and Its Problems* of American pragmatist philosopher John Dewey to clarify the "problem of the public." Dewey was concerned that the public of his time was ill equipped to make good decisions that would reflect the common good and sought to address ways that the "people" could move from being a discordant mass to a Great Community. I consider what has been called Dewey's democratic faith in light of his diagnosis of the problem of the public sphere. Dewey offers us several inroads toward our vision of a creative public sphere with widened possibilities of political subjectivity for individuals when he articulates the necessity of the local and an experimental approach to politics. However, I argue Dewey's conception of the scientific attitude, his naiveté about the effectiveness of communication and his neglect of power relations require us to keep searching for a theory of the public that begins to live up to our ideal.

My engagement with Dewey leads to the consideration of the work of Hannah Arendt in Chapter Three. Theorists tend to read Arendt's work as a suggestive whole, seeking to join her essays, books, and speeches into a unified theoretical frame. Instead of taking that approach, I restrict my points of encounter with Arendt to two of her major works, *The Human Condition* and *On Revolution.*[5] The first is Arendt's sustained treatment of the nature of politics and political subjectivity, the latter, her historical consideration of the direct democracy found in what she terms "revolutionary council politics." I offer an interpretation of the Arendtian self and political actor. Arendt proposes a narrative conception of identity. According to Arendt, the self is actually multiple and that stability of self is only achieved through the stories that others tell of us. Arendt's conception of narrative identity relies upon a problematic public/private distinction. Arendt sets up an exclusionary public that has dire implications for equality even as she poses politics as the realm of freedom. Liberal philosophers have argued that freedom should be the highest aim of politics, while other thinkers, such as communitarians, have set the liberal freedom of individuals against the ideal of equality. Must the two ideals be opposed? Throughout this dissertation the problem of the longstanding theoretical disconnect between freedom and equality will be considered. Arendt offers the first encounter with this problem. Although, *On Revolution* does not satisfy our attempts to find an egalitarian public sphere, it does highlight localized direct democracy and the possibility it affords for a widened political subjectivity.

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[5] Hannah Arendt. *On Revolution.* New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1963. And, Hannah Arendt. *The Human Condition.* Second Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

In Chapter Four, seeking out this political subjectivity and the hope for societal transformation a creative public would require, I turn to the work of Michel Foucault. I use Foucault's analyses of the subjectivation of the individual to deepen the understanding of the social construction of identity used within this dissertation. Interrogating Foucault's useful, but limited, notion of subjectivation, I consider the theory in light of contemporary accounts of autonomy and agency paying particular attention to the appropriation of Foucault by feminists in debates about autonomy and politics. Although creation and imagination figure largely in Foucault's work, I will argue that Foucault's negative, reactionary politics does not give us grounds for a satisfying political subjectivity. I make this claim against those feminists and democracy theorists who have appropriated the later Foucault's ethics of the self and its commitment to resistance and transgression as a politics, in particular, because it cannot adequately account for transformative political projects.

Exploring the relationship between recent geographical thinking about place and identity in juxtaposition with theories of subjectivity in recent feminist theory occasion Chapter Five. Theories of the self and subjectivity especially in relation to group membership and political possibility must be further complicated by adding location to the string of recognized markers – sex, gender, class, ethnicity, race and the like. I demonstrate that location is the remainder in popular theories of positionality, standpoint and intersectionality, and hybridity. Returning to one of the major claims of this dissertation, I assert that geography and individual participation offer us inroads to theorizing about a more just politics inspired by theories of radical democracy, thus setting up the concluding chapter where the focus is on the necessity of practical visions of local politics for increased opportunities for justice.

In conclusion, I argue that questions of justice in relation to freedom and equality are the most substantial questions of this project. I pose the problem of pluralism as the major difficulty for justice and end not by solving the problem but by using the insight of the foregoing investigations, suggesting several potential moves towards a creative sphere for an actually existing American democracy that center on the local participatory geography of individuals.

Chapter One: Paradigmatic Claims and Democratic Practices

I. The Demand for a Creative Public Sphere

While it can be said that political philosophers rarely agree on anything explicitly, implicitly democracy theorists have come to agree on at least one thing, that the public is a necessary condition of democracy[6]. Attempting to match our theory with our current politics and making suggestions for future politics, democracy theorists have offered unsatisfying conceptualizations of the public that must be expanded to include claims for widened political subjectivity. Current, under-theorized political claims demand what I will call a *creative public sphere* and call for a visionary pragmatic approach to democracy theory and the practice of democracy itself.

In this chapter, I will begin by sketching out some of the more popular political claims democracy theorists try to address. This is by no means a comprehensive summary of all of the political claims treated by contemporary democratic philosophers, rather it is a survey of the political claims that have held pride of place in the debates about democracy over the last century. I will consider three types of claims: liberal claims of civil rights and the communitarian claims that counter them, claims of redistribution, and claims of recognition. The reason analyzing these claims remains important is because they serve as limiting concepts to what we think of when we think about legitimate politics. After presenting these paradigmatic political claims, I will present a set of political practices happening in neighborhoods, cities and towns that do not easily match on to the traditional claims and assert that they necessitate we rethink the nature of politics. Finally, I will present my methodological framework as the path through the current debate and toward a theory of the creative public sphere that is the ultimate goal of this work.

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[6] Cf. Nancy Fraser. "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing American Democracy." *Social Text.* No. 25/26 (1990) pp. 56-80 and George Marcus and Russell Hanson, eds. *Reconsidering the Democratic Public.* University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993.

II. Rights, Redistribution and Recognition: Reordering Political Claims

Two debates monopolize American political philosophy. The first is at least as old as modern political thought, and the second emerged soon thereafter. Following conventions in the literature, let us call the first the liberal-communitarian debate and the second the redistribution-recognition debate. These two debates set the limits of our political theory. They have become hegemonic and any attempt to think about the nature of politics without first dealing with the import of these two debates is weak theory at best and at worst incomprehensible. In an effort to make our inquiry into the possibility of a creative public sphere intelligible, we must first assess these paradigmatic political claims and attempt to push the limits of our current thought.

A. Liberalism vs. Communitarianism

Much of philosophy is carried out dichotomously. Either this thing or that, this concept or that, this theory or that. Few positions are seen as a suitable middle ground, this is especially true in political philosophy. The liberal-communitarian debate has taken several forms. It had been viewed as the debate between the right over the good, negative liberty versus positive liberty, and even individual versus community. Liberals, in all of their different shades, color in their political pictures with individuals, rights, and freedom from state sponsored coercion (negative liberty).[7] And communitarians in their varying forms draw maps with the importance of communal life and ethical governing based upon principles (positive liberty) as the bold strokes that should make up our politics. In the case of liberalism and communitarianism, only a few have had hopes of reconciling the two without doing away with what either side believes to be essential. This is ironic considering the fact that at this historical juncture the majority of practitioners of both claims to be advancing types of democracy theory. In fact it is often in the name of democracy that each criticizes the other. The dichotomy set up here between thinkers of a communitarian bent and those who profess liberalism is not my own, in the sense that I step into a conversation that has already begun. Others have drawn the lines. As will be evident throughout my consideration of the debate much of what is considered oppositional need not be. In this section I will clarify the demands each side makes in the name of their form of democracy and how, without losing its critical force, communitarianism should be joined to our normative liberal democratic theory.[8] I present this as a necessary but not sufficient step toward the goal of this work.

What we recognize as forbearer of today's liberalism can be traced back to the rise of modern political thought. If we are to follow what I find to be a convincing history of ideas, John Locke, with less influential others, initiated the concept of individual rights that permeates our current liberalism. These rights became the foundation for the American democracy. Our Bill of Rights stands as testament to their longevity. The rhetoric of rights and constitutional interpretation reign in both our political talk and legislative actions. Although there may be some disagreement about what a liberal politics may look like, there can be very little disagreement about what has priority in liberal politics.

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[7] The terms negative and positive liberty are taken from the work of Isaiah Berlin. *Four Essays on Liberty*. London: Oxford University Press, 1969. These concepts are given a fuller treatment below.

[8] There may be some question to whether a "normative liberal democratic theory" remains a form of liberalism or should be classified under some other name. Such a concern is left for others to decide, as I am happy to leave it underdetermined.

For the democrat of liberal tenor, the freedom of the individual is of the highest priority. What freedom entails is a contentious subject. It is most often theorized in two ways that fit into concepts that can be attributed to the work of liberal Isaiah Berlin. Berlin's two concepts of freedom, positive and negative, are competing ideas of freedom.[9] According to Berlin, the properly liberal freedom is negative. It is the freedom from coercion and outside interference. On this reading, individuals are free only in so far as they are allowed to live their private lives in ways that are not prescribed by any authority other than their own and that in so living they are allowed to make choices about the content of that life without interference from other subjects. Berlin argues that negative freedom as 'freedom from' sets the individual's rights to a self directed life over and above any emphasis on a substantive good life grounded in community.

Theorists, who claim that the ends of government involve the support and adherence to some sort of ethical life or version of the good, are on Berlin's account, involved in a totally different project than that of the liberal. In the class of the nonliberal others, Berlin groups Hegel, Marx, Herder and Kant.[10] These theorists ascribe to a version of freedom that Berlin calls positive freedom, which is really no freedom at all. They may be concerned with questions of justice or equality but in the final analysis, freedom is always an individual's freedom from external coercion. "Everything is what it is: liberty is liberty, not equality or fairness or justice or culture, or human happiness or a quiet conscience."[11] Berlin argues that positive freedom, or freedom to, is connected to a concept of freedom in accordance with rationality. On this view, freedom is the freedom to live in a state where rationality gives the law. This is the tie that binds these theories. Those two giants of Western philosophy Hegel and Kant are bought close to one another by Berlin because in both of their political and ethical philosophies, individuals are only free when they are rational agents who have learned to exercise control of their passions. Supported by well-ordered societies, individuals recognizing the reasonableness of the state will live in a state of harmony with one another.

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[9] Some have posed a third concept of freedom – "the freedom of." This is the freedom of belonging that is treated as an aside in Berlin's seminal essay. Although some have tried to make a distinction, to me this sense of freedom seems like a function of positive freedom and maps on to a kind of claim of recognition, and thus, I am not sure if it should be called a different kind of freedom at all. Recognition claims will be considered in what follows. For a proposal of this third type of freedom, see Cynthia Willett, *Irony in the Age of Empire: Comic Perspectives on Democracy and Freedom*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008.

Berlin criticizes this notion of freedom on two grounds. First, in a society of positive freedom, individuals are not free at all. In having to live in accord with reason, the individual's choices are prescribed and therefore not choices. Individuals will want to do things that do not seem reasonable, even in a weak sense of rationality[12], and these things that they wish to do, will be limited by a society based upon reason. Society will groom its citizens through a moralizing and normalizing education that will require individuals not only to give the law to themselves in the Kantian sense of autonomy but also to one another. Coercion is the mark of a substantial notion of positive freedom. This raises the second problem for Berlin. If reason is the standard, who gets to decide what is rational? In the last hundred years of critical theories of race, gender and class politics, this question has been considered crucial. Berlin argues that in pluralistic society where individuals have different ideas of the good, any claim of a prevailing rationality seems fraught with problems.

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[10] The last of whom is instrumental in current liberal thought, such as that of John Rawls. Many have followed Berlin, however, and rejected the "liberalism" of Kant and by extension Rawls as "illiberal." Cf. Raymond Geuss. "Liberalism and Its Discontents." *Political Theory*. Vol. 30, No. 3.(June 2002), pp. 320-338.

[11] Isaiah Berlin. "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *Four Essays on Liberty.* London: Oxford University Press, 1969. 125.

[12] By a weak sense of rationality I refer to those theories of reason that contend what counts as rationality is socially constructed (hence, could possibly be different) as opposed to those views that hold what is rational is given by some universal, transcending law.

> There can be in principle only one correct way of life; the wise lead it spontaneously, that is why they are called wise. The unwise must be dragged towards it by all the social means in the power of the wise, for why should demonstrable error be suffered to survive and breed? The immature and untutored must be made to say to themselves: ‘Only the truth liberates, and the only way in which I can learn the truth is by doing blindly today, what you, who know it, order me, or coerce me, to do, in the certain knowledge that only thus will I arrive at your clear vision, and be free like you.’[13]

In the theories of positive freedom, self-determination is taken out of the hands of individuals, who may not know and do what is good for them and given to experts. Berlin denies that this is any sort of freedom. Moreover, at many times Berlin claims we may have goals aside from freedom. In situations where what people need is food or protection from imminent danger, we may place other aims higher than freedom. But recall for Berlin, “Everything is what it is: liberty is liberty, not equality or fairness or justice or culture, or human happiness or a quiet conscience.”[14] We will return to Berlin’s hard distinctions between freedom and these other human pursuits throughout our consideration of the nature of politics. Can they be as distinct as he claims? Can freedom be conceived in isolation from justice? Happiness? If any of these are preconditions for freedom, it would seem that a preliminary answer is no.

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[13] Berlin, “Two Concepts,” 152.
[14] Berlin, “Two Concepts,” 125.

Like Berlin, others have also questioned the authoritative view of freedom, as proposed by the rationalists. For critical social theorists that have sought to promote epistemologies that incorporate the productive nature of power relations in what we regard as truth, the question is both “who gets to decide?” and why do they get to decide? In our case, the United States with its vast economic, social and political disparities, the prevailing notion of rationality has been traditionally been built upon these hierarchies and reinforces and creates situations of inequality. Power, knowledge and truth are intimately connected and limit the freedom of individuals based on their race, class, sexuality, gender and ethnicity. Ironically, it is from these same critical theorists that the liberal notion of negative freedom is most ardently criticized. [15]

Critical social theorists[16] are often committed to a notion of the socially constituted self and consequently an idea of communalism that shares many of its criticisms with what is known as communitarianism proper, as proposed by thinkers like Michael Sandel and Alasdair MacIntyre. In what follows, the criticisms of liberalism as expressed by the communitarians and the critical social theorists will be considered and then separated in the end because of the different notions of community or sociality expressed in the theories that can arguably be put at odds with one another.

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[15] Cf. Lucius Outlaw. *Critical Social Theory in the Interests of Black Folks.*Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005. Also, Cornel West. *Keeping Faith : Philosophy and Race in America.* New York : Routledge, 1993.

[16] Critical social theory is a broad term that is used by two groups (that may sometimes overlap but are often distinct and contrary) of theorists. Those who center their analysis on identity groups such as “critical race theorists” and “feminists”, and those who trace their theoretical lineage to the Frankfurt School critical theory of Adorno, Horkheimer, Benjamin, and Marcuse. For both groups concerns of social justice and emanicipatory politics figure largely in their work.

Theorists who argue that the self is socially constituted and is therefore determined by interactions with others (here it can be in the strong or weak sense for now), frequently profess a shared root in Hegel.[17] In accord with this view, selves are developed in and find expression in their communities. Selves are determined in relation to others and this human condition of relationality is the basis of freedom. These theorists contend that what liberal individualism of the sort Berlin expounds does not exist. Individuals are not agents outside of their communities. This is both an oversimplification of the liberal view and, on the interpretation that I will give it here, an oversimplification of the possibilities for selfhood apparent in our everyday living. The communitarians and critical social theorists have made straw men of the autonomous self of the liberal. Autonomy is made out to be an impossibility by communitarians like Michael Sandel.[18] The individual cannot and does not stand outside of her or his relationships with others. Individuals always make choices that are informed and determined by the social structure in which she or he lives. Community and resulting notions of identity are essential to each person. Philosophical liberalism and autonomy theory has an inadequate conception of human activity and motivation.

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[17] In particular, they find the Master/Slave dialectic in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* fertile ground for conceptualizing the self in relation to community. See George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. *Phenomenology of Spirit.* Miller, translator. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979, in particular, the section entitled "Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage," paragraphs 178-190. These paragraphs are also influential in the recognition theories found below.

[18] Cf. Michael Sandel. *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982. Sandel's major claim is that selves are socially constituted. That our community attachments are not merely based on our choices as autonomy theorists say, but that our selves are constituted by socially originated ends that are essential.

Surely as social selves, individuals are educated, nurtured and sustained by the social structure as well as dominated, repressed and spurned. At the same time, individuals act on reasoned motivations, blind duty and whimsy in interaction with other individuals. They are born members, are made members, are ex-communicated and create memberships. At every turn they make choices that affect not only their lives but also the lives of others in the sphere of choice open to them in the society in which they live. Some days they choose to "do nothing," which is in itself a choice. Other days they strike out and attempt to do something novel. Any way one puts it, individuals interact with one another and the environment (both built and natural) in which they live. Theories of liberal autonomy that recognize this mess of interactions and reactions, and just plain old actions, survive the communitarian critique of individualism.

Consider the critiques of liberal individualism from critical race theory and feminism. Together many of the theories offered from these two camps mount an important critique of the rational individual found in classical liberalism where all of the autonomous individuals are white, European, heterosexual male normativized. The valorized character traits of the authentic, autonomous individual align (by no mistake) with the traits opposite the binary of the minority, the poor, the female and the non-white in the public imaginary and scientific discourse created and perpetuated in a state of inequality. These I think are valid critiques of the Kantian self.

Further, selves are embedded in social networks and the lack of attention into the sort of social networks selves are a part of and can create in our society has been a limitation of liberal theory. Consider feminist ethics of care. According this position, theories of autonomy do not allow for the possibility of considering the value of work and nurturing done within what has traditionally been known as the private sphere. What has traditionally been seen privatized “women’s work,” is relegated to the inessential when it comes to self-constitution and political import. A little bit of people watching and even less psychology suggests that this must be a false view. Communities of care, according to some feminists, are communities that show the interdependency of members. These theories contend that through relationships of nurturing and friendship subjects are made into selves and it is through interdependency that agency, which is to be distinguished from autonomy is founded.[19]

The desire to throw out the good of autonomy which emphasizes the importance of personal power to leave unjust situations and the right of bodily sanctity because the first theories of autonomy expounded by the Enlightenment thinkers and supplemented by the American revolutionaries overlooked the implications of these principles by excluding those at the periphery, is just wrong. What liberals have called “the right to exit,” is essential to feminism and critical race theory.[20] This right of individuals to disengage from the associations and life roles that they are a part of must be a part of any theory that seeks to enlarge equality and freedom. It is this right to exit that should realign these progressive theories with a more liberal program and recommends liberal democracy over communitarianism.[21]

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[19] For the seminal work in care ethics, see Carol Gilligan. *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.

[20] The ‘right to exit’ is treated in depth in Chapter 6.

[21] While it may seem like I am making a strong case for “liberal democracy,” what I really want to make a case for is a notion of democracy that protect the interests, needs and desires of individuals as political actors as opposed to any particular brand of liberalism.

In her essay, "Autonomy and the Social Self," Linda Barclay defends a notion of relational, procedural autonomy as a viable option for feminists.[22] She discourages a strong connection between feminism and communitarianism because she argues that communitarianism is tied too closely to ideas of social determinism and tradition that work against feminist goals. She criticizes the communitarianism of Michael Sandel and Alasdair MacIntyre as counterproductive to feminist conceptions of the social self. She writes,

> Although it is undoubtedly the case that certain moral and political theories presuppose an individualistic conception of the self, it is not plausible to suggest that the concept of autonomy itself presupposes such a conception of the self... According to most procedural accounts of autonomy, a person's choices must be procedurally independent, rather than substantively independent...It is consistent with a procedural account that an autonomous person may be motivated above all by a sense of solidarity or attachment to various people, causes, or communities...a person's individual autonomy is not threatened by a deep attachment to other people and thus there is no reason to suspect that there is an incompatibility between autonomy and the motivationally social self...Nevertheless, although autonomy is not threatened by enduring attachments and the motivation to further the interests of others, the converse doe not necessarily hold: the exercise of individual autonomy may threaten certain relationships to particular others. [23]

The resolution of the debate between liberalism and communitarianism has to be one in which individuals are empowered to make autonomous choices. The assumption of political equality and freedom requires that any solution to the problem of the individual's relationship to the community must protect those that are different and minority. In the remainder of this section, I will address possible solutions to this problem and then in the next, I will complicate these solutions by considering the claims for recognition and economic redistribution that have often come coupled with concerns about justice for the different and minority.

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[22] Linda Barclay. "Autonomy and the Social Self," in *Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, Agency, and the Social Self.* Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar, editors. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

[23] Barclay, "Autonomy and the Social Self," 60.

Solutions to the liberalism versus communitarian debate that intend to either sublate one into the other or join the two in some equal coalition of opposites offer interesting insight into the problem of a creative public sphere. What is most compelling about these attempted solutions is that they elucidate the problem of the paradigmatic political claims even if this not what they attempted to do. In fact, what these solutions do is make apparent the limits of how we think of politics and suggest ways that we may push our current theory to adequately widen the arena of political subjectivity. The solutions that come closest to meeting this criteria are the one championed by Michael Walzer that asserts communitarian concerns are "just" necessary critiques internal to liberalism itself and Albrecht Wellmer's explanation that conflates the two by contending that what really happens is that our communal life has become liberal normative and therefore our communalist tendencies take on a certain character.

Michael Walzer makes an analogy between communitarianism and the pleats in pants. It is a trend that comes in and out of fashion as a critique of liberalism, much like the pleats, which every few seasons recur in trousers. He writes, "No communitarian critique, however, penetrating, will ever be anything more than an inconstant feature of liberalism."[24] Communtarianism in any sense other than as a critique of liberalism is not an option on our political horizon for Walzer. Our society is "unsettled." Mobility is the marker of our times. The possibilities of migration and the plurality of our ends defeat the communitarian project for Walzer. [25]Along those lines instead of taking communitarian claims for robust, normative forms of life based in shared culture seriously, he only considers their use as critiques of liberalism. Walzer maintains the in-common that communitarians want no longer exists for us and that it is only their critiques that are interesting. Walzer is not inimical to all claims of social connection. Walzer separates social democracy from communitarianism. Social democracy and liberalism on his view can coexist and together because it is possible to pursue collective ends and promote forms of social identity and defend the liberal rights that are foundation of liberalism. Walzer argues that liberalism can accommodate social concerns by supporting local government and eschewing the traditional liberal view that government must be neutral.[26]

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[24] Michael Walzer. *Politics and Passion: Toward a More Egalitarian Liberalism.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004, 142.

Walzer contends that communitarians mount two types of critiques against liberalism. One against liberalism as it is practiced and the other against liberal theory. Walzer argues that both of the criticisms cannot be right, either we really are, in "practice," liberal, ahistorical individuals or we are communal social selves that liberals fail to theorize about correctly. While each contains some truth, what is true in one rebuts the truth of other.[27]

On the one hand, communitarians accuse liberalism of the denigration of communal life. Communitarians like Alasdair MacIntyre lament the loss of morality signified by the fragmented world created by liberalism. [28]

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[25] Walzer, *Politics and Passion,* 148.

[26] Walzer, *Politics and Passion,* 161. Walzer believes the key to understanding community for the liberal must be through voluntary association. I consider his thought in more detail in Chapter 6.

[27] Walzer, *Politics and Passion*, 143.

[28] Cf. Alasdair MacIntyre. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981.

> Liberalism tells the truth about the asocial society that liberals create – not, in fact, ex nihilo, as they theory suggests, but in a struggle against traditions and communities and authorities that are forgotten as soon as they are escaped, so that liberal practices seem to have no history. Men and women in liberal society no longer have access to a single moral culture within which they can learn how they out to live...We liberals are free to choose, and we have a right to choose, but we have no criteria to govern our choices except our own wayward understanding of our wayward interests and desires...Liberal society, seen in the life of this first communitarian critique, is fragmentation in practice; and community is the exact opposite, the home of coherence, connection, and narrative capacity.[29]

This accusation, that liberalism as a practice has effectively desocialized individuals is fraught with problems even before we consider Walzer's second point. First, if we agree with Barclay that "even the most autonomous person's identity is always mediated to some extent by community," this criticism does not tempt us away from liberal individualism as it is understood as a form of relational autonomy.[30] Rather, not being bound to a particular universal moral code offers liberating possibilities. My different communities socialize me, but no one of these communities constitutes me fully. In fact, the very conciousness of membership in communities that are disputed and underdetermining goes a long way to refuting any strong sense of communitarianism.[31] Struggles against prevailing norms are not ahistorical and norms themselves are not forgotten. Struggles occur in context. Our "narrative capacity" maybe disrupted but it is not completely disregarded, it cannot be. Every attempt to understand our rebellion against tradition requires acknowledgement of shared meaning, if only epistemologically.

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[29] Walzer, *Politics and Passion,* 143-145.

[30] Barclay, "Autonomy and the Social Self", 64.

[31] Later in this chapter I will begin to argue for a notion of community as the space of politics that diverges from the definition of community offered by communitarians who assume that groups and communities are based in a hereditary notion of the in-common and emphasize likeness and survival of the group or community as a good above and beyond what individual members desire.

Individuals may be planted in terms too shallow for the communitarians, but it just makes no sense to talk about rootless individuals.

This brings us to Walzer's second communitarian critique of liberalism. Liberal theory gets life all wrong. For all of its talk of individual autonomy, liberalism neglects the fact that we are all part of communities, that our values and relationships are not merely voluntary or contractual. Walzer maintains, "The burden of the second critique is that the deep structure of even liberal society is communitarian."[32] Liberals have misconstrued the sociality of individuals. As stated before even in our struggles against tradition, we are inherently rooted in communities. Habits, traditions, languages, and institutions structure our lives. No individual is capable of living outside of these structures and remaining intelligible.[33]Taken at face value, the communitarians and I seem to agree. However, the problem with this criticism is that it takes its anthropological presuppositions too far. My disagreement about the nature of community and identity will be treated in fuller detail in what follows.

I agree with Walzer, these two critiques can't both be true. The truth of one cancels out the truth of the other. Either we are the individuals detached from one another and have no shared traditions or, we are not detached and are by our very natures made by our identities in communities and therefore the first argument is wrong and liberalism has not won after all. Either we are no longer communal or we are inherently communal, so Walzer says. His solution is a denial of the premises of the debate. The types of communities that the communitarians want no longer exist. Walzer cautions,

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[32] Walzer, *Politics and Passion*, 147.

[33] This is a version of the Wittgenstinian argument against a private language. See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*. 3rd edition. G.E.M. Anscombe, translator. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001.

"Nothing is waiting; American communitarians have to recognize that there is no one out there but separated, rights-bearing, voluntarily associating, free speaking, liberal selves. It would be a good thing, though, if we could teach those selves to know themselves as social beings, the historical products of, and in part the embodiments of, liberal values."[34] Unfortunately, Walzer does not offer much of an explanation on what it might mean to say that we are these separated beings that are produced by liberal values. Walzer does not tell the historical story of how it is the case liberal values have become hegemonic nor does he flesh out it means to call liberal values a productive force. His analysis of institutions.

Enter Albrecht Wellmer's solution to the liberal communitarian debate. It is both the one that reconciles the two most effectively and holds the most promise for this project. Wellmer argues that positive and negative freedoms require one another in our current political situation. Against the separation Berlin postulates, Wellmer contends that liberalism and its foe communitarianism are cut from the same cloth. He wishes to integrate communitarianism into liberalism. Expanding on the view of Michael Walzer previously mentioned, Wellmer argues,

> A communitarian corrective is built into the liberal tradition, since liberal values themselves require a great deal of democratic participation, which is to say that they are dependent on a democratic form of "ethical life" (*Sittlichkeit*), to borrow Hegel's term. But just as liberal values depend on democratic participation, so too does modern democracy depend on individual rights. Democracy is both a liberal and communitarian project; the modern idea of democracy signifies a communitarian form of practice that "lives up" to the liberal notion of individual rights.[35]

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[34] Walzer, *Politics and Passion*, 154.

[35] Albrecht Wellmer. *Endgames: The Irreconcilable Nature of Modernity, Essays and Lectures.* David Midgley, translator. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998, 44.

Wellmer denies the distinction between the right and good that is said to distinguish positive communitarian projects from negative liberal projects. Liberalism for all of its emphasis on rights has produced a notion of the good. To be self-determined, self-directed and to participate and even refrain from participating necessitates that one has a concept of the good. Whereas reason turned Kantian and Hegelian notions of negative freedom based upon rights into positive freedom, the liberal rights have created the foundations for democracy. “Negative freedom – in the sense of a universalist institutionalization of abstract right – is the precondition of communal freedom in the modern world to the same degree as it is also the condition under which individuals have a right not to be fully rational.”[36] Democracy is liberalism normativized.

Wellmer’s solution is novel in that he has joined those two opposing forces. To satisfy the liberals such as Berlin and Walzer, he concedes that what is the priority for our politics is the negative liberties of individuals. To allay the worries of the more communalist thinkers, who contend that we need some common normative force in order to structure our lives, he converts negative freedom into the basis for a shared end amongst our personal ends. Wellmer declares that negative freedom when it becomes normative becomes its own objective and politics is the widening of the sphere of this freedom.[37] Thus, rights, justice, freedom, even collectivity are all tied up in a politics that sets the priority of individual freedom at its center.[38]

B. Redistribution vs. Recognition

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[36] Wellmer, *Endgames*, 24.

[37] Wellmer, *Endgames*, 34.

[38] Radical Democracy theorists such as Chantal Mouffee offer a similar position. See Chapter 6 below.

Wellmer's solution to the liberal/communitarian debate clearly shows the overlap of that debate with another ongoing debate in political philosophy that is characterized by a third type of claim – claims of justice, that can be divided into two prevailing types of claims – claims of recognition and claims of redistribution. Justice in this debate figures centrally whereas in the previous debate discussed, equality and freedom were the locusts of concern. The nature of just relations to one another may be seen as a notion that must be handled in the foregoing debate but in the considerations that follow, justice becomes the organizing principle of politics and that has a different affect on the sort of claims that can be made. Liberal normativity is questioned when recognition claims are made. Are there some rights, duties, privileges that must take into account the nature of groups that the liberal emphasis on individuals miss?

In his seminal essay, "The Politics of Recognition," Charles Taylor incites the debate with the strong claim that "Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being."[39] Alex Honneth makes an even stronger claim about what misrecognition or non-recognition means politically, he argues, "What subjects expect of society is above all recognition of their identity claims."[40] These are claims about self-esteem, honor, dignity and authentic selves, as well as, the group identity and the correlate claims of group esteem, respect and authenticity. Honneth, Taylor and others, who argue for the validity of recognition claims, use philosophy and psychoanalysis to argue that identity is dialogical and formed on the basis of interactions with others.[41] Here I will consider the political nature of these claims and leave the truth of the psychological nature of these claims for the reader to decide. Robust psychoanalysis is fraught with problems. It is possible to infer much about our human condition through our actions and interactions without referring to the personal internal states preferred by such analyses. Desire as expressed through action is what is of concern. The depth of that desire and its roots in a self with drives of any kind, conscious or unconscious, will be given a minimal treatment. That said, we can consider the politics that are practiced and social identities as they are expressed without psychoanalysis.[42]

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[39] Charles Taylor. "The Politics of Recognition." in *Multiculturalism*. Amy Guttmann, editor. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, 25.

[40] Nancy Fraser, and Alex Honneth. *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange.* Golb, Ingram, and Wilke, editors. London: Verso, 2003, 131.

Taylor arranges the "politics of equal recognition" into two conflicting politics that play out in the public sphere, the politics of universalism and the politics of identity. The difference between the two is as follows,

> With the politics of equal dignity (universalism), what is established is meant to be universally the same, an identical basket of rights and immunities, with the politics of difference, what we are asked to recognize is the unique identity of this individual or group, their distinctness from everyone else. [43]
>
> And further,
>
> The principle of equal respect of requires that we treat people in a difference-blind fashion. The fundamental intuition that humans command this respect focuses on what is the same in all. For the other, we have to recognize and even foster particularity.[44]

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[41] Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," 35 and 38.

[42] For a sustained criticism of the usefulness of psychoanalysis for social and political theory, see Nancy Fraser. "The Uses and Abuses of French Discourse Theories for Feminist Politics." *Boundary* 2. Vol. 17, No.2, (1990).

[43] Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," 38.

[44] Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," 43.

These two politics, universalism (equal dignity and rights) and difference (distinctness and uniqueness of identities, both personal and group based), according to Taylor, Honneth and countless others, form the two major competing politics of our times.[45] In considerable ways these two politics are a reworking of the liberal-communitarian divide. On this account, liberals champion the rights of all individuals and create a system of equality based upon sameness. In the eyes of the law, each right holder is afforded the same obligations and protections. This is also what is at stake in claims of redistributive justice considered below. On the other hand, the politics of difference, often called identity politics, defends "group rights" that require not only that each person's individual civil rights be upheld, but that groups may have claims to justice and rights. The normative force of liberalism, as considered above, is an equalizer. It assumes that because each individual has the same political rights, that each individual is in fact offered the same share of freedom. However, in the context of conditions of inequality that have been perpetuated in our economics, politics, civil society and private lives, theorists who champion recognition contend that we must reconsider this apparent equalization and attend to the truth of difference and the substantive rights of groups, if we are to give any content to our discussions of the possibility of freedom.

What sort of claims count as recognition claims? [46]

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[46] Many a tree has been cut down so that theorists might expound upon the nature of the self as it forms in relation to the other. In particular, there are many pages written about the politics of recognition as it plays itself out in Hegel's master/slave dialectic. For Hegel, the slave and master are mutually formed as selves through a life or death struggle, wherein reason prevails. For a sustained consideration of this Hegelian contribution to political and social theory, see Cynthia Willet. *Maternal Ethics and Other Slave Moralities.* New York: Taylor and Francis, Inc., 1995. And Ann Cudd. *Analyzing Oppression.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

In the liberal tradition political claims are claims about individual rights. Rights to private property, free speech, exit, etc, are often called rights of citizenship. In the history of American politics different people have made claims to these rights, which originally excluded non-whites, white women and the poor of all persuasions. These people grouped together and through movements such as the Suffrage Movement and Civil Rights Movement, sought wider legal rights to be recognized as citizens. They used methods such as marches, protests and boycotts to publicize their claims and further their agendas. It can be argued, however, that these movements were not identity politics of recognition in any stout sense of the term. While the suffragists and the Alabama bus boycotters may have also wanted the larger society to recognize them as valuable members of society whose contributions were to be appreciated, these claims of input were subordinated to the push for enfranchisement. Although, the "worth" of the group may have been used as leveraging tool in the fight for civil rights, it can be argued that recognition as a distinct group or culture were not at the top of their agendas In fact, blacks as a group and white women as a group and the poor as a class were grouped by the forces of oppression operating in society before they became "groups" interested in rights claims. While members of these groups could have "chosen" not to protest or march, the prevailing social structure did not give them much choice about identification. Visible markers sufficed as labels of group membership.[47] While visible markers may not serve to designate the group, the same argument that what is politically at stake in the contemporary Gay Rights movement is not the robust recognition to have the cultural forms of the “group” honored but recognition under the law. What gays want does not seem to be recognition as a valid, useful group, rather, they lobby for the right to marry and the extension of legal benefits that such a right entails. Much like the Civil Rights movement’s push for fair and equal treatment through integration into society so that blacks and whites would have the same rights, protections and benefits.

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[47] While many argue that the nature of social relations in America has changed and that group membership is no longer rigid in this way, I find that claim dubious. In her book, *Visible Identities: Race, Gender and the Self*, Linda Martín Alcoff contends, "Visibility is both the means of segregating and oppressing human groups and the means of manifesting unity and resistance," 7. The character of group resistance and unity as a form of politics will be considered in this chapter.

The aforementioned movements differ from movements such as the Black Power movement of the late 1960s and early 70s or the Native American movements, which did not petition for enfranchisement into mainstream society, but rather, sought to assert claims about the importance of sustaining and even separating particular group identities as apart from the mainstream. Empowerment for these groups consisted in the recognition of their difference and the affirmation of their culture through recognition.

I am not claiming that groups who make citizenship claims do not think that their groups should be recognized for their inherent worth, but as in the claim made by suffragists what is at stake is not the respect and acknowledgment of the group as a group but the goal of achieving enfranchisement for each individual member. Certainly along with enfranchisement comes the recognition that women are to be treated fairly and as equals but this recognition does not have to be coupled with a program of appreciation of women’s “traditional” roles and “culture.” To underscore this point consider the following, blacks petitioned the American legal system for full and equal protection under the law. That protection gave non-white people recourse to the judicial system when they were wronged, but it has been argued that segregation and general prejudice continue even so many years after the mass movements of the fifties and sixties.

Formal types of recognition were extended as a result of the Civil Rights Movement. The Martin Luther King Holiday and Black History Month are both products of the force of those movements. Pages were added to textbooks to include passages about Harriet Tubmann and Sojourner Truth and briefly expound upon the inventions of George Washington Carver. As forms of recognition with political importance, these national holidays and textbook addendums fail to demonstrably increase the power of African Americans in the political arena. Whereas fights over educational curriculum and controversies surrounding state flags have shown both the promise of increased citizen activity around the recognition of identity, as well as, exposed the ineffectiveness of much recognition politics.

Clarifying an ambiguity in the analysis of difference politics, I think that there are at least two ways to conceive of group recognition claims. They are either separatist claims or claims of difference. The Black Power claims and the nationalist claims made by secessionists are separatist claims. These claims are characterized by two general features, the group asserts a fixed, closed membership, whether it be by race or other identity marker such as gender, creed or locale, and the group sets as one of its primary goals, needs, or desires, either a separate governing body or an imperative to sustain their group identity (and sometimes both). The second sort of group recognition claims, claims of difference, do not reify group identity, but contend that because the nature of oppression is group based, to remedy that social ill they require differential political treatment.

Taylor asserts that procedural liberalism is ‘inhospitable to difference because it can’t accommodate what members of distinct societies really aspire to which is survival."[48] Here, Taylor's multiculturalism becomes conservatism in the physical science sense of the term. Groups seek to enact policies that maintain their traditional ways of life. Neutrality towards the factual, context dependent identities of people by liberal politics fails to recognize the value in minority identities and when universalism is achieved, it is at best the death blow to minority culture.

For all of the assertions of conservatism that I find problematic, Taylor is right and wrong. Liberalism is indeed a threat to groups. As Walzer asserts, "Liberalism is distinguished less by the freedom to form groups on the basis of these identities than by the freedom to leave the groups and sometimes even the identities behind. Association is always at risk in a liberal society."[49] And in his criticism of Taylor's survivalist multiculturalism, Habermas contends, "Cultures survive only if they draw the strength to transform themselves from criticism and secession. Legal guarantees can be based only on the act that within his or her own cultural milieu each person retains the possibility of regenerating this strength."[50] According to Walzer and Habermas, insuring the survival of culture is not a goal of the state.

What does this mean if we affirm that oppression is group based? Does agreeing with Habermas and Walzer mean that we are idealist about universality and must give up on group identities that are very real in our lives, groupings that have very real effect on us personally and politically? In a society built upon inequality, where the goal of all of these pages is to add to the efforts of its redress, how can I be against the premise that what we should strive to do is seek to sustain cultural specificity when we know so well that efforts to deny specificity can lead to the annihilation of whole groups of people?

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[48] Taylor, "Multiculturalism," 61.
[49] Walzer, *Politics and Passions*, 155.
[50] Habermas, "Struggles for Recognition in the Democratic Constitutional State." In *Multiculturalism*. Amy Guttmann, editor. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, 132.

Sustaining traditional groups is only important as long as individuals want to sustain those groups. If by some slight of hand, all African Americans tomorrow decided that they no longer wanted to identify as such and give up on all of the cultural forms that we believe to be attached to such and then at the same time if the larger society suddenly gave up on the cultural imperialism that made the effect of such a grouping both desired and despised, and economic and social inequality rooted in prejudices fell away, I would be fine if the group African American ceased to exist. But there is no great magic at work in our society. Aside from the integral part such groups play in self constitution and expression, the need for groups to assert identity both politically and culturally remain.[51]

Habermas couches the debate about recognition in terms of the priority of good versus the just.

> Persons, and legal persons as well, become individualized only through a process of socialization. A correctly understood theory of rights requires a politics of recognition that protects the integrity of the individual in the life contexts in which his or her identity is formed. This does not require an alternative model that would correct the individualistic design of the system of rights through other normative perspectives. All that is required is the consistent actualization of the system of rights. There would be little likelihood of this, of course, without social movements and political struggles.[52]

Habermas has tapped into what is appealing about a normative liberalism. If we agree with Wellmer that liberalism is not value neutral in the sense that it requires the legal upholding of universal rights, than we can also agree that the status of what is good to each individual must be protected under the law which assumes the status of the higher good. In situations where individual notions of the good conflict with liberal values, including when “equality” is merely formal, Taylor rightly asserts, “All this is to say that liberalism can’t and shouldn’t claim complete cultural neutrality. Liberalism is also a fighting creed.” [53]

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[51] Cf. Tommie Shelby. *We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity*. Boston: Harvard University Press, 2005.

[52] Jurgen Habermas. “Struggles for Recognition in the Democratic Constitutional State.” In *Multiculturalism*. Amy Guttmann, editor. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, 116.

In her assessment of identity politics, Iris Marion Young defends a politics of difference that is more agreeable to our project than the one set forth of recognition as group survival. Young argues “the achievement of formal equality does not eliminate social differences, and rhetorical commitment to the sameness of persons makes its impossible even to name how these differences presently structure privilege and oppression.”[54] For Young, the problem with liberalism is that its idealization of equality makes it impossible for groups who are systemically being oppressed to make claims and it does not account for the fact that sometimes differential treatment is necessary. This is an argument that joins claims of recognition to claims of (re)distributive justice.[55]

As stated above, formal equality is not the same actual equality. In his theory of justice, John Rawls argues for a theory justice as fairness based on a model of distributive justice. On that model, the equal distribution of benefits, burdens, rights, responsibilities and a certain basic level of material goods is necessary. Young criticizes this paradigm of distributive justice because she contends it cannot adequately address the complexity of our stratified society.

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[53] Taylor, “Multiculturalism,” 62.

[54] Iris Marion Young. *Justice and the Politics of Difference.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990, 164.

[55] Arguments for distributive justice are often advanced in theory without taking into account specific contexts. Thus, Rawlsian distributive justice can be discussed from a hypothetical original position. Whereas, theories and politics that make claims in context using the distributive paradigm are redistributive. Redistributive justice assumes that material goods have already been unjustly distributed.

> [P]hilosophical theories of justice tend to restrict the meaning of social justice to the morally proper distribution of benefits and burdens among society's members...While distributive issues are crucial to a satisfactory conception of justice, it is a mistake to reduce social justice to distribution. I find two problems with the distributive paradigm. First, it tends to focus thinking about social justice on the allocation of material goods such as things, resources, income, and wealth, or on the distribution of social positions, especially jobs, this focus tends to ignore the social structure and institutional context that often help determine distributive patterns.[56]

Young's argument that a politics of difference is necessary if we hope to live in a just society because of the cultural and historical situation that forms the operational background of our lives, is convincing even if we retain our liberal tendencies. Young argues to ameliorate social problems group specific rights are necessary, unlike Habermas who contends, "even if such group rights could be granted in the democratic constitutional state, they would be not only unnecessary but questionable from a normative point of view."[57] Counter that, Young argues, "The specificity of each group requires a specific set of rights for each, and for some a more comprehensive system than for others."[58] Habermas assumes that achieving universal rights may require group efforts but that the goal of those efforts will be the achievement and should be the achievement of individual enfranchisements. This is the form that the group politics of the Civil Rights and Suffrage movements conformed to for the most part. The legitimacy of group claims, as Young proposes them, can be regarded as a more practical, effective step toward a solution to historical, systemic inequality and in a revised form will help me argue for a more localized notion of political participation.

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[56] Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, 15.
[57] Habermas, "Struggles," 130.
[58] Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*,183.

As examples, Young cites differential rights for women and Native Americans.

> I assert, then, the following principle: a democratic public should provide mechanisms for the effective recognition and representation of the distinct voices and perspectives of those that are oppressed or disadvantaged. Such group representation implies institutional mechanisms and public resources supporting (1) self-organization of group members so that they achieve collective empowerment and a reflective understanding of their collective experience and interests in the context of the society; (2) group analysis and group generation of policy proposals in institutional contexts where decision makers are obliged to show that their deliberations have taken group perspectives into consideration; and (3) group veto power regarding specific policies that affect a group directly, such as reproductive rights policy for women, or land use polity for Indian reservations.[59]

Although she does not argue for a notion of group rights, Nancy Fraser's norm of parity of participation and what it entails shares many features with Young's principle of a democratic public. Fraser argues, "To remedy political exclusion or marginalization one must remove political obstacles via democratization."[60] According to Fraser our current issues can best be redressed through strategies of nonreformist reforms reached by democratic deliberation, not by a lone philosopher but by a "counterhegemonic bloc of social movements."[61]

Fraser's critical assessment of recognition claims is carried out in an exchange with recognition theorist Alex Honneth. Fraser and Honneth are concerned with continuing the immanent critique of society in the tradition of the Frankfurt School Critical Theorists. Both acknowledge, however, that the critique of society can no longer be carried out in terms of Marxist derived concepts. In the style of the Critical Theorists, Fraser and Honneth search for the tools of critique in the existing norms of society. They contend the possibility for social change already exists in our practices. Whereas Honneth argues claims for recognition provide the "engine of social change,"[62] Fraser thinks that somehow claims for redistributive justice must be coupled with recognition, if either is to successfully achieve its goals.

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[59] Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference,* 184.
[60] Fraser, "Redistribution," 33.
[61] Fraser, "Redistribution," 79.

Fraser claims that efforts to either subsume politics of recognition under politics of redistribution or vice versa are wrong headed. Both claims are valid justice claims and any theory of justice must be able to address them. She proposes a "two dimensional conception of justice." This conception of justice has both an objective or economic condition and an intersubjective or cultural condition, and as an aside, a third, political condition. She joins this theory to the normative ideal of "parity of participation." [63] She writes,

> First, the distribution of material resources must be such s to ensure participants independence and "voice." This I shall call the *objective condition* of participatory parity. It precludes forms and levels of economic dependence and inequality that impede parity of participation...In contrast, the second condition requires that institutionalized patterns of cultural value express equal respect for all participants and ensure equal opportunity for achieving social esteem...It precludes institutionalized norms that systematically depreciate some categories of people and the qualities associated with them.[64]

What Fraser offers in the normative ideal of participatory parity is two ways for individuals and groups to appeal against social and political structures they find unjust because they deny one or both of the above conditions of justice. This norm appeals to us because it requires equality to be substantial and not merely formal. In a society where capitalism is alive and well, arguments against and for the first condition are familiar to us. Abolishing private property and personal wealth in favor of equal material resources will not be happening anytime soon. However, there are many economic reforms that might be suggested that make this vague objective condition of parity thinkable even if it is not yet realizable. The second condition however, faces an even tougher challenge than capitalism, ambiguity as both a condition and what such a condition would like if achieved. What does it mean to afford someone equal social esteem?

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[62] Cf. Alex Honneth's contributions to *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange.* Golb, Ingram, and Wilke, editors. London: Verso, 2003.

[63] Fraser, "Redistribution," 38.

[64] Fraser, "Redistribution," 36.

In an effort to explain how these conditions might be achieved, Fraser proposes strategies of "nonreformist reforms."

> These would be policies with a double face: on the one hand, they engage people's identities and satisfy some of their needs as interpreted within existing frameworks of recognition and distribution; on the other hand, they set in motion a trajectory of change in which more radical reforms become practicable overtime. When successful, nonreformist reforms change more than the specific institutional features they explicitly target. In addition, they alter the terrain upon which later struggles will be waged. By changing incentive structures and political opportunity structures, they expand the set of feasible options for future reform. Over time their cumulative effect could be to transform the underlying structures that generate injustice.[65]

As examples she cites the strategic essentialism of some feminists who claim it is necessary to reify certain "culturally" female traits in order to combat patriarchy and promote the value of "female labor" and the on-going struggle of French Muslim female students to wear traditional head scarves banned by the French school system. In both cases, identities are asserted to counter hegemonic norms so that individuals and groups might achieve equity of participation. In the end, however, both cultural feminism and conservative traditions of covering one's head, may be threatened and even transformed by parity. Fraser contends this approach joined with a “cross-dressing” approach that seeks to address problems of distribution as well as problems of recognition, go a long way toward achieving social justice.

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[65] Fraser, "Redistribution," 79-80.

But what of the third, political condition? What might people do in the public arena besides make claims about the misrecognition of their identities or the lack of equitable resources? Surely our political subjectivity must consist of more. Fraser states that it consists in the problem of “the frame” and asks “Who are the social actors among whom parity of participation is required?”[66] This is a claim about who deserves justice and what form that might take in a given public sphere. Fraser’s concept of a political condition is inadequate because while it ensures equal distribution and promotes equal recognition, it does not say enough about the claims individuals make when they want to change old institutions and create new forms of life. Like the liberal view that we have the right to exit and the communalist view that we must have the right to the “in-common,” this lack of theorizing the political as nothing more than dissent or acquiescence is problematic.

Here are a few preliminary thoughts about what I mean by claims to create forms of life and institutions. Agreeing with Taylor, Young and others, people are equal based on the principle of equal respect.[67] In the realm of politics, I am deserving of dignity above and beyond any particular social context, that said, as an agent deserving of respect, the social bonds I wish to foster for myself and in the making of my society (both traditionally and radically) are to be recognized as political legitimate, if only because I wish to introduce them in the course of public discourse. My claims may be refused, amended or accepted, but I should be allowed to broach them. Further, I should be allowed to create culture, not just to participate or be fully excised from it. I make claims as a group member, as an individual, as a potential founder of something different. I contest and uphold identities. I transform not only my personal identity through choice but I also attempt to have those choices reflected in the world I share with others.

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[66] Fraser, “Redistribution,” 88.

[67] Kwame Anthony Appiah attempts to flesh out what the principle of equal respect in relation to the state means for those of us who are committed to some form of ethical individualism in his *The Ethics of Identity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005. See Chapter Three, “The Demands of Identity,” in particular pages 88-97. While I have some deep seated objections of Appiah’s conception of individual subjectivity, I think that he is on to something when he writes, “Neutrality as equal respect doesn’t require us to feign agnosticism about the beliefs of our fellow citizens or avoid relying on controversial claims: it merely asks us to avoid offending the beliefs of minorities as

III. Community Based Democracy: Cases, Principles, Action Steps

The misconception that people in poor communities, whether urban and rural, are not committed to making their communities better places persists, alongside the competing myths that these same people are either content with their own impoverished situations or that they would rather complain than act. Rampant in the American imaginary, these ways of thinking about the poor among us prevent us from considering ways in which people have come up with ways of dealing with their plight that are at once creative, effective and highly democratic. The prejudice against the people in our democracy theory, is well, undemocratic. People are practicing democracy and it would behoove us to find out how and why. And more importantly, how we might extend and broaden these democratic practices so that more of us might have the opportunity to

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much as we can," 94. Appiah's notion of neutrality as equal respect must be, however, coupled with a notion of positive, group specific legislation, for example, as differential rights for women when it comes to the regulation of maternity leave, etc. Does such an addendum then make equal respect less neutral? I don't think it would have to in my case or in the defense given by Appiah.

express a widened political subjectivity, which clearly is not simply about the assertion of recognition or the traditional claim for civil rights of individual non-interference. Widen political subjectivity is about individual effective power and the legitimacy of authority through democratic politics, joining the liberal and communitarian claims mentioned earlier.

There are at least two types of democratic participation experiments which we can consider. First, there are those programs and policies sponsored by local, state, and national governments, that have offered citizens a share in control and administration of what are normally considered programs and services of the government. Second, there are those grass roots initiatives through which individuals have claimed control over the governing of their lives, sometimes with, and sometimes without, the support and sanction of the government and philanthropic organizations. In the cases considered here, the first type of experiment in local participatory democracy follow the model of Empowered Participatory Governance proposed by Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright,[68] and the second is best represented by a diverse group of comprehensive, frequently neighborhood based initiatives called *community building*.[69]

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[68] Archon Fung, and Eric Olin Wright, editors. *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance.* London: Verso, 2003.

[69] Cf. Leila Fiester. “Building a Community of Community Builders: The National Community Building Network, 1993 –2005. Report, prepared under contract to The Urban Strategies Council, with funding from The Annie E. Cassey Foundation. And, John Kretzman and John McKnight. *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Towards Finding and Mobilizing a Community’s Assets.* Chicago: ACTA Publications, 1993. The Fiester report is an evaluation of the National Community Building Network (NCBN) and its achievements before it went defunct due to funding and organizational issues in 2005. The NCBN is at the time of my writing this, in the process of regrouping and possibly being housed at the Office of University-Community Partnerships (OUCP) of Emory University, collaboration that both the NCBN and OUCP hope will revitalize

A. Empowered Participatory Governance

Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright's project in *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovation in Empowered Participatory Governance,* is an attempt to theorize ways that democracy can be extended or "deepened" in a time when even our most democratic of countries, participation has come to mean sometimes voting, sometimes picketing and extremely rarely, running for office for most people. In the cases they use to ground their theory of Empowered Participatory Governance (EPG), Fung and Wright's emphasize state sanctioned practices that feature "innovative" ways for citizens to become involved. Their theory relies on a thick conception of deliberative democracy that assumes "the importance of civic life and non-governmental organizations to vigorous democracy. EPG builds upon this insight by exploring whether the reorganization of formal state institutions can stimulate democratic engagement in civil society, and so from a virtuous circle of reciprocal reinforcement."[70] In what follows, I will consider EPG in general through an analysis of Fung's consideration of "Deliberative Democracy, Chicago Style," and the institutional practices of citizen participation in the Chicago school system and police "beat" meetings.

Citing repeated failures of Chicago area school system to meet standards and a distrust and ineffectiveness of policing in that same city, the local government proposed two, unrelated citizen participation experiments. Calling the models used in Chicago, devolutionary, Fung characterizes these measures by their decentralization and a notion

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the organization and make it more sustainable. The Kretzman and McKnight piece is considered foundational in the community building approach by community organizers.

[70] Fung and Wright, *Deepening*, 15.

of “accountable autonomy,”[71] According to Fung, “Accountable autonomy requires that the center both support the capacity of schools and beats to act autonomously through various supports and hold them accountable through monitoring, sanctioning and intervention.”[72]

Local school councils were set up in Chicago’s public school system. These local school councils were made responsible for the hiring and firing of school officials including principals, administering funds and curriculum planning. Parents and community members were trained by the government to handle the duties assigned them. In the case of Chicago Police Department, although there were no official positions, beat meetings, neighborhood residents and police formed partnerships through beat meetings where residents alerted police to their concerns not only about the crimes in their neighborhoods but also how the police should combat crime and interact with residents. In both cases, there is an on-going deliberation about the best ways to proceed.

Theorizing from this Chicago case and the other case studies presented by contributors to the volume, Fung and Wright propose several principles and what they call institutional design features.

> ... three general principles are fundamental to all these experiments: (1) a focus on specific, tangible problems, (2)involvement of ordinary people affected by these problems and officials close to them, and (3) the deliberative development of solutions to these problems. In the reform context examined here, three institutional design features seem to stabilize and deepen the practice of these basic principles: (1) the devolution of public decision authority to empowered local units, (2) the creation of formal linkages of responsibility, resource distribution, and communication that connect these to each other and to super ordinate, centralized authorities, (3) the use and generation new state institutions to support and guide these decentered problem solving efforts. [73]

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[71] Fung and Wright, *Deepening*, 111.
[72] Fung and Wright, *Deepening*, 119.
[73] Fung and Wright, *Deepening*, 15 -16.

At first glance, EPG's principles and institutional design model are exactly what we are seeking in our demand for a creative public sphere and they have taken care to combat many of the arguments against localized democratic participation, such as the claims that localism is exclusionary and that most locales do not have the expertise to effectively maintain their own government.

EPG prevents dangerous, exclusionary localism because in the suggested institutional design, local groups are subordinate to government authorities who have the power of check and balance. No neighborhood police beat in Chicago can decide that the most effective way to end crime in their neighborhood is to recommend that men of certain ethnic groups not be allowed in the area, not because the citizens may not want to enact such a racist form of policing but because a higher authority would not allow it. Fung applauds the Chicago model because "Chicago reforms ...do not leave neighborhoods to their own devices."[74] Standards are set and upheld in connection with governmental policy. When the local group fails to meet those standards, they are reworked and retooled by demand of the government.

Further, deliberative democracy in these reforms is fostered by government appointed experts, who teach the citizens how to deliberate fairly and then, the citizens are "monitored." Thus, through proper training and supervision, citizens are able to exercise accountable autonomy as a group that plays by the rules and the "common good" is what wins out in the debates about who should be hired or fired at the school or what crimes are placed on the police agenda for a given neighborhood.

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[74] Fung and Wright, *Deepening*, 113.

There are limitations to EPG. In his analysis, Fung cites several. First, because what happens in each local unit is peculiar to that unit and is not disseminated in any structured way across units, "best practices" stay local and do not become part of "advances" that could help all of Chicago (or in the other places considered).[75] Second, participation in these local units maps unto a "pattern" that is problematic. He asserts, "Surprisingly, those in low-income neighborhoods participate as much or more than people from wealthier ones. Within any given neighborhood, however, the more advantaged – homeowners and those with more income and education – participate at disproportionately greater rates. This pattern confirms the well-grounded intuition that resources and other advantages influence citizens' ability to participate."[76] It would seem that all of the same barriers to participation that exist on the macro-political scale, still exist in smaller local units. The poorest and the least educated are still left out of the loop of participation. Third, when we speak of local participation, just what do we mean? What constitutes the local and how many people can we allow to deliberate over a problem? In large cities like Chicago, it is foreseeable that a neighborhood can have several thousand people. Large group participation is costly and timely. What this alerts us to is a criticism of democratic participation on a large scale. If we are to get anything done, participation must, it would seem, become representation. It is interesting to note in his analysis of the two Chicago reforms, Fung fails to articulate what could be called the difference between the effectiveness of the small, local board of the school unit, which serves a representative function and the larger beat meetings and how the larger beat meetings on his account wield less power over the institution in which they are said to participate. The representative local unit can hire and fire, while the beat meeting seems much more like a town hall where recommendations are made and then selectively enacted by the police force. Surely, this is a step up from policing which does not include neighborhood input, but this is a long way off from a creative public sphere in which individuals get to claim an effective political subjectivity. And lastly, Fung is unsure if local participation is always effective in getting the "job done". In the cost benefit analysis of institutional reform, citizen training and monitoring, and the labor intensiveness of deliberation, local participation is not always successful in completing the concrete task it sets itself.

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[75] Fung and Wright, *Deepening*, 114.
[76] Fung and Wright, *Deepening*, 129.

In her contribution to Fung and Wright's work, "Practice – Thought – Practice," Jane Mansbridge offers ways that the EPG model might be developed further.[77] Mansbridge presents three important criticisms of the EPG approach, it neglect of self-interest, it over-emphasizes consensus and it fails to see what importance the participants may have garnered from the experience, even when they did not complete the task.

With Young and others who critique models of deliberative democracy that seek to be interest neutral, Mansbridge argues,

> A single focus on the common good tends to make the assertion of self-interest illegitimate. Yet recognized and asserting self-interest helps advance distributive justice. Recognizing and asserting self-interest helps one figure out oneself what one wants. Recognizing and asserting self-interest helps in becoming understood (and respected) for what one wants and needs. Finally, recognizing and asserting self interest helps unveil hegemonic understandings of the common good when those understanding have evolved to mask subtle forms of oppression.[78]

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[77] Jane Mansbridge. "Practice – Thought – Practice," in *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance.* Fung and Wright, editors. London: Verso, 2003. 176-199.

[78] Mansbridge, "Practice – Thought – Practice", 179.

Fung and Wright miss an important point about individual political subjectivity and group politics, as well, knowing what is at stake, whether it be about schooling, policing or green spaces, and knowing what is at stake for us, is necessary for the just distribution of resources. Assuming that we all have the same interests washes over the dirty fact that we do not and that some of us are disadvantaged by decisions made in the "common good." Additionally, in cases where we are attempting to do what we believe to be right for us, even when our group does not include everyone, such strategy should be seen as a part of deliberation. We should not shy away from what strategic thinking can do and what it can mean in politics. Oppressed groups and individuals who find their interests in the minority need strategies to bring about the change they seek. Deliberation theorists often want us to play too nice. This playing nice is often done at the expense of the ungainly – i.e. the different, the person who doesn't know the rules, who is marked as other. Mansbridge argues further , "The failure to reach consensus on a just or good outcome does not automatically mark a bad process of deliberation. A good deliberation will clarify both conflict and commonality, even if the final decision is to go to war."[79] This point of clarification is important for future deliberations.

And of most interest to this project, Mansbridge's essay contains a section entitled, "Self Interest In The Process Of Personal Transformation," where she considers the relation of theory to practice as a loop that Fung and Wright have not gone around enough times. She argues researchers may want to ask people what they got out of the process and not merely whether or not the process was a model case of deliberation or whether or not the task was completed.[80] While the task may not have been completed, perhaps participants became "better citizens". Here, Mansbridge begins the work of taking political subjectivity seriously. Individual benefits, feelings of control, as well as actual ability to control, and participate in the shaping of institutions must be taken into account in our consideration of democratic practices. While citizenship has come to mean voting habits and civic association, there are ways to consider conceptualize political subjectivity that offers a wider sphere of personal freedom and improved chances of equality that is not synonymous with citizenship although citizenship status is a necessary condition.

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[79] Mansbridge, "Practice – Thought – Practice, 180.

B. Community Building: The Case of DSNI

More promising for my admittedly lofty aspirations is found in the family resemblance of practices happening in neighborhoods all across the United States that can be grouped under the name "community building initiatives." What community building initiatives have in common is a commitment to local, comprehensive, asset-based approaches to public concerns controlled by residents and other community stakeholders. What makes community building different from EPG is that the practices are run at the local level by lay people whose ultimate goal is not only to achieve success at their various endeavors, but also to give individual's wider spheres of influence over their own lives. These initiatives are often at odds with conventional wisdom about public policy and with governmental agencies. Although experts are employed to assist in the projects of community building, ultimately, unlike in the EPG model, local associations desire to have the final say. Struggles over definition, power, and control are part of the everyday work of community building, while all the while they stress the importance of equality and inclusion. Community building can be called visionary pragmatism in progress.

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[80] Mansbridge, "Practice – Thought – Practice, 183.

In what follows. I will consider the case of a paradigmatic community building initiative, the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative and the principles of community building as outlined by the National Community Building Network and the influential work of John Kretzman and John McKnight. Community building is not without its flaws, in fact, the omissions and failures of the practice of community building are in many ways philosophical. I will point out these philosophical points and then use them, along with some others I have pointed out along the way, as the catalyst for the remainder of this work.

The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) grew out of a neighborhood assessment of a blighted area of Boston by college students and initial funding from a philanthropic organization after local residents used the results of the survey to begin making an agenda to “re-member” their neighborhood. Although the streets shared the problems of high crime, low employment and business traffic, as well as, the illegal dumping of waste onto the burned out lots that were featured all over the area, Dudley Street only became a neighborhood and a community through the process of creating the initiative. Members of the initial organization drew and redrew the maps of what would constitute the community and often disagreed on the precise catch man area. Once the initial group of interested residents realized that their hopes would only work if they sought to engage others in the planning process, DSNI held elections and deliberated on guidelines, bringing together a diverse population of Cape Verdean immigrants, older white residents, black residents and a growing Latino population that seemed to be plagued with all of the problems of poverty and diversity. In the beginning, many people did not see the point of the organization. They had been promised help by the city and foundations for years, but had instead received false hope or worse yet, they felt as if the city and state governments had helped foster the decline of the area and were not actively seeking to improve it or the residents that lived in it. Cynicism towards participation in anything like the normal channels was high. Andrea Nagel, who held DSNI's first community organizer position recounts, "At times the negativity was really alarming. And it's because people had just lost hope or were very cynical about anything really changing. They had seen too much come down or had heard too many broken promises. So it was going to be up to DSNI to create conditions for them to be part of something successful."[81] Part of those conditions would be the difficult process of bringing the diverse group of people together to even begin to set an agenda for revitalization. The people spoke different languages, interpreters where necessary. They came from vastly different cultural and religious backgrounds and were divided by sect and race. Often these differences led to deep seated disagreement on the course of action, but more often than not they were used to create a community.

In the story of DSNI, *Streets of Hope: The Rise and Fall of an Urban Neighborhood*, two of the organizers give a history of the organization, its successes and challenges. DSNI created, though direct participation of community members in workshops and elections and open policy meetings a development plan to create a neighborhood where existing residents could thrive. Touting its goal as the "creation of an urban village," Dudley Street residents were not experts with advanced degrees in urban planning or politicians, rather they saw what assets the community did have in people, ideas and sheer will power and sought out allies.

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[81] Peter Medoff and Holly Sklar. *Streets of Hope: The Fall and Rise of an Urban Neighborhood.* Boston: South End Press, 1994, 69-70.

> Through organizing, DSNI would build up people's expectations of what is desirable and doable. With united community willpower behind it, DSNI could create the political will necessary to make the city a partner in implementing the Dudley neighborhood's bold development agenda. DSNI would not be afraid to use confrontation to achieve its objectives, nor would it be afraid to cooperate with people or institutions who didn't share the whole agenda. It recognized both the power of numbers and the importance of building personal relationships.[82]

From the very beginning, the initiative sought not just to bring in businesses or to force the city government to help improve the schools or the unemployed find jobs, it also sought to foster resident control over just what the neighborhood would become and that it was just as much about the resident control and input than it is about the effectiveness of any of the many initiatives to create affordable housing, green spaces, safe spaces, and a higher quality of living.

> In the words of DSNI's 1993 *Framework for a Human Development Agenda:*
> Our community has a gold mine of natural assets and resources...They take many forms: human, institutional and physical. Our community rebuilding strategy must be anchored in the power and strength of our people and our neighborhood...We know that the process of rebuilding and reknitting our community back together is as important as the goal itself.[83]

Whereas the goal in the strategic, government based groups (such as though used in the EPG model) emphasize the completion of the task, the community DSNI wanted to rebuild and reknit is actually being created because it did not exist in the diverse form pre-DSNI. In fact, this is one of assumptions that DSNI's self assessment misses. They set out to create a community out of a loose geographic area. They created community out of diversity and strife, not by leveling diversity or eliminating strife, but by trying to use those things in their favor. The creativity that went into the DSNI being the first neighborhood group to win immanent domain over vacant lots in their area and succeed in having the city take up their resident planned agendas for revitalization point to more than a traditional form of playing politics on the city level. What they sought to do was not to improve upon the existing infrastructure, but create something different altogether. The importance of individual and group efforts in that development go way beyond voting for the challenger to a city government seat or protesting a zoning law at a meeting.

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[82] Medoff, *Streets of Hope*, 67.
[83] Medoff, *Streets of Hope,* 171.

The paradigmatic claims of recognition, redistribution and individual rights fall short of fully appreciating the sort of political game the DSNI started to play. They declared "community rights," the first of which was "We have the right to shape the *development of all plans, programs and policies* likely to affect the quality of our lives as neighborhood residents."[84] This positive right to develop and create based upon an asset based model of community building, is highly politically charged. Who were these people that they thought they should be able to control and decide what happened in their neighborhood to such a great extent? They didn't have extensive expertise in land development or school curriculum, most of them were poor, and minority and in effect, powerless. Yet they claimed control to shape. And shape is a key term here. They did not use the force of their numbers or the sad tale of their poverty on the national news to force the city government to implement a city sponsored and executed Band-Aid plan for their problems, they sought out allies, and held fast to a "human develop mission" that they would succeed in wresting the control of the governing of their everyday lives from the hands of neglectful bureaucracy.

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[84] Medoff, *Streets of Hope,* 202.

> DSNI's human development mission is to advance community-wide strategies to achieve the goals of increasing resident participation and control over circumstances affecting their physical, spiritual and mental well-being; foster coordinated, resident-driven, capacity building human services; and influence government policymaking.[85]

This goal has promise for political subjectivity. This approach returns us to Mansbridge's criticism of EPG's failure to realize that what we might be looking at and aiming for in our participation is not only task completion but also the benefits derived from participation by individuals.

The DSNI is one of many initiatives that work using the asset based model of community development. Before community building's articulation as a movement of sorts in the mid 1980's, initiatives to "revitalize" urban areas focused on the problems in those areas – high crime, drug use, poverty, substandard education and the like. Government agencies and philanthropic organizations sought to ameliorate those problems by tackling one at a time, using a top down approach. Experts and specialists went in and started programs for a set duration and about a set problem. If you were a poor mother who needed help feeding her family, you went to the welfare office and applied for food stamps. If you needed to work on your GED, you enrolled in a GED program at the library sponsored by the city. If you needed a job, you went and stood in line at the employment agency and waited for a placement. Most times these services had no relation to one another. Providers did not share information or resources and if you happened to need a lot of services at once you were left confused about where to go and who to see. Many times the services contradicted each other. And almost all of the time the individual had very little control on how the services were administered, each service took on a cookie cutter form that left little room for individual circumstance.

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[85] Medoff, *Streets of Hope,* 171.

What the National Community Building Networks' members and the work of asset based community building theorists like Kretzman and McKnight argue is that community building should focus on the resources the community already has in the form of individuals, physical spaces and likely allies in government, philanthropy and business. Both the NCBN and Kretzman and McKnight, stress the importance of a comprehensive approach to community building that seeks to empower individuals through the development of resident run community services. Among the principles of this approach are, start from local conditions, require racial equity and foster broad community participation, as seen in the DSNI example.

The community builders do not spend a lot of time theorizing the use of the local in the discussion of creating more equitable community and empowered individuals. The larger point of universal equality and freedom are not addressed in any depth. They assert that local conditions are necessary because each community's assets and desires are different. For these grass root builders and the urban planners that work with them, localness is a given. It is only at the local scale that their efforts can be effective. They try to check the factionalism and separatism that may result from localism, with the principle of requiring equality. They join groups like the NCBN to help others achieve the success they have achieved. The practices make sense, more theoretical work must be done if we are to endorse them fully.

A few problems with community building jump right out at us. The emphasis on geographic group may neglect the input of stakeholders who may not reside in the area may be affected by the plans. Also, geography is a funny thing. The map changes all of the time. As in the Dudley Street case, even picking a locale can be a point of contention. However, the contentiousness of geography and the risk of leaving someone out are the necessary evils of this focus that seeks to combat poverty, nihilism and disenfranchisement. Kretzman and McKnight argue,

> Because this community development process is asset-based, it is by necessity “internally focused.” That is, the development strategy concentrates first of al upon the agenda building and problem-solving capacities of local residents, local associations and local institutions. Again, this intense and self-conscious internal focus is not intended to minimize either the role external forces have played in helping to create the desperate conditions of lower income neighborhoods, nor the need to attract additional resources to these communities. Rather this strong internal focus is intended simply to stress the primacy of local definition, investment, creativity hope and control.[86]

Indeed, it is the justification and scope of “the primacy of local definition, investment, creativity, hope and control” in relation to political subjectivity that I want to work through in the subsequent chapters.

IV. Visionary Pragmatism and Critical Social Theory

Earlier in this chapter I briefly sketched a view of the critical social theory as it related to the immanent critique of social norms as began by the Frankfurt School. This approach is employed in the visionary pragmatism advocated by Patricia Hill Collins. She raises three questions as challenges to any critical social theory that I use as guides for this work.

> First, does this social theory speak the truth to people about the reality of their lives? …Does this social theory equip people to resist oppression? IS this social

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[86] Kretzman and McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out*, 9.

> theory functional as a tool for social change?...Does this critical social theory move people to struggle? For oppressed groups, this question concerns how effectively critical social theory provides moral authority to struggles for self definition and self-determination.[87]

This approach is about initiating change. Its goal is to speak to people, not about people. Collins limits her discussion to group self definition and determination but in this project I will extend that to include personal self definition and determination through the public sphere. I will argue that we should rethink our idea of what counts as political and that this rethinking compels us to broaden our notion of the public sphere to include the public creation of forms of life, like those attempted by the community builders. In this chapter, I have made several initial assumptions about the primacy of the individual, the nature of freedom as autonomy and control over social institutions, more most must be said about these things.

Keeping in mind the commitments I have just sketched in this chapter, in the next two chapters, I will take a first step to sure up my position by engaging the traditional philosophical conversation about the public sphere as it appears in the works of John Dewey and Hannah Arendt, in Chapters Two and Three, respectively. Dewey and Arendt offer two divergent theories of political subjectivity and the public that have preoccupied democracy theorists for the last fifty years.

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[87] Collins, *Fighting Words*, 198-199.

Chapter Two: Framing the Problem: John Dewey and The Public

I. Distinguishing the Public

What is the public sphere? How does one point out, delineate, describe something that is not so real as to displace air in space or be photographed for reference? In the sedimentation of its uses, the public implies its private and that opens up a whole other line of question about where and how that sphere of living and doing ends. We philosophers like to make distinctions, to make things clear and less obtuse, to make the messy neat, and the neat categorical. Not much escapes our omnivorous attentions. The public, however, like many of our favorite provisions, eludes precision because we are like so many chefs in one kitchen unable to agree on what goes in the pot. The public is at once described as the sphere of politics, equated with the media, considered the open arena for the formation of general opinion and the realm of action. It is described as dead, as dying, as alive, as closed, open and even as illusory.

America's philosopher of democracy,[88] the pragmatist John Dewey raised the problem of the public in the 1920's. His diagnosis of the public as most often fragmented, sometimes virtually nonexistent, in need of adequate procedures of formation and rules of communication would predate, but remain relevant, to some of the most influential democracy theories of our time. Before Jurgen Habermas and the cadre of theorists who have since offered theories of communicative action and deliberative democracy there was John Dewey's small tract on the public, *The Public and its Problems.* In this chapter, I will consider Dewey's diagnosis of the problem of the public sphere in that text. Dewey offers several inroads toward a vision of a creative public sphere with widened possibilities of political subjectivity for individuals when he articulates the necessity of the local and an experimental approach to politics that emphasizes the productive nature of that activity as well as the potential of democracy as an end in itself. However, Dewey's naiveté about the effectiveness of communication and his neglect of power relations require us to seek out further sources for our task.

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[88] Cf. David Fott. *John Dewey: America's Philosopher of Democracy.* Lanham*:* Rowman and Littlefield, 1998.

II. Dewey's Diagnosis

In 1925, Walter Lippmann declared the public sphere a phantom.[89] In a line of argument characteristic of Left intellectuals after the First World War, Lippmann asserted that nothing like the public, as the informed, communal basis of democratic society, existed. For Lippmann, the public was an illusion because every individual's understanding was mediated through an increasingly mass culture that prevented reflective citizenship due to the proliferation of defining stereotypes and consumerism that had become constitutive of each individual. Lippman saw direct democracy as a pipedream. The best that could be hoped for was the election of elite experts that could better filter out the irrationality of the media and technology as representatives. Although he shared Lippmann's worry over what critic Stanley Aronowitz calls the "decline of the democratic public," in his response to Lippmann, *The Public and Its Problems,* John Dewey attempted to solidify the phantom public by redefining its characteristics and assisting on its possibility even in face of the great challenge of mass society. Dewey set as his task the resuscitation of what he believed to be an ailing democracy.

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[89] Walter Lippman. *The Phantom Public.* New York: Macmillan, 1927.

In the *Public and Its Problems,* Dewey writes, “the outstanding problem of the Public is discovery and identification of itself.”[90] Dewey alternately describes the public, as eclipsed, disorganized, shadowy, multiple, and nonexistent. All of these instances, even in their apparent contradictions, are Dewey’s attempts to describe the supreme failure of the American democracy as it existed in his day with the movement toward mass culture and away from local, participatory pioneer American democracy.

Philosophers work best with a crisis, we declare it, we set out to clarify the problem, set up a method for amelioration, and then critique the solution. The crisis that Dewey thought he had to address was the tenuous relationship between politics as the realm of social good and the huge and seemingly sudden advances in industry which created a scale and scope of social interaction beyond anything that had previously been experienced. Mass culture created, according to Dewey, new modes of mobility and communication which, because they were allowed to develop unintentionally, created vast and intricate consequences for large segments of an ill-informed populace. Hence Dewey’s democratic crisis.

In our times, at least in my estimation of today, the crisis of democracy that creates the problem of the public is not mass consumer society and the inability of people to form publics through which to form public opinion. Rather, the crisis of our democracy is the institutionalized ineffectiveness of publics, both real and imagined. Publics exist,[91] their problem is not that they do not communicate, or do not know what the issues are, or cannot because of a lack of education or expertise make judgments of the issues. We have more forums to talk about public issues than ever before.[92] The problem of the public today is that even if the public's members know that there are problems and have the desire to search out and offer solutions to those problems, most members of the public do not have access to viable options to put these solutions into effect. Moreover, these publics as possible remedies for depersonalized mass politics have not been theorized correctly. So, whereas Dewey sought to create a Great Community of cooperative communicators to fix his public's problem, our current crises requires a more effective public of enabled individuals.

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[90] John Dewey. *The Public and Its Problems.* Denver: Holt, 1927,1954. 185.

[91] The question could be raised about the use of the plural form of public. Are there many publics? Or is there just one? If we define a public as the space of politics, it seems to me that having multiple, interconnected publics is not problematic. The idea of multiple publics, or sites of politics, is recurring concern of the dissertation.

III. Deweyan Individuals and Political Subjectivity

Dewey attempts to set his view of individuality apart from the notion of individualism prevalent in the political thought of his day. According to Dewey, individualism sets up a false dichotomy between the individual and the social. Like the social constructivists of our time, Dewey argues it is senseless to speak of the individual outside of the associations of which s/he is a member. Our knowledge, our communication, our identities, are associational. Therefore, an individualism that endows individuals powers of autonomy that somehow precede the social sphere, are theories which serve to sever the importance and necessity of sociality. Dewey has a point. Individuality is expressed in sociality. There is no isolating the individual from social context. The individual, however, is not reducible to the associations in which she/he is apart. Dewey recognizes this irreducibility of the individual but seems to skirt the issue by focusing instead on how the individual is constituted by and functions in the groups of which s/he is a member. Our question must then be, is Dewey's focus on the substantial nature of group membership too limiting for our purposes?[93]

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[92] The internet, television, print and radio create a scale of media whose accessibility and publicity exceed any previous form.

Dewey's conception of the self has been criticized as weak. While many critics of Dewey may be concerned with the lack of psychological depth Dewey gives to his individuals, I think the real failure of Dewey's conception of the self is his relative lack of attention to the nature of the individual's effective power. While Dewey contributes the beginnings of an associational self to our project and even an idea of what creativity may mean in politics, ultimately as the "philosopher of community" in a strong sense, Dewey leaves us wanting in our search for a wider political subjectivity for individuals.

Unlike many critics of Dewey and in line with more sympathetic expositors of his thought, I see a coherent, unifying conception of the individual throughout his writings on politics and experience. Dewey admonishes that the individual is an individual only in virtue of her/his interactions with their environment, both social and physical. In his organic view of the individual Dewey emphasizes "integrated individuality" based in "common experience."**[94]** Although he is often thought of as one of the most prominent proponents of American-style liberalism, Dewey took pains to set his philosophy part from what he saw as the misconceived projects of intellectualist academic philosophy that advocated an individualism that he did not believe was possible nor desirable.

According to Dewey, individualism has its origin in a critique of traditional society. In traditional societies, individuals were constrained by essentializing group memberships whose particular desires often led to the sacrifice of personal desires, needs and bodies. Group reason and rationality not only trumped individual desire and initiative but suppressed it. Thus, as a form of protection, individualism extolled the merits of individual rationality and the ethical priority of individuals, giving theoretical support to the oppositional nature of the individual to society. By making the opposition between society and individual fundamental, individualism set the tone for philosophical thinking about the nature of association. Any interference or influence by others, state or otherwise, became an infringement upon individual freedom. Dewey, by asserting the necessarily associational nature of individuals attempted to reinsert the individual into society. Most importantly, Dewey challenged the view of the pre-social rationality of the individual. Theories of freedom and autonomy grounded in a reason that presupposed that either freedom or autonomy could be expressed outside of individuals socially interacting with others, did not make sense to Dewey on the grounds of experience. Dewey, however, did not think that individuals as agents were unimportant. He sought to reconcile the choice theories of indivdualism with the theories of constitutive community.

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[94] Mathew Flamm. "The Demanding Community: Politicization of the Individual after Dewey." *Education and Culture*. Volume 22, No. 1, 2006. 35-54. Cf. 38, 42.

Individuals, according to Dewey, have a “dual capacity.” They are have both private interests and a public station. In *The Public and Its Problem*, Dewey sketches out the distinction between the private and public in unsatisfactory terms. He asserts it is the consequences of actions which characterize them as either public or private. A private consequence affects only those directly involved. Its origination is easily traced, You and I plan a hiking trip with one another. A few days before our trip, after you have bought all of our gear and rented the cabin on the top of the mountain, I choose to stay home with my cat. This differs from a public concern in Dewey’s conceptualization, because only you and your immediate plans were affected by my decision not to go. Whereas, a public concern is of consequence to more than just the actors directly involved. Suppose, that instead of it just being you and I discussing a personal trip, we were city planners attempting to construct a series of roads. While you and I are still the people talking about what will happen, the consequences of the actions we take are public because they affect more than just you and me.

Although Dewey recognized that an individual's public actions may just be extensions of her/his private interests, he leaves this relationship under-theorized. Further, the distinction between public and private based upon consequences is subject to much revision. What constitutes public consequences is, on first glance for Dewey, something that effects a "large number of people." What constitutes a large number of people? Feminist and critical race theorists have successfully challenged the numerical distinction of the public and private on the grounds that many of the concerns now acknowledged as public, such as, domination in the family, domestic violence and residential segregation, are things that were once private matters. It seems Dewey was conscious of such objections. He recognized that what counts as public may indeed change. In fact, "new publics" form out of private initiatives. It is through communication that private matters become recognized as public. But how does this relate to the claim that what is public is that which is consequence to large numbers of people?

Perhaps, we can think of it as consciousness raising. While the private instances of prejudice and sexual discrimination I face affect only me and perhaps a few other people like me, if I organize people around this issue and bring this up in the public, political space, if it catches on, it becomes a public matter. Many people may not have even considered the private events of their lives, such as store clerks following them around the store or being ignored by cab drivers as discriminatory and endemic of wider social problems until someone like me decides to put a name and face on the issues. Around these now named issues, we form a group and pooling our resources we lobby the government to intervene. However, commentators on Dewey have argued that he was against just this sort of interest group practice I am suggesting.

Dewey's critics and defenders alike locate his rejection of the use of factionalism or interest group politics in public discourse due to his commitment to the "integrated personality," sometimes called the integrated individual and what has been called the "model of social cooperation."[95] Dewey saw the social interactions of individuals as formative of the self and felt that education policies could strengthen the sense of the in-common. Although he sometimes expressed the benefits of diversity, Dewey it seems was more interested in solidifying the in-common than addressing the substantive and persistent differences of lived experience. Diversity was good only in so far as it served as a tool for the social deliberation about public problems and not as a challenge to the common good.[96]

A defender of Dewey's concept of the common good, Alfonso Damico summarizes Dewey's position in opposition to pluralists (of which I count myself) well. He writes, "The pluralist's focus on decision making as the political act limits questions about the common good to the nature of the policy adopted. The pluralist's community is instrumental in that partisans have some stake in reaching an agreement – each side can get part of what it wants."[97] The pluralist, who uses group membership and subsequent political action in order to affect change in a political policy, like my example of organizing around my plight, is a partisan who neglects the importance of the shared experience from which the common good is created.

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[95] Alex Honneth. "Democracy as Reflexive Cooperation: John Dewey and the Theory of Democracy Today." *Political Theory*. Vol. 26, No. 6. (Dec. 1998), 763-783.

[96] Cf. J.E. Tiles. "Introduction: Political Theory and Social Practice," in *John Dewey: Critical Assessments. Volume II: Political Theory and Social Practice*. London: Routledge, 1992, 1-21. On page 9, Tiles writes, "For when it came to practice, Dewey's attention appears to have focused more on how to keep diversity from being divisive and on how to minimize conflict, than on how to reconstruct the economic structures which generate oppressive divisions within society, or on how to harvest the fruits of cultural differences."

Damico, Matthew C. Flamm and James Campbell agree that Dewey's conception of the common good arises out his conception of the integrated individual.[98] As stated before, Dewey sought to dispel the myth of the pre-social individual. For all of his liberal leanings, Dewey suggests a social individual that is far removed from the liberal individual who is free only in so far as s/he is not being coerced from the outside. In *The Public and Its Problems*, Dewey expresses the integrated personality of the social individual in relation to groups through two conditions of democracy, one for the individual and one for groups.

> From the standpoint of the individual, it consists in having a responsible share according to capacity in forming and directing the activities of the groups to which one belongs and in participating according to need in the values which the groups sustain. From the standpoint of the groups, it demands liberation of the potentialities of members of a group in harmony with the interests and goods which are common. Since every individual is a member of many groups, this

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[97] Alfonso J. Damico. "Impractical America: Reconsideration of the Pragmatic Lesson." in *John Dewey: Critical Assessments. Volume II: Political Theory and Social Practice*. Tiles, editor. London: Routledge, 1992, 274.

[98] Cf. The Damico article cited above, as well as, Matthew Flamm. "The Demanding Community: Politicization of the Individual after Dewey." *Education and Culture*. Vol. 22, No. 1, (2006), 35-54 and James Campbell. "Dewey and Democracy" in *Dewey Reconfigured: Essays on Deweyan Pragmatism.* Casey Haskins and David I. Seiple, editors. New York: State University of New York Press, 1999, 1-17.

> specification cannot be fulfilled except when different groups interact flexibly and fully in connection with other groups.[99]

We are social individuals who achieve our personhood through group memberships. The goal should be to make those memberships more fulfilling and reflective of the "shared experiences" of individual members. And these integrated, social individuals would ideally have wide spheres of freedom because their group memberships, when they come into contact with another, not only reinforce the group memberships but also perform a "give and take" that is less limiting than essentialized claims of group membership.

This is certainly an ideal. Conflicting group memberships often only result in wider spheres of freedom for individuals after much risk and systemic rule change. Often these group memberships and the "harmony with the interests and good which are common" require rigid conceptions of right, wrong and the self, that in breaking with them you are either punished or expelled from the group. Consider the cases of openly gay ministers of churches whose dogmas regard homosexuality as a sin. Professing oneself as, or being exposed as gay, leaves the ministers open to ridicule, rebuke, excommunication and violence. The common interest of the group is not benign in the way Dewey suggests and in many cases cannot be as flexible as he hoped. The minister's mobility between group memberships permits that he also be a member of a theater group and even of a secret society of Free Masons, but not a homosexual. In rare cases these ministers have been allowed to keep their congregations and pulpits but not without high personal costs.[100] It is this risk of individual choice coupled with the interplay of relations of power between individuals and groups, and as well as among groups, that are too easily mistaken in Dewey's faith in the scientific attitude, which is arguably a product of the liberal critique of society.

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[99] Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 147.

[100] It is also important to note, that free radical members of groups not only change the groups but they disrupt and destroy the group. This is the claim made by group members against the gay ministers. If they were to permit them to keep their memberships, they

What counted for Dewey was not factionalism that found its resolution in cooperation based on temporary agreement and tradeoff but a "faith" in a form of "moral democracy" as a "way of life". As previously stated, Dewey claimed individualism set up an unnecessary dichotomy between the individual and society. The individual as a discreet agent is only thinkable in association with others. Mere association is not what moral democracy sought to attain.

> But while associated behavior is, as we have already noted, a universal law, the fact of association does not of itself make a society. This demands, as we have also seen, perception of the consequences of a joint activity and of the distinctive share of each element in producing it. Such perception creates a common interest; that is concern of the part of each in the joint actions and in the contribution of each of its members to it. There exists something truly social and not merely associative.**[101]**

Following this line of thought, Eugenie Gates-Robinson asserts Dewey believed that "we are intelligent together or not at all," and that "social intelligence is based in communication and a capacity for critical consciousness."**[102]** This capacity for critical consciousness is Dewey's greatest contribution to our search. As Mark Whipple observes, "Dewey saw in democracy the opportunity for all citizens to achieve both "self-realization" and positive fraternal association. Democracy is not merely a means to end,

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would be in direct conflict with one of the organizing principles of their group. Not slightly altering the group but changing it altogether, raising issues about the desires for recognition and sustainability of group membership that were introduced in Chapter One.

[101] Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 188.

[102] Eugenie Gates-Robinson. "The Private and Its Problem: A Pragmatic View of Reproductive Choice," in *Dewey Reconfigured: Essays on Deweyan Pragmatism.* Haskins and Sieple, editors. New York: SUNY Press, 1999, 175.

but an end as well...To Dewey, the participatory model of democracy creates the conditions for the greatest realization of broad individual and collective capacities."[103]

According to Dewey, the public was in eclipse because it did not have the signs and symbols to recognize itself as a public. When the public did emerge it emerged as an inchoate public that did not have the ability to comprehend the root of the consequences it rose up against, nor did it have a shared experience which to rally around and use as "critical consciousness." In *The Public and Its Problems* Dewey argues, that the mass culture produces too many technical problems. That the public at large and its lack of ability to comprehend these technical problems and their consequences were unable to be an effective force. Dewey believed that a public, a proper public anyway, required people who were educated about the issues as best they could be and who possessed a certain sort of civic education. "The essential need, in other words, is the improvement of the methods and conditions of debate, discussion and persuasion. That is the problem of the public."**[104]** Like communicative democracy theories that would follow, Dewey's emphasis on open dialogue as the road to a shared public opinion, vastly underestimates what happens in the political sphere.

Putting such a high premium on acceptable forms of communication and appropriate types of education, Dewey mischaracterizes exactly what we want to do and what we can do in the public sphere. Dewey's idea that the public of his time was eclipsed rested on the necessity of what Stanley Aronowitz critiques as an anti-democratic notion of an "Aristocrat education" as the prerequisite for effective citizenship. What the public needed was not just more opportunities to participate in governance; Dewey criticizes the public when it does emerge of obscuring the issues and often making things worse. The masses just didn't know enough to be a public. For Dewey the public is organized around a concern for the common good and it would seem that the common good can only be brought about through educated deliberation and agreement. Although he is more optimistic than Plato about the ability of the masses to comprehend the forms, Dewey, at least in *The Public and Its Problems*, is far closer to the old Greek than some of his devoted following would like. I say this because however much Dewey may have thought our intelligence was formed out of community, he had in mind an ideal sort of citizen with an ideal type of attitude developed through an ideal education at the mercy of an idealized science.

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[103] Mark Whipple."The Dewey-Lippmann Debate Today: Communication Distortions, Reflective Agency, and Participatory Democracy." *Sociological Theory*. Vol. 23, No. 2. (June 2005), 161.

[104] Dewey. *The Public and Its Problems,* 208.

Dewey characterizes the beginnings of American democracy by the "pioneer conditions" which fostered face-to-face relationships and direct democratic governing, the mark of what Dewey calls "genuine community life". This genuine community life was agrarian and stable. In the pioneer community, Dewey alludes to an integrated individuality that was expressed through face-to-face relationships.

> Pioneer conditions put a high premium on personal work, skill, ingenuity, initiative and adaptability, and upon neighborly sociability. The township or some not much larger area was the political unit, the town meeting the political medium, and roads, schools, the peace of the community, were the political objectives. The state was a sum of such units, and the national state a federation – unless perchance a confederation- of states. The imagination of the founders did not travel far beyond what could be accomplished and understood in a congeries of self-governing communities.[105]

Although there was a hierarchy of neighborhood, town, to city, to state, and ultimately to nation, in the end, the sector that set the rules was the local, small scale community. As quoted above, Dewey thought that the writers of the Constitution were not able to foresee the great shift from local, agricultural communities to a mass society where the interdependency of people increased with their new mobility and the leaps and bounds made during industrialization.

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[105] Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 111.

Dewey's appreciation of the lost pioneer community has been criticized as a form of idealized, conservative communitarianism. Setting pioneer conditions as the example requires not only a dubious history of early America but is not a model that we should find appealing if what we want to achieve is greater political subjectivity. Although founded with the ideals of freedom of religion and speech as core values, the small towns and states Dewey romanticizes were rife with discrimination based on gender, race, and religion and used measures that would be intolerable to us to preserve longstanding hierarchies of social and political control. These are a few of the charges that are persuasive as reasons why parts of Dewey's theory of community must be either stricken from our approach or must be adapted to our pursuit of a creative public sphere that recognizes the primacy of each individual's political subjectivity in a democratic theory that must take into account power relations in a heterogeneous society. In particular, a localized community as an important space of effective political action is worth salvaging from the idealized conservative public that appears frequently in Dewey's discussion in the *Public and Its Problems* and in his writings on democracy more generally.[106]

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[106] Cf. John Dewey. *Democracy and Education.* in *The Middle Works, 1899-1924,* Jo Ann Boydston, editor. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1976, 1983. In Chapter Five, I have attempted to argue that pluralism as a fact does not lead down the slippery slope of extreme relativism that would sanction all pluralism as a value. Thereby, giving us ethical grounds to oppose forms of segregation and intolerance.

In order to defend Dewey’s conception of community against a “politicized conception of the individual,” Matthew C. Flamm aligns Dewey’s conception of community with those found in works of theorists of civic republicanism and communitarianism who critique the prevailing liberal individualism that has proliferated in the shadow of John Rawls. Although he mentions the civic republicanism of Michael Walzer and Charles Taylor, Flamm focuses on the communitarian critique of liberalism found in Michael Sandel and cites Sandel’s own estimation of the Deweyan project. Citing Sandel, Flamm contends Dewey’s lament about “the loss of community was not simply the communal sentiments, such as fraternity and fellow feeling. It was also the loss of the common identity and shared public life necessary to self government.”[107] Flamm pushes Sandel’s assessment in a different direction however, because while Sandel is right in asserting that for Dewey the loss of the public is the loss of the sphere of self-governance of common problems, Sandel’s civic virtues are problematic because they ultimately fail to recapture the public nature of the common good, sacrificing it to private, group related ends that are dangerous to the “the integrity of individuality”. [108]

Instead, Flamm observes that Dewey’s project is about theorizing democracy as a “form of life.” This project, according to Cornell West, is a part of an American pragmatist theodicy following the work Ralph Waldo Emerson. And other commentators have also called Dewey’s attachment to democracy as a form of life as a type of faith.

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[107] Flamm, “The Demanding Community,” 38.

[108] “The problem is that in his advocacy of civic virtue Sandel never tells us how the integrity of individuality is secured against collective dismemberment.” Flamm, “The Demanding Community,” 38.

This faith in democracy as a form of life is connected to community because for Dewey, “Democracy is the ideal of community itself.”[109]

Deweyan community revolves around a concept of the common good agreed upon through deliberation utilizing “free and open inquiry”, or the scientific attitude as the guide to making “warranted assertions”. One could argue that this idealized, democratic community can be differentiated from communitarian efforts because it posits as an ideal, not a traditional community of any particular social group but a pragmatic ideal whose concern is not with the content of the community life but the form of deliberation and interaction that is necessary to democracy. Necessarily experimental, Deweyan community even with its emphasis on the common good, is not a conservative communitarianism, following this line of thought, because it does not privilege past forms of life and the risk of the demise of its own preferred institutions are built in. Unlike those groups that seek to preserve their identities through identity politics, here groups are made tenuous by the transactional relationship of individual to community mentioned above.

Yet, this defense of Deweyan community against the charge of communitarian conservatism does not address Dewey’s underlying assumptions which make those of us committed to certain brands critical race theory and feminism suspicious on several accounts. First, as argued above in the case of the gay ministers, group memberships often prescribe rigid conditions. Even if we recognize the “cross-cutting” nature of identity as Dewey tries to when he theorizes the transactional nature of groups, there are some groups that are intolerant of one another. Dewey assumes that the mere fact that we are identified by and identified with numerous groups will necessarily make these groupings less rigid. Although that may be the hope of many liberal leaning theorists, Dewey and these theorists have put faith in a “progressive” view of human society. Dewey did not advocate wholesale assimilation and in fact was vocal in his distrust of “melting pot” theories prevalent in his time.[110] However, Dewey’s view that under the correct conditions in the public, as a public, we could all get along, is grounded in an underlying assumption of the “in-common” that is challenged daily by groups.

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[109] Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems,* 148

Second, the defense of Deweyan community takes as its standard a view of rationality, communication and deliberation that is derived from a form of reason and science that, at its best, has been ignorant of forms of knowing and acting in non-majority groups, and at worse, dismissive and oppressive to members of those groups. Thus, failing to address the problems of privileging a “scientific attitude,” in a world where many of us have historically been the objects of science and not the creators of what has counted as ‘scientific knowledge’ or its methods, Dewey’s community of “scientists” gives us pause. Moreover, the dependency on thinly described notions of common ends reached through deliberation found in Dewey, ignores the unequal relations of power as the source of majority of our social ills that restricting politics hopes to combat.

Who can deny the success, pragmatically speaking, of the scientific attitude? Even if it is the cultural production of a privileged class that oppressed large segments of society in its formation, the attitude itself, cannot be denied as the best alternative to some form of Kantian universal reason or irrationalism, right? Certainly, the suspicion of the scientific attitude that I am trying to get at here is not a rejection of its previous success. It is, however, a caution about its universalizability and exposes it as a historical form of rationality and not as some form outside of the context.

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[110] Cf. J. Christopher Eisle. “Dewey’s Concept of Cultural Pluralism.” in *John Dewey: Critical Assessments. Volume II: Political Theory and Social Practice*. Tiles, editor. London: Routledge, 1992. 157 - 167.

The method itself suggests certain means and certain ends. Remember, this is what Aronowitz criticizes as the undemocratic moment of Dewey's philosophy. For individuals to appear in public, on this view, it is required that they present themselves with the right attitude, that the rules of play have already been set, and that will continue to hinder the participation of certain people.

Indeed, Dewey took away the name of the public based on the judgment that the public was not prepared or appropriate to be called such. In fact, his educational recommendations to promote the scientific attitude to further the common ends, suggests a contempt of the "common." His ideals of free, open communication are coupled with a judgment that people are unprepared and unable to make the correct sorts of judgments because they have the wrong sorts of attitudes and training. Dewey was optimistic about the people's ability to learn the scientific attitude, but this sounds like so much paternalism. Must a person be committed to a formalized, distant attitude when they step into the public?

What if the nature of the issue at hand is highly contentious and of grave importance to the public? Must I be polite, not raise my voice and know the correct motion of Robert's Rules of Order when the topic of discussion is the leveling of my neighborhood to make room for a new highway or the harassment of my nephews by police on their walk to and from school? And what happens if neither of these issues are so pressing at the time but I find myself sitting in the city planning meeting where the pros and cons of the proposed highway’s affects on the neighborhood are being discussed and I am the only neighborhood person in the room? But I have no credentials, no expertise other than I know that this highway, that they have assured me will meet the state’s, albeit low, environmental and noise standards, will disrupt the peace of my neighborhood and incite the already bad asthma of my two children and those of my neighbor Lucille next door. What place does my non-expert, non-scientific claim have in this situation? I have read up on the effect of highways in urban centers at my local library and come with an armload of pictures detailing how dangerously close the highway will run to the school in my area. I have a tear in my eye and my voice cracks in frustration when I explain the unintended consequences of the highway. The city planners tell me that I am making my private problem out to be more than I should, that they have considered the options and run the right tests, and that what is good for us all is the new road, what am I to do? In this community of people with the “correct” public attitude, I am powerless. Power masquerades in the guise of procedure. Procedure formulated by a community that I am excluded from.

But, couldn’t the defender of Dewey’s scientific attitude say, that I have not only misread what he means by the scientific attitude in making it the attitude of a certain class of people, but I have also missed Dewey’s point, that if we all had the scientific attitude my concern would no longer be a problem? That if used correctly and normalized through our institutions, the scientific attitude would create a social atmosphere of cooperation that did not privilege experts but put them into the service of the public?

In his lectures on *Liberalism and Social Action*, Dewey asserts “Liberalism has to assume the responsibility for making it clear that intelligence is a social asset and is clothed with a function as public as its origin, in the concrete, in social cooperation."**[111]** The moral claim that we should use our intelligence like a community of scientists and come together to create a society that would best suit our common ends is arguably a persuasive moral claim. In fact, the ends of more freedom and more equality of this work is a moral claim itself and may be subsumed under Dewey's strong claim about the purpose of intelligence. However, like all moralizing, the grandness of the claim is also its foil. How do we make people, whose desires, needs and attitudes are disparate and even opposed, decide to hold hands and sing koombyah as they grow in intelligence together? Dewey offered education as the solution but knew more had to be done if we were to accomplish his great community. He also recognized that individuals in their private persons were not as malleable as they were often painted to be and that there were people who would resist such moralizing.

Another assumption reflected in Dewey's adherence to a scientific attitude inspired by the early Charles Peirce about the democratic of scientific inquiry, is that individuals would all have to acquiesce to the findings of our inquiries, leading us not create the "in-common" but rather to discover it. Quentin Anderson claims that Dewey developed this theory of truth throughout his career, always emphasizing the capacity for personal detachment and rational agreement on common matters.[112] What this position neglects is not only the fact that a plurality of perspective may lead to a plurality of solutions to the problems that trouble us but it also emphasizes a technical means-end rationality that seems to belie Dewey’s faith in democracy as not merely a tool of administration of means but democracy as an end on to itself.

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[111] John Dewey, *Liberalism and Social Action*, New York: Capricorn Books, 1963, 67.

[112] Quentin Anderson. "John Dewey's American Democrat," in *John Dewey Critical Assessments, Volume II: Political Theory and Social Practice*. J.E. Tiles, editor. London: Routledge, 1992.

In the face of this resistance and the infeasibility of the goal of drastically changing the worldview of each and every person around us, I still make the moral claim that the way that we might actually achieve some degree of increased freedom and equality in political life is through clamoring for a change in the governing structure of people’s local communities. I do not think that this change is all that is necessary to alleviate the social ills Dewey saw and I agree are still a problem, along with a host of others. But it is a change that has an effect on people’s lives that may be the difference between a life devoid of public worth, in the sense that these people are never allowed to step into the public arena as actors and decision makers leaving them vulnerable to the whims of others who do not know or care about their desires and needs, and one in which at least some of the many obstacles that obstruct their lives are removed. Removing obstacles to participation and creating avenues where that participation is not mere talk but leads to effective action, invests in each individual political subject not only a common stake in what comes to pass, as Dewey hoped for, but also serves as a protective function.

Flamm and Damico attempt to assuage us raced, gendered critic’s suspicions of any political theory that does not prioritize power talk in Dewey’s case by asserting that while Dewey may not have theorized power in a way we would have liked, he was not ignorant of its effects and sought solutions. Moreover, criticisms by theorists such as Cornell West and myself, that charge Dewey with a dangerous naivety about the small local communities he championed and are somewhat reluctant to share his faith in the ability of people to reach cooperative solutions to major social problems, have just miscast Dewey's project.

Dewey's high regard for the pioneer conditions of early American democracy find expression not only in his advocacy of the strengthening of local community but also in his insistence on communication in his theory of democracy. In small communities, people were able to know each other and assess the causes of the consequences that they deliberated about. Communication was simple and straightforward in this characterization of the local community. However, in a mass society, communication is obscured much like the roots of the consequences we want to deliberate upon. Communication is also full of useless material and is dangerously frivolous. Dewey's democratic faith rests in "perfecting communication."[113] This sentiment is reminiscent of the recently popular forms of proceduralist democracy.

In his consideration of American democracy and Dewey's legacy, Ralph Sleeper argues Dewey's diagnosis of the public of the late 1920s as the failure of communication in *The Public and Its Problems* is still apposite.

> For the root problem in every case can be traced to the breakdown of communication. We have the means of communication as never before in history. But what is communicated too often represents a sharp and tragic contrast between the technical excellence of the media and the intellectual inferiority of its substantive content. The ideas and ideals congruent with the improved means of communication are not communicated. The tools for formation of an intelligent and organized public are available, but they are not employed. Above all, we have not yet learned how to transform our communications media into the means of conducting transactional relations between individuals, and between the public

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[113] Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems,* 155.

> which they might then constitute and the agencies which are chosen to represent them.[114]

In a succinct summary that points to the major thesis of Dewey's diagnosis of the problem of the public, that is the Great Society which is created by mass production can only be transformed into the Great Community (Great Democratic Community) through improved communication of intelligent ideas, Sleeper allows us to raise a few red flags against this thesis.

First, Sleeper claims "the root problem in every case can be traced to the breakdown of communication." Is this so? What sort of problems are Sleeper, and by extension Dewey, referring to? Problems of systemic poverty, disenfranchisement, violent crime and gender, race, and sexual based discrimination through policy and practice, do not appear to be primarily problems of communication. They are problems of economic distribution, cultural imperialism, status hierarchy, entrenched racism, but communication? Dewey assumed many social problems could be solved in part by transforming education a claim closely tied to communication, the pros and cons of his approach to education reform are still hotly debated.

Second, following Dewey's argument closely, Sleeper contends "the ideas and ideals congruent with the improved means of communication are not communicated." The condescending tone of such an argument seems just offensive to democratic sensibility and counterfactual to our current technologies of communication. The internet, television and the ever increasing cross-cultural interchange of ideas in every arena, sports, science, medicine, in the university and in the board room, suggest that people do indeed talk. Who isn't talking? What else could be communicated? Who has failed? There are message boards, newspapers, entire TV channels and chat rooms dedicated to every aspect of our living together. More people are spending more and more time communicating about what they think are the social issues of our times and potential solutions. What Dewey mourned for and what Sleeper laments about is the anti-intellectualism of the media. Why must we intellectualize the media? Who does such an intellectualization exclude? What sort of social control would be necessary to have an "intelligent" media? Who would be able to exercise that power? And finally, is it a power that we should tolerate?

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[114] Ralph Sleeper. "John Dewey and the Metaphysics of American Democracy," in *John Dewey: Critical Assessments Volume II Political Theory and Practice.* J.E. Tiles, editor. London: Routledge, 1992, 41-42.

Third, Sleeper cites the "transactional nature of relationships" as the thing that the media is failing to realize and hence, the problem of the public. At the end of *The Public and Its Problems*, Dewey characterizes this failure as a logical failure, a failure of dialogue. He is concerned that shared experiences are not had and communicated through the media. This claim refers back to the desire to intellectualize the media. In fact, the proliferation of communication that Sleeper cites and any quick perusal of the television or the internet indicates, often involves hotly debated topics which are properly political, an abundance of science and technology focused forums as well as what might be seen by higher thinkers as trivial.

Why is the personal and trivial so bad? Sure, my personal desire to change the world, to stop hunger, genocide and domestic violence often makes me cringe about the amount of time the evening news spends chasing around mediocre movie stars or profiling the urban castles of rap artists, but why can't there be room for those things which we seem to find entertaining? Dewey, Sleeper, and others who warn us about the dangers of entertainment, contend it obscures us from the important issues. Indeed propaganda has historically been used as a divergence tactic. Certainly the proliferation of forms of communication may have this effect, but it may also alert us to an ever-widening set of social concerns that mere “political” communication may overlook.

That the media is a tool that reinforces stereotypes and hierarchy, thereby limiting opportunities for certain people and groups to appear in the public and be considered full standing members of society, is a more enduring challenge. Patricia Hill Collins has called this effect of media representation (along with other techniques of oppression), part of a new politics of containment.[115] In the new politics of containment, proscribed roles are used to mask racism and gender based oppression. The question becomes how do we counteract the ill effects of the media without assuming the role of censor or intellectualizer.

III. In-roads to Understanding Political Subjectivity

I have considered Dewey’s integrated individual and charged that it is under-theorized because of Dewey’s scant commentary on power relations. That charge stems from a suspicion that in his hopes to “integrate” individuals into society, Dewey mistook conformity and agreement for the major role individuals had to play in regard to the formation of groups and the governing of society. Conformity and agreement with traditions, practices and institutions which do not serve to enrich the lives of, and widen the spheres of political action of each individual, do not seem promising for this project.

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[115] Cf. Patricia Hill Collins. *Fighting Words: Black Feminist Thought and the Fight for Social Justice.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.

However, in the search for the creative public sphere, Dewey does offer us a few in-roads by way of his considerations of imagination.

As stated earlier, deliberation and communication in themselves do not necessarily translate into effective action. Individuals may talk and consider many topics without ever doing anything or changing anything. The transformation of practice, the creation of forms of life and innovation in political practice require a vision of the future. By vision I do not mean some progressive push toward a telos, rather, vision in the sense of contemplating the desired consequences of the changes which one seeks to initiate. Dewey's conceptualization of the imagination serves that function.

Dewey attaches imagination to deliberation. When we deliberate, we consider possible options, we imagine, and in the end we act. This process is on-going. As Steven Fessmire quotes from Dewey's *Ethics*, "Deliberation is actually an imaginative rehearsal of various courses of conduct. We give way, we try, in our mind, some plan. Following its career through various steps, we find ourselves in imagination in the presence of the consequences that would follow."[116] Fessmire outlines a Deweyan program of imagination as a "moral art." He argues that through this process of "dramatic rehearsal" we are able to both think of individual options for action and judgment, as well as, develop the context for understanding our common experiences and creating and experimenting in and on our shared world. To use Deweyan imagination as a tool for our moral conduct, Fessmire writes,

> What is needed is twofold: (1) to wrest the complete meaning from tragic situations so that we are better prepared for future events, and (2) to transform

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[116] Steven Fessmire. "The Art of Moral Imagination," in *Dewey Reconfigured: Essay on Deweyan Pragmatism*. Haskins and Seiple, editors. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999, 137.

> crippling conditions that may yield to reconstruction so that the future might not merely repeat the past. Imagination expands our focus beyond a confused and dizzying present so that we can reflect and act in ways that may eventually bring about more desirable conditions.[117]

Imagination conceived of this way, helps us envisage the work we would like to be done in the public sphere as experimental but not groundless or directionless. While we may never be able "to wrest the complete meaning from tragic situations," we might be able to recognize the importance of individual experiences when we deliberate on the future. Attempting to get a "complete" view of the tragic begins to guarantee that each story of the past might have a legitimate space in which to be told. Further, justifying imagination as a useful tool of "reconstruction" supports claims of change and creativity in our political projects.

IV. Recovering the Local: The Potential and the Problems

At the end of *The Public and Its Problems,* Dewey is optimistic.

> The Great Community in a sense of free and full intercommunication, is conceivable. But it can never possess all the qualities which mark a local community. It will do its final work in ordering the relations and enriching the experience of local associations. The invasion and partial destruction of the life of the latter by outside uncontrolled agencies is the immediate source of the instability, disintegration and restlessness which characterize the present epoch...Vital and thorough attachments are bred only in the intimacy of an intercourse which is of necessity restricted in range.[118]

Dewey desired a transparent, orderly public sphere. On the level of the Great Community, he acknowledged that such a desire would always be partially fulfilled. He held out hope for a revival of the local to reinforce the Great Community. He rested his faith on a notion of local intimacy.

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[117] Fessmire, 'The Art of Moral Imagination," 146.

[118] Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems,* 211-212.

My desire to transfer effective political power to local communities are not nearly as optimistic. It is a result not of privileging the face to face as the intimate site of cooperation but of a more individualist concern. People, each person, may have more of a chance of equal treatment and a larger sphere of freedom, if they are allowed to participate in governance using their own judgment and imagination.

Yet, on the surface, my claim for the local runs into many of the same stumbling blocks as Dewey's. Who is to say that local communities will be tolerant communities? It is conceivable that enclaves of racists, zealots, and chauvinists will take full of advantage of my local publics to create and solidify practices inimical to freedom and equality. Secessionists and separatists ardently support the devolution of politics and the end of big government so that they might continue to exclude and oppress. Moreover, an honest look at the economic problems and the lack of infrastructure of most local communities that would benefit most from more local control suggests that they would not just be ineffective but that they would not survive without the benevolence of larger society in the form of national or state government.

These are just a few of the problems with the local as the site of widened possibilities for political subjectivity. These are problems that will be worked through in subsequent chapters. In particular, the problem of justice's relationship to freedom will be addressed. But before I move on to securing the local in general, my consideration of Dewey poses a more immediate particular problem- the problem of individual political subjectivity. Tied to the desire for an effective, creative public sphere which is intimately tied to the local, is that this sphere would be the arena for individuals to express more control over their lives. The power of Dewey's associational individual is under-theorized. Thus, in the next chapter we turn to another prominent thinker whose work on the public and the power of the individual is seminal in contemporary political thought, Hannah Arendt.

Chapter Three: The Promise and The Unforgivable: A Critique of the Use and Usefulness Hannah Arendt's Public Sphere and Political Subjectivity

I. Philosophical Comments

Philosophy, as well as the many other academic disciplines that share philosophy's deep care about the prior as substantial, proceeds in the form of running commentary. We would like to think of it as conversation or even dialogue with previous theories and theorists. It is, against the charges of its critics, one of the most historical disciplines. Not because it is so much interested in the dates of large battles or the reigns of sovereigns but each new work must establish its pedigree and choose sides in the ongoing wars of thought. One must mention Aristotle when we talk about sociality, and if we neglect Kant when we talk about the autonomy of the subject, we have missed the point of the endeavor. One must speak about the "relevant" past, if one is to do philosophy right. Even those of us who prefer arm chairs and a priori concepts to pragmatism and applied ethics, must make mention of our predecessors and attempt to work them into our works. At its best, philosophy may indeed proceed as an exchange of ideas which grows up, out, around and from those theories we find ourselves drawn to, or in many cases pushed toward. At its worst, philosophy, becomes an endless critique and comment on whatever vogue thought or thinker preoccupies the discipline in all of its disagreements at the time of our writings. Creating a lopsided, perpetual loop of engagement with texts and ideas that not only productively shape the parameters of the dialogue but more often than not fix the limits of what we can say, what we think to say and what we might feel brave enough to say.

The political theory of Hannah Arendt has captured a certain collective imagination of political theorists who are concerned with political subjectivity and the public sphere. This chapter does double duty, it stands as a testament to the reality of the argument I was just making about the philosophical necessity of commentary. I must comment upon Arendt because her thought forms much of the playing field of the game that I wish to play. And the other thing this chapter should reveal to the reader is that I find the fascination with Arendt as something itself that must be examined. After reading Arendt, I am concerned that her political theory is far more disturbing than helpful for those of us seeking to theorize freedom and political subjectivity in a way that promotes radical equality. This concern requires me to problematize the relationship of recent political thought with Arendt and question the appropriateness of appropriating her thought.

II. Arendt's Promise and My Unwillingness to Forgive

In her introduction to a recent edition of Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition*, Margaret Conovan points out that Arendt understood that the problems raised by the unpredictability of human action would never be solved once and for all but theorized that these problems could be countered, at least in part, "by the permanent possibility of taking further action" and "the human capacities to forgive and promise".[119] The purpose of this chapter on Arendt's public sphere and theory of political subjectivity is to consider the promise many have seen in her work for new ways of understanding politics. Here, I am using promise in a narrow sense of her thought's proposed usefulness for the resuscitation of a politics of freedom and the public sphere. Having spent some time with Arendt's writings and the ever-increasing commentary on Arendt, I have concluded that Arendt's theory is rife with unforgivable postulates, not the least of which are commitments to a heirarchical tectonics that serve to justify oppression and a trivialization of politics by elevating it to the realm of excellence in a world that requires we take necessity seriously.

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[119] Margaret Conovan. "Introduction" to *The Human Condition.* Hannah Arendt. Second Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, xviii.

I will engage Arendt in a manner that may seem contrary to the way her work is most often taken up. My engagement differs from other commentaries in at least two ways. Theorists tend to read Arendt's work as a suggestive whole, seeking to join her essays, books, and speeches into a unified theoretical frame. While I am sure such a task has its merits, I will not carry out such an analysis. My points of encounter with Arendt will be two of her major works *The Human Condition*, first published in 1958 and *On Revolution*, which appeared five years later in 1963.[120] The first is Arendt's sustained treatment of the nature of politics and political subjectivity, the latter, her historical consideration of the direct democracy found in what she terms "revolutionary council politics." The second reason my engagement will be different from most previous work on Arendt is because theorists also tend to read Arendt's life as explanation of, ground for, a reason to accept the illiberal moments of her thought. This too may yield fruit for further thought, but I find this interpretative methodology dubious. Indeed, interpretation runs as a recurring theme of this chapter. First, I will offer an interpretation of the Arendtian self and political actor, interrogating her assertion that the self is multiple and that identity is only achieved in the presence of others who can later tell a story about us. Narrative identity is both an easily accepted proposal on one hand but considering Arendt's public/private distinction, a wholly unacceptable root for political subjectivity on the other. I will argue the exclusionary basis of subjectivity and politics as the stage of that identity does none of the work theories of political freedom and equality need it to do. The limitations of the narrative identity Arendt asserts go hand in hand with the limitations of her concept of politics. Instead of attempting to justify the unjustifiable in Arendt by using her biography, or recourse to a "literary" explanation of her work,[121] I will reject the Greekophile politics and the public of Arendt's *Human Condition* and turn to the revolutionary council system Arendt praises in *On Revolution*, keeping in mind the contradiction inherent in and between the two works without attempting to unify them. Again, Arendt's theory of politics in *On Revolution* proves inadequate but it does bring to the fore consideration of localized direct democracy important to the task of rethinking the public sphere as a realm of creation and widened political agency.

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[120] Hannah Arendt. *On Revolution.* New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1963. And, Hannah Arendt. *The Human Condition.* Second Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

III. The Limits of Political Action and Identity in Arendt Are Its Foundations

Distilling what Arendt advocated about the Greek conception of politics for contemporary use from what she saw as admirable or as an interesting but not applicable comparison to contemporary practices is often difficult. This is no less so when considering the self. Arendt postulated selves. Self one, a hermeneutic, publicly constituted self and self two, an "existential" fragmented and multiple self. The public self finds its predecessor in the courageous Greek citizen, while the multiple self can be characterized by a certain existentialist psychology. Identity for Arendt is precarious due to the fact of multiple self which is only partly unified by the existence of identity granting others and the subsequent ability to have one's life made into the story of the hermeneutic self.

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[121] For a sustained treatment of Arendt's politics as justified through her "literary" style and intentions, see Shiraz Dossa, *The Public Realm and The Public Self: The Political Theory of Hannah Arendt*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1989. Dossa goes to great lengths to set Arendt apart from previous political thinkers and explain her disdain for all sorts of people and their suffering by recourse to calling her a literary thinker.

Who is Arendt's political actor? To answer that question we can start by considering what Arendt has to say about the nature of the self in general and then draw some troubling conclusions about the character of her political subject. Arendt sought the source of her self not in contemporary psychology or anthropology but in an interpretation of the self that she derives from the Greeks. Following Heidegger's destructive hermeneutics, Arendt hoped to save politics from the rise of the "social", by uncovering a hidden, forgotten meaning of politics from the Greeks. Maurizio d'Entrèves describes this method as part of Arendt's original contribution to rethinking our historical moment.

> ...Arendt's return to the original experience of the Greek *polis* represents an attempt to break the fetters of a worn-out tradition and to rediscover a past over which tradition has no longer a claim. Against tradition Arendt sets the criterion of genuineness, against the authoritative that which is forgotten, concealed, or displaced at the margins of history. Only in this way can the past be made meaningful again, provide sources of illumination for the present, and yield its treasures to those who search for them with "new thoughts" and saving acts of remembrance.[122]

Refuting the utility of this methodology is beyond the scope of this current encounter with Arendt. However, a few cautionary flags are readily waved before we turn to Arendt. The first is simple and d'Entrèves attributes its more complex formulation to

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[122] Maurizio Passerin D'Entrèves. *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt*. London: Routledge, 1994, 34.

Hans Georg Gadamer. There is no ground for interpreting the past without tradition. There is no outside of tradition even as we critique it. Another flag is a worry about where Arendt went looking for “genuineness” and meaning. The Greek *polis* was a place of deeply rooted social inequality. The politics of the great men of Athens are not just different from ours, from what we think politics should be and do, they represent a time and place whose cultural, economic and political milieu seem not just impractical to us, but undesirable.

Leaving methodological considerations aside, in *The Human Condition*, Arendt offers the following story. Men have always been preoccupied with the concepts of immortality and eternity. The Greeks understood that there was a distinction between the two concepts of duration, and along with that understanding, understood that men were the only mortal beings in the universe. The Greek gods were immortal and all other animals as species endured in a cyclical, limitless time. The preoccupation with the mortality and implied fragility of human existence led philosophers down two paths. The contemplation of perfection and eternity as concepts and ideas outside of the realm of human action and the unique consequence of man as the only true actor in nature, whose contingency and uncertainty progressed in such a way that only man could make a meaningful existence that has a beginning, middle, and end. Only men have life stories and only the history of men is a history. All other beings, gods, and nature lack narrative. Couple man’s capacity (perhaps even need) to have his life’s story told to achieve immortality after death with what Arendt calls the fact of natality and we have the beginnings of Arendt’s conception of the self. On the one hand, Arendt will shy away from saying anything determinate about the concept of the self but she will say many provocative things about the political self.

Much has been made of Arendt's claim that her task, that her charge to her contemporaries, was "to think what we are doing." To do this, it is not remiss to say, Arendt attempts to think who we are. One element of such an ambitious task is to decide if there is such a thing as human nature and if there are things which necessarily follow from such a nature. Arendt will deny she is making any claim about human nature but rather her description of the human condition and the resulting claims about the constitution of the self and political action are about what is "authentically human."[123]

The human condition has three components – labor, work and action. Corresponding to these three human conditions are three mentalities or sensibilities or types of life.[124] The *animal laborans* is the name Arendt gives to those people whose lives center around fulfilling life's necessities – all of those things attached to bodily functioning and thriving. *Homo faber*, the mentality which rose to the fore with the rise of production and capitalism, concerns itself with making. All human craft and economy belong to this condition. And finally, there is the life of action or the political life which Arendt champions as the only authentically human life. She writes, "Action alone is the exclusive prerogative of man; neither a beast not a god is capable of it, and only action is entirely dependent upon the constant presence of others."[125] Whereas labor only concerns the survival of the species, and work concerns objects, tools and consumption, action is public and excludes everything that is merely necessary. Arendt thought labor was and should be a private condition and work was social. At the end of the *Human Condition,* Arendt warned that labor and all of the brute necessity of life was threatening to take over the public sphere. She lamented that the ascendancy of the private began with the rise of the social in the modern age signaling the end of politics as realm of freedom and the authentically human that the Greeks knew so well and that we have forgotten.

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[123] Arendt, *The Human Condition,* 176.

[124] Determination of whether these types are actually types of classes of people or mentalities is considered below.

[125] Arendt, *The Human Condition,* 22-23.

The distinction between the public and private is easily traced in Arendt, while the concept of the social is more ambiguous. Relying on Hanna Pitkin's analysis of the social in the *Human Condition,* we realize Arendt does not explicitly mark out the boundaries of the social because she viewed it as something boundless, a "blob."[126]

> The rise of the social, then, seems to mean the development of a complex economy: trade, money, division of labor, a market, eventually the whole, extensive, centralized economic system we know, in which we people are profoundly interdependent, yet no one is in charge...When what used to be housekeeping goes large-scale and collective, or in more economic terms, when production is no longer mainly for use, and money and trade begin to generate market forces, natural necessity becomes dangerous...[127]

This makes Arendt sound like Marx. Pitkin ably points out that these similarities cease when we consider Arendt's recommendations for combating the rise of the social and the infiltration of private into the public do not include regulating the market or socializing production. Those proposals were not political. They are beneath Arendtian politics and belonged to mere administration or private struggle. The spheres public and private are demarcated by freedom and necessity. The social stands in between as the private infiltrating the public. Setting aside the veracity of these divisions of the human condition aside for now, we at least have chalked out Arendt's territory.

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[126] Pitkin, Hanna Fenichel. "Conformism, Housekeeping, and the Attack of the Blob: The Origins of Hannah Arendt's Concept of the Social," in *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt.* Honig, editor. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995, 51 –81. See also, Margaret Canovan, *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. In particular pages 116-117, where Canovan can only make the social in the *Human Condition* comprehensible by having recourse to essays and Arendt's work on totalitarianism.

[127] Pitkin, "Conformism, Housekeeping, and the Attack of the Blob," 54.

Readers of Arendt have interpreted these three conditions in two ways. In the first interpretation, these three conditions of labor, work and action map onto mentalities or sensibilities that are present in each person. Or following other references in the *Human Condition*, interpreters argue Arendt meant these not simply as mentalities we each negotiate in the course of our lives but that she ascribes these mentalities to particular bodies, particular persons which has implications for her theory of political subjectivity and who may appear in public.

From the first claim, that the three conditions are sensibilities, we get a reading of the self as tripled. Combined with what Arendt posits as the doubled human conditions of plurality and natality, the theory of the self is more than tripled and is possibly best called multiple. Arendt asserts as a postulate of common sense that plurality is a fact of the human condition. It is the occasion of all action. "Plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else whoever lived, lives, or will live."[128] Our distinctness is a given, implied in plurality is natality, that with each person the possibility of new beginnings, of entirely different action arises. Although she claims the facticity of plurality and natality, Arendt was careful to say that they did not constitute something like a human nature. Arendt saw two limitations to defining human nature. First, she wrote "the problem of human nature...seems unanswerable in both its individual psychological sense and its general philosophical sense. It is highly unlikely that we, who can know, determine, and define the natural essences of all things surrounding us, which we are, not, should ever be able to do the same for ourselves – this would be like jumping over our shadows."[129] Following Nietzsche and in agreement with the existentialists who were her contemporaries, Arendt distrusted a unified self based on human nature on both experiential and theoretical grounds. The 'I' that I am resists attempts to reconcile with any set, predefined nature, and is both determined and underdetermined by the conditions of its existence.

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[128] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 8.

And second, "the conditions of human existence – life itself, natality and mortality, worldliness, plurality, and the earth- can never "explain" what we are or answer the question of who we are for the simple reason that they never condition us absolutely."[130] Not able to define human nature, Arendt theorizes a self which does not and cannot define itself and must rely on its identity from the interpretation of others. This a strange claim to those of us familiar with one line of Western thought that privileges our inner lives as what is essential about us and views the outer interpretation of our actions as somehow lesser than our own intimate estimations. Arendt recognized the prevalence of this sort of thinking and criticized the introspective, sovereign self which she claimed had its roots in Galileo and Descartes. The knowledge of the world that could be extrapolated from a knowledge of self by the road of solipsistic Cartesianism was patently false. This criticism relied on the necessity of 'the space of appearance.' According to Arendt, appearance is reality. The world, the common ground both for our purely animal existence (nature) but also of our uniquely human making is the origin of both the larger meaning of reality for us all and of our individual identities.

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[129] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 10.
[130] Arendt, *The Human Condition*,, 11.

Arendt denied the existence of a self beyond the self as a doer. As Bonnie Honig observes, “[p]rior to or apart from action, the self is fragmented, discontinuous, indistinct and most certainly uninteresting.”[131] Where and when does this self get an identity, become and agent, get a political subjectivity? Arendt will say that identity, as the coalescence of the multiple self, only happens in the public. Arendt gives two definitions of the public: “It means, first, that everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest possible publicity. For us, appearance – something that is being seen and heard by something that is being seen and heard by others as well as by ourselves – constitutes reality.”[132] And “[s]econd, the term “public” signifies the world itself, in so far as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately owned place in it.”[133] Who are you? Is a question that Arendt thought could only be answered by how one appears to others. Through public speech and deed, the self is revealed.

> Arendt emphasizes the *revelatory* quality of political action. In political action alone is a person revealed. There alone is light...In his nonpolitical life, he is reduced to his biological species-being, or to the typicalities of social conduct, or to a losing struggle to preserve an amorphous personality against social pressure, or to dependence on the unreachable, inexpressible substratum of his mental life. The political self, public presented, is thus the real self or what must pass for the real self...Political action introduces coherence into the self and its experience. [134]

In many places Arendt equates the public to the political. Politics is action. Action as speech and deed is carried out in public amongst and between peers. Peers are the others that construct the ‘who’ of the self that acts. In the Greek polis, heroic action as the display of excellence and distinction was the only suitable fodder for narrative. Arendt retains action as excellence, or the highest form of human existence, but used natality and plurality to make the story more interesting. Because we always act in a web of human relationships in a way that has consequences beyond our intentions and because the public realm presupposes others as actors and co-actors, the stories told about us cannot be neatly scripted. Although Arendt cautions that we cannot script our lives or attempt to act alone, public action as the grantor of a personal identity and the public realm as the site of access to and the creation of the common world has powerful consequence for freedom and equality. We must then look into what it means to act for Arendt.

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[131] Bonnie Honig. *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993, 80.

[132] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 50

[133] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 52.

[134] George Kateb. *Hannah Arendt: Politics, Conscience, Evil*. Totowa: Rowman and Allanheld, 1983, 8.

Arendt asserts that action is done for action's sake and by analogy politics for the sake of politics. What we have come to know as the subject of politics – healthcare, the budget, the economy and social welfare, are left out of Arendt's politics. These concerns belong to the aforementioned social. What, then, are political concerns? In *The Human Condition*, Arendt does not give a positive answer. We can only assume that the proper content of the political realm is the "worldliness" that we share. According to Arendt, the public is about the world we all have in common. We constitute the world in public and the private is not to be tolerated or considered politically relevant.[135] Margaret Canovan contends *The Human Condition* is "not so much about politics itself as about the aspect of the human condition out of which politic arises.[136] Canovan's reading of Arendt is one of the many that take her autobiography and works as a whole, so when she argues that the section entitled "Action" in *The Human Condition* is not about the content of politics she does so from evidence that what Arendt was "really" getting at were observations about totalitarianism she had previously made and that *The Human Condition* was to serve as a “prolegomena” to a fuller treatment of politics.[137] I am not inclined to follow Canovan on a biographical journey to find the content of politics elsewhere in Arendt. We may not get a positive definition of politics in *The Human Condition* as such, but there is certainly a description of what actors can and should do in the public sphere and why that becomes strikingly apparent after she evacuates private, social concerns.

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[135] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 50-51.
[136] Margaret Canovan. *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, 130.

Maurizio d’Entrèves argues Arendt gives two models of action – the heroic and the participatory.[138] We are already familiar with the heroic model. The actor acts to express the virtue of excellence. Through his speech and deeds in public he achieves an identity that the private realm cannot grant. In this performance of excellence, he is with others, but he is also attempting to distinguish himself from others. *Agon*, struggle and contest, is characteristic of the public sphere. The second, participatory model of action, according to d’Entrèves, is often criticized as conflicting with the first.

Remember, Arendt thought that the public realm was the site of our common world, interaction among peers, that action was unpredictable and happened in concert with others. D’Entrèves uses this model to defend Arendt against the sort of criticism I wish to make here. It is my contention that Arendt’s notion of excellent actors whose actions stem from self aggrandizement and generic principles is an aestheticization of politics that cripples the public sphere because it leaves us no direction, reason, purpose for acting alone or together that could ever sustain politics. Politics requires interest, the consideration of the necessary. Politics requires positions which are not ‘I’ only positions but also ‘we’ position and ‘us’ positions that imply means-ends thinking as well as moral considerations. d’Entrèves argues Arendt does not exclude interest or instrumentality in action but subordinates them to principles and “that action is engaged for the sake of freedom and that it is free to the extent that it transcends mere instrumental concerns.”[139]

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[137] Canovan, *Hannah Arendt*, 130.

[138] Maurizio Passerin D’Entrèves. *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt*. London: Routledge, 1994, 84 –85.

What is freedom for Arendt? What are these principles of action?

Arendt’s treatment of freedom in *The Human Condition* does not help d’Entrèves’ case. Freedom is related to heroic action, the “disclosure and exposing of oneself” in public.[140] Freedom is the ability to appear in public because one’s necessities have been met.[141] Freedom derives from natality; it is the unpredictability of the consequences of action in the “web of human relationships.”[142] Nothing about acting out of freedom defeats my charge. Perhaps, principle can. Admittedly, I find Arendt’s notion of acting from a principle opaque. In *The Human Condition*, principle is given short shrift amidst the many pages about the “revelatory character” of action and its unpredictability. d’Entrèves and other must locate acting from a principle in Arendt’s other works.[143] d’Entrèves makes much out of a frequently quoted passage from Arendt where she considers how interests manifest themselves in action. He quotes,

> Action and speech go on between men, as they are directed toward them, and they retain their agent-revealing capacity even if their content is exclusively “objective,” concerned with the matters of the world of things in which men move, which physically lies between them and out of which arise their specific, objective worldly interests. These interests constitute, in the word’s most literal

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[139] d’Entrèves, *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt*, 88.
[140] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 186.
[141] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 73.
[142] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 234 - 235.
[143] Cf. George Kateb. *Hannah Arendt: Politics, Conscience, Evil*. Totowa: Rowman and Allanheld, 1983, 12-13.

> significance, something which *inter-est*, which lies between people and therefore can relate and bind them together.[144]

This passage is about two things- the revelatory nature of action and worldliness. We create the world, sustain the common through action. At the same time by acting, others see and hear us, giving an identity to our disjointed multiple selves. Still no support for what acting from a principle might mean, why such a thing as a principle should compel us more than our private interests.

From there d'Entrèves must move on to the concept of acting from a principle found in Arendt's "What is Freedom?" He writes, "Action is therefore always *about,* and to this extent, *constrained by,* our instrumental concerns; the point, for Arendt, is that it can never be entirely determined by them, that we are able to transcend our worldly interests for the sake of a political principle, be it the principle of freedom, or equality, or communal solidarity."[145] But in this jump to another text, d'Entrèves has leapt too far. Had he continued the same passage in Arendt, he would have confronted the fact that here Arendt was still very much concerned with revelatory nature of action and not principles at all.

> Most action and speech is concerned with this in-between, which varies with each group of people, so that most words and deeds are *about* some worldly objectivity reality in addition to being a disclosure of the acting and speaking agent. Since this disclosure of the acting and speaking agent. Since this disclosure of the subject is an integral part of all, even the most "objective" intercourse, the physical, worldly in-between along with its interests is overlaid and, as it were, overgrown with an altogether different in-between which consists of deeds and words and owes its origin exclusively to men's acting and speaking directly *to* one another.[146]

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[144] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 182.

[145] d'Entrèves, *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt*, 88.

[146] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 182-183.

Even if we follow d'Entrèves to other texts and search for reasons for action, we get very little more than what *The Human Condition*, offers us. In fact, the principles seem to suggest a self centered actor that does not guarantee the participatory, communicative public sphere d'Entrèves superimposes. Gabriel Tlaba carefully summarizes Arendt's idea of principled action.

> To act from a principle is to act in an impersonal way, that is, not from inner determinations, whether these derive from the assertive will, the calculating intelligence, the impassioned heart or the urges of the body. A principle is not a moral principle in the usual sense. It is an idea or value, general in nature and universal in validity, which comes to one from outside and inspires "from without." It only appears when one acts from it...Arendt gives these examples: honor, glory, love of equality, distinction, excellence, 'but also fear or distrust or hatred.' These principles of action can be repeated time and time again.[147]

Perhaps I want the story people tell about me to be one of courage and boldness. Yet, what Tlaba and d'Entrèves miss is that these actions, expressions of virtù, Greek principle by whatever name they might be called, are directed toward someone or about something. Fear, distrust, hatred, only make sense with a background story and an object, when we act of fear or the like when we presume to have a just cause. Our desire to be loved, honored or glorified by others is self interested. The love of equality as a fellow feeling of solidarity or some such emotional tie to peers may indeed give d'Entrèves some ground. But what about the love of equality is principled and not instrumental for Arendt? She is no Kant. There are many reasons for using other people as a means to our own ends. Surely I may want to "act in concert" with my peers but ultimately, given the weight Arendt gives to the importance of distinction and self-making that go on in these interactions. What more is principled action than an attempt to make a more interesting life story?

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[147] Gabriel Masooane Tlaba. *Politics and Freedom: Human Will and Action in the Thought of Hannah Arendt.* Lanham: University Press of America, 1987, 16-17.

In line with my argument that acting from a principle is acting just to reveal one's self in public, George Kateb explains principled action, "To act from a principle is not only to be inspired by it, but to manifest it. A political actor does not *pursue* honor, for example; he does all that he does honorably, or he does honorable deeds. A principle is not a consideration external to the act and satisfiable by a neutral method. One acts form a principle when one spends one's political life, one's worldly career dominated by the effort to live up to the objective requirements of a single loyalty, and to do so at whatever costs to one's interests."[148] Like so many other Arendtians, d'Entrèves seeks some notion of political action that is not Arendt's appropriation from the Greeks. He wants to find civic virtues for Arendt that are removed from heroic action. Perhaps, then, her politics can have content, a direction and not strike us as elitist and unjust. But without recourse to politics as means to some end and the consideration of hierarchy as the condition of freedom, Arendt's notion of the public as the site of identity or communicative politics fails.

IV. Private Women, Demeaned Labor and Trivial Excellence: The Unacceptable Foundations of Arendt's Political Subjectivity

We find the unacceptable foundations of Arendt's notion of politics by returning to action in public as the locus of identity. As Bonnie Honig writes, "Arendt's actors do not act because of what they already are, their actions do not express a prior, stable identity; they presuppose an unstable, multiple self that seeks its (at best) episodic self-realization in action and in the identity that is its reward."[149] Honig's description of the "self-realization in action" which Arendt claims for her political subjects is troubling.

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[148] Kateb, *Hannah Arendt*, 13.

> Men can very well live without laboring, they can force others to labor for them, and they can very well decide merely to use and enjoy the world of things without themselves adding a single useful object to it; the life of an exploiter or slaveholder and the life of a parasite may be unjust, but they certainly are human. A life without speech and without action, on the other – and this is the only way of life that in earnest has renounced all appearance and all vanity in the biblical sense of the word – is literally dead to the world; it has ceased to be a human life because it is no longer lived among men.[150]

Famously, Arendt relegated women, the working class and the poor to the private realm. Theorists of democracy and feminists have tried to reconcile the contempt Arendt had for the poor, the average and women with her politics of freedom as public appearance in various, unsatisfactory ways.

One such way mentioned briefly above is to claim that Arendt recognized that no person was always in the public and since we each must partake of all three mentalities that make up the human condition, Arendt did not mean that women and the poor could not appear in public. Sure in a way this may be true. Women who were able to divorce themselves from the biological determinacy of their bodies could certainly appear and act in public. Only the propensity to be connected to their bodies through the necessities of species re-creation through child birth and rearing prohibited their appearances according to Arendt. Similarly any person who found a way to have their basic private needs met, could also appear in public. The working poor man, who had a household of women – wives and daughters- to take care of his needs could appear in public, couldn't he? But this does not solve our problem with Arendt's distinctions. Arendt ascribes the terms

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[149] Honig, 106.
[150] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 176.

animal laborans and *homo faber* to types or classes of people, which of course included actual people. The poor, the jobholders, the women, existed for Arendt. Their concerns were necessarily private. Arendt admonished that there were classes of people who 'should not' appear in public. 'Could' means that everything is possible, whereas 'should not' is an imperative that makes the violent, oppression of others one of the prerequisites of public appearance. What happens to the selves, the identities of those left out of the public and what does this mean for the nature of political action and its relationship to justice?

In her "Feminist Receptions of Hannah Arendt," Mary Dietz contends Arendtian politics gives us very little in the way of a notion of justice. [151] The closest thing we get in *The Human Condition* to just relations in the public realm is found in Arendt's conceptions of promising and forgiving. According to Arendt, the fact of the irreversibility and the unpredictability of human action require forgiveness and promising respectively.

> The possible redemption from the predicament of irreversibility – of being unable to undo what one has done though one did not, and could not, have known what he was doing - the faculty of forgiving. The remedy for unpredictability, for the chaotic uncertainty of the future, is contained in the faculty to make and keep promises. The two faculties belong together in so far s one of them, forgiving, serves to undo the deeds of the past, whose "sins" hang like Damocles' sword over every new generation; and the other, binding oneself through promises, serves to set up in the ocean of uncertainty, which the future is by definition, islands of security without which not even continuity, let alone durability of any kind, would be possible in the relationships between men.[152]

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[151] Mary G. Dietz. "Feminist Receptions of Hannah Arendt,' in *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt.* Honig, editor. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995, 40.
[152] HC, 237.

Arendt’s fragile world of acting men has no guarantee other than the words and deeds of men. Because we can forgive, we can move on from atrocities that resulted in no small part from the unpredictability of action. Forgiving requires forgetting. Blame and shame would destroy us, close the public arena of action, and end the world that we create with each other. Vengeance and retribution are petty and keep us from being free to act, to be excellent for fear of retaliation. Even in our forgetting and forgiving we must also promise. We must act, it is the capacity that makes us human. When we promise we commit ourselves to action, we lend at least some modicum of expectation to our words and deeds. The historians and narrators who later tell our stories may give them their overall meaning, but our promises are what allow us to act in regard to the future.

> Both faculties, therefore, depend on plurality, on the presence and acting of others, for no one can feel bound by a promise made only to himself; forgiving and promising enacted in solitude or isolation remain without reality and can signify nor more than a role played before oneself.[153]

To ur peers, we are compelled to extend forgiving and promising to them as they have to us. From this Arendt derives a moral code. But to whom and with whom must we act morally? Certainly not the women, poor slaves and workers, who sought alleviation of their private pains in the public sphere. Politics based even strategically on identities, give us more cause to act than what Arendt offers.

Performativity and self-realization in action are shallow grounds for politics. I would argue against Arendt’s Aristotelian notion of politics, those who seek to have some effective power in the public sphere, do indeed ‘act because of what they already are.’ Certainly, their identities are not wholly determined from without but these identities, the stakes that people have in their communities, in their systems of belief, in their privately held views of what is good and bad, these are the catalyst, the reasons for their actions. They step into the public and wish to change and create based out of these identities. Hunger, anger, pride, these are some of the many roots of political action. Action without these emotions and drives is incomprehensible. These emotions and drives of self-expression and desires to create and change what we have in common are unthinkable without identity and interest. As we have considered above, individuals are socially constituted. While Arendt would agree that the free-standing, lone actor does not exist. She failed to understand that her notion of acting “in concert” must include not only action for actions sake, or an obscure concept of solidarity but action for the sake of living together, a certain way, for the sake of justice.

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[153] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 237.

Arendt said that the body is the site of necessity and hence, is private. its needs and wants are to be relegated to the private sphere because it does not partake of freedom. Disconnecting our bodies from our freedom is a doomed and fallacious project. What we must do is attempt to theorize our freedom in that necessity. The reward of the political actors who want to change social institutions, is the change of those institutions into more just institutions, to reflect their desires, to fulfill their needs, to encourage their public projects. It is an issue of control and power. They seek to be effective, even if some of them seek to be remembered or famous or the like. The public and the actor’s appearance in it are not merely about performance.

V. In Search of Creative Councils: Beyond Arendt and Toward Possible Practice

On Revolution differs from *The Human Condition* in at least two aspects: First, *On Revolution* in its consideration of the American and French revolutions is prescriptive in its intent, while *The Human Condition* can be read as diagnostic. *The Human Condition* is a lament about the rise of the social and its administration to the public sphere. The social is decried as a form of normalization or housekeeping unfitting for politics. But there Arendt goes no further than the diagnosis of the disease. In *On Revolution*, although her contempt for the social and private interests in politics remains, Arendt champions a form of direct democracy as proposed in the "ward system" of Jefferson and found in the "revolutionary councils" which sprang up during all of the revolutions she considers. Secondly, in *The Human Condition* the grounds for and the content of political action are left constricted at best, leaving only that which is not merely private or necessary as the content of politics, making self aggrandizement the form. *On Revolution* continues that line of thought by emphasizing the good feelings and performative nature of public action. Yet, unlike in the *Human Condition* where the grounds for social justice are not made explicit and it could be argued do not exist, there are traces of its possibility in the notion of happiness found in *On Revolution*. Of the two political works, the much maligned and less often considered, *On Revolution* provides the most direct point of encounter with Arendt to those of us hoping to envision new ways of conducting democracy as a politics of equality and freedom. In Chapter Three of *On Revolution*, "The Pursuit of Happiness," Arendt offers a critique of the French Revolution and the American Bill of Rights. She contends both Robespierre and Jefferson missed the mark in substituting private rights and the “pursuit of happiness” for public freedom and “public happiness.” The distinction between the pursuit of happiness and happiness attained by an individual through public displays of freedom is one of grave importance for Arendt. The public sphere is the realm of all that is excellently human and by extension public happiness is the highest form of human happiness. Arendt’s notion of public happiness only allows for individuals to be happy in so far as they have had the opportunity to be seen and heard acting excellently. It is a resuscitation of Greek notions of civic virtue and identity. The public sphere is dominated by heroic action as opposed to parties, interests, causes or even justice.

What are we critical race and feminist theorists to do with such a public? Even if some part of my political participation can be captured in considerations of my egoistic desires for public recognition, always more pressing are my efforts to widen the sphere of participation and enlarge the meaning of politics to not only reflect my own virtue, but to correct longstanding inequality, erect protection against possible oppressions and ultimately, to create new, egalitarian institutions. How does Arendt’s notion of public happiness fit with her consideration of the revolutionary councils and ward system? Is it possible to appreciate and adapt the ingenuity and practical possibilities of the council system without at the same time committing ourselves to a public happiness which is founded on a dubious conception of the self and an exclusionary public/private distinction?

In short, the answer is we may want to interrogate the effectiveness of the form of the councils Arendt suggests but adjust the content of politics and refigure the meaningfulness of happiness in the public sphere to further our emancipatory and effective political projects. Arendt's *On Revolution* gives those of us seeking to talk about possibilities for more egalitarian political practices a better place to begin than the *Human Condition*. It also forces us to interrogate many of our assumptions about political inclusion and elitism. It challenges us to press through these difficulties all the same.

On Revolution is a history of modern revolutions where Arendt advances the thesis that the American and French revolutions, although they are often considered struggles for freedom, differed greatly in their estimations of what such a freedom should entail. Chronicling the revolutions through readings of Robespierre and the Founding American Fathers, Arendt contends that the American Revolution came closer to a successful revolution in the name of freedom because of the character of the American political spirit and the fact that, American poverty was not as pervasive as that of French poverty. She argues that in spite of the misery of American slaves who were totally invisible in the public arena – the space of politics, Americans largely had the leisure and ability to affect the sort of social change advocated by a revolution. Whereas the French struggle for freedom was hindered by the necessity that the impoverished bought to the fore, the American revolutionary spirit as embodied by Jefferson, Madison and the like was not a struggle about necessity, rather about freedom.

It is important to understand that Arendt saw necessity – anything that had to do with the satisfying of bodily and economic needs as directly opposed to freedom. Freedom for Arendt is action in the public sphere. According to Arendt, Robespierre confuses the private welfare and happiness of the people with public freedom. What started as a concern for liberty in France gave over to a rebellion against masters that would not have any positive outcome for freedom, as the misery of the poor would not be alleviated by any increase in freedom. Conversely the American Revolution did not center upon the desire to create a new form of government that would increases freedom. To quote Arendt, “The point is that the Americans knew that public freedom consisted in having a share in public business, and that the activities connected with this business by no means constituted a burden but gave those who discharged them in public a feeling of happiness that they could acquire nowhere else.”[154]This notion of public happiness has a lot to recommend it to those of us interested in participatory democracy. If Arendt is right and some share of a fully human life requires participation in the public sphere, then far too many of us are precluded from access to such happiness. Systems of representation that reinforce lassiez-faire political actions on the part of the majority of people may be effective but exclude that majority from ever achieving public freedom.

As an exemplar of a system of politics that would promote public freedom and happiness, Arendt cites Thomas Jefferson’s ward system that would divide large regions into smaller local units. The ward system was not a formal proposal of Jefferson, but rather something that he wrote about in letters to friends many years after the revolutionary war. The new federal government and its subordinate state governments were too large and removed from the people in Jefferson’s estimation. Politics quickly had become the purview of representative bodies and not of the people themselves. Immediate participation was impossible. Delegates not the people were the actors. The people remained removed.

Jefferson had been impressed by the frequency of and the people’s commitments to town meetings at the time of the revolution. He advocated that the local units be given more control over everyday political matters, where “the voice of the whole people would be fairly, fully, and peaceably expressed, discussed, and decided by the common reason of all citizens.”[155] Surely this is idealistic view of what happened in the town hall meetings of New England masking over the hierarchies of class and the omission of the non-white, and white women altogether from public life but that it is idealistic does not mean that it doesn’t offer us clues to possible practice.

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[154] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 115.

Arendt found a positive prescription in Jefferson’s wards. She saw wards as spaces where politics could be practiced as it had in the Greek polis. Citizens equal because of their status as citizens would be given the opportunity to achieve happiness. Jefferson would never have his wards put into effect and Arendt saw the abandonment of the idea and the subsequent political proposals to follow as anti-freedom (for lack of a better word). She cites the popularity of Marx’s notion that politics had to supply the private needs of the people as a continuation of the anti-freedom sentiment in world politics. While Jefferson is always privileged over Robespierre, Arendt argues that Jefferson’s Declaration of Independence and its pursuit of happiness was the beginning of the end of the possibility of a local council system. Rather, the private desires to create wealth and hold property were inserted into politics when the pursuit of happiness was added to “life and liberty.” Public freedom and happiness are not the same as the pursuit of happiness. What the pursuit of happiness indicates is the pursuit of private interests, while Public happiness “consisted in the citizen’s right of access to the public realm, in his share in public power – to be “a participator in the government of affairs” in Jefferson’s telling phrase – as distinct from the generally recognized rights of subjects to be protected by the government in the pursuits of private happiness even against public power, that is distinct from the rights which only tyrannical power would abolish."[156] Jefferson "blurred the distinction between public happiness and the pursuit of happiness" which Arendt equates with private rights. These private rights conflict with public concerns and allow for men to detach themselves from participation, making public business a burden.

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[155] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 253.

According to Arendt, the meaning of participation was forgotten as American politics shifted from public happiness to the protection of civil liberties. The relationship between public freedom and happiness outlined in *On Revolution* does not differ much from Arendt's concept of heroic action in *The Human Condition.* Arendt depicts the American and French revolutionaries at their council meetings as delighting in being in the presence of others and the opportunities they were given to distinguish themselves. The general occasion may have been the "spirit of liberty," but the meeting garnered its importance because of the space of freedom it created for public expression. Heavily quoting John Adams, Arendt contends,

> What bought them together was "the world and the public interest of liberty" (Harrington), and what moved them was "the passion for distinction" which John Adams held to be "more essential and remarkable" than any other human faculty: "Wherever men, women, or children, are to be found, whether they be old or young, rich or poor, high or low, wise or foolish, ignorant or learned, every individual is seen to be strongly actuated by a desire to be seen, heard, talked of, approved and respected by the people about him, and within his knowledge."[157]

Arendt focuses on the local town meeting as a place of self-expression where one could be seen. She paints the revolutionary spirit as if it were an oratory contest. Action, the political is often equated with public speech. And moreover, the content of this speech seems to matter little to Arendt as long as it is not about private interests. This notion, that political action is the same as public speech, is a notion that must be problematized more fully that I can do here, but I will give a brief demonstration of the problem.

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[156] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 124.
[157] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 115.

We can assume in Patrick Henry's "Give me liberty or give me death" pronouncement, the rhetoric of the idea of being a great statesman crossed his mind. He may have even chosen a stylish suit of clothes for the occasion and hoped that his rivals were in the audience. But if we attribute any depth, any purposive forethought to Henry, we must also contend that he not only wanted to be publicly regarded but also that he believed in what he said. He desired a certain type of freedom for himself and fellow colonists from the British. He wanted to fight not for his own glory but what he saw as right. Whatever the spectacle of the assembly added was the passionate side effect of his interested political claim. Decisions in the context of participation may often be based on good oration and deliberation but when they are made the key component Arendt misses are that the people who are making the decisions act from the ideals and identities she criticized as private and non-political. Those of us seeking to theorize public spaces where people have more direct political power, do understand the Arendtian claim that being recognized in public is important for self worth and respect. We agree with her claim that being contained to the private sphere limits the happiness of the contained. But what Arendt misses is that not only is privatization problematic because no one sees or hears the private person, but also that the private person who is powerless to have some real effect over the administration of her life desires a share of public power and this desired share concerns more than the very small range of political matters Arendt sanctions, but it must be widened to include all sorts of interests. Equal pay, clean drinking water, gay marriage rights and anti-discrimination initiatives are not private issues. We step into the public and demand not just to be seen and heard but for our demands to be met. Our private happiness depends on public freedom and the converse is also true. We could amend Arendt's admonition that no person is considered truly happy unless they had the power to appear in public by rewording it to contend that our happiness depends not only on others esteem of us in public but our abilities to take part in effective politics. We could have many ineffective town hall meetings, where those who have the leisure and inclination to appear and speak would be granted the honor and self realization of an audience of their peers but this in itself is not politics. Pontification is not government. Perhaps this just what Jefferson was setting out to ameliorate - the disconnect between grand words and action when he sought to create the wards.

Jefferson's ward system, a political wish under theorized by Jefferson himself and championed for its emphasis on localism and direct democracy by Arendt because it provided a space for citizens to participate in politics, has much to recommend it. In particular, a system where individuals could voice their concerns and make proposals about the governing of their lives and the world that they share with others opens the possibility that individuals whose political concerns have been traditionally been tabled by representational and bureaucratic government would actually have some power. Yet, Arendt is committed to a notion of politics that is vacuous and there seems to be very little to decide, create and do. Her idea of the joy of getting together in public does not seem to grasp what is properly political. Individuals who seek to participate in politics long not only for the stage but also for the effect. Arendt recognizes they are starters but they are also problem solvers. And one of the greatest problems that individuals must solve together is how they might prevent politics from becoming the tool of inequality. Arendt assumed that political equality would be a condition of the local democracies she recommended but what she failed to understand was that localism, while it might provide more room for participation, has no built in safe guards against oppression and hierarchical politics. Problematically in her consideration of public happiness Arendt does not talk about justice. The nature of justice is the properly political question. Therefore we must go beyond Arendt and recognize that our possible political practices must consider justice a matter of necessity and desire as the limit of freedom and the precondition of happiness.

I have made much to do about Arendt's constricted politics, but as Margaret Canovan point out, that is only one source of criticism.

> The feature of Arendt's 'council' system that has upset most readers, however, arises not so much out of lack of realism as because she face squarely up to a problem that enthusiasts for participation tend to dodge. This is that the current system of representation suits a great many of us because we do not want to be citizens; we want to get on with our private lives undisturbed, while having our material wants taken care of by politics greedy for our votes. In a system of direct democracy, what happens to those who don't attend meetings?...the end of the system of parties and general elections would also mean the end of universal suffrage, since while all would have the opportunity to participate in the local council, those who did not attend would have to put up with decisions being taken in their absence. [158]

This is a biting criticism against direct participatory politics. If we take away occasional voting and make politics more time consuming and personally demanding, not everyone will participate. Many do not want to. Canovan worries about what would happen to the interest of those of us who did not desire to participate. This is a valid worry. Arendt is right, some of us desire the private pursuit of happiness. We are content with living quietly at home with our families, pursuing our hobbies and don’t care much about politics as long as our representatives respond to our few suggestions to not raise taxes or universalize healthcare. And then some of us are the laboring, working poor. We are tied to meeting the necessities of life. We have four kids and two jobs - participating in public decision making, who has time? Even if we think something really ought to be done about the deplorable condition of our children’s schools and the scarcity of gainful employment in our neighborhoods, no one listens to us anyway. What can we do without resources, with our high school diplomas?

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[158] Canovan, *Hannah Arendt,* 237-238.

While the first of these types, those of us who like our private freedom and elect to withdraw from public life, pose a problem for participation “enthusiasts” like myself, it is not their problem that concerns me. It is the second person, who wants power, who would like to be a part of the decision-making processes of government and the creation of new institutions through politics, but cannot meet the cost of appearing in public.

Arendt assumed that even in local council politics the cream would rise to the top. Elitism is natural on her view. I would challenge that if the level of heroism that was required for participation in politics was lowered and the effectiveness of that participation was heightened, there would be far more of the second type that would be active in politics. The people who want change need avenues to express that want, to try out their ideas, to thrive instead of survive, they are why we continue to seek widened notions of political subjectivity and alternate conceptions of politics and the public sphere.

VI. Concluding Remarks

In an attempt to read Arendt against or in spite of herself, Bonnie Honig writes "The mark of true politics, for Arendt, is resistibility and a perpetual openness to refounding."[159] Eschewing the communicative, participatory strain others like Maurizio d'Entrèves wish to find in Arendt's works, Honig uses Arendt to theorize an agonal concept of politics. Stressing the unpredictability of the human condition, Honig argues Arendt could not close off the realm of politics by expunging what she viewed as pre-political concerns. Honig's efforts are appropriately heroic. Instead of pursuing the lost treasures of Arendt like Honig, I hope to conclude with a few points of interest occasioned by her thought, but that cannot be resolved by it.

Denying the heroic self of Arendt's politics we must seek political subjectivity elsewhere. We know that public recognition may be a prerequisite of participation but we also know we want effective power for our own actions and the ones we undertake with other and that we desire a politics that can handle our necessities. We also know from the treatment of the council system, local participation seems promising but requires further consideration. How do we make participation less utopian and more possible? Mustn't we come up with a concept of justice to insure elitism and the costs of participation don't turn into domination? The next chapter on the work of Michel Foucault takes up these questions in more detail.

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[159] Bonnie Honig. *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993, 116.

Chapter Four: Steps Toward Connecting Political Subjectivity and Social Change Through the Later Works of Michel Foucault

When considering the relationship of the individual to the public sphere, her duty, her rights, her freedom, two important themes arise – that of the possibilities of social action and the possibilities of social transformation. These two related ideas admit several points of entry. The first is about subjectivity itself. Political subjectivity is both self-centered and externally conditioned. What are the possibilities and limits of political subjectivity given our current constellation of social arrangements? After an attempt at this first line of inquiry, the second concerns the nature of the public sphere itself. As far as theory goes, these are moral and political questions which require us to think through our commitments and their implications. In the last chapter, I argued that Hannah Arendt's conception of the public sphere featured an impoverished concept of politics and that her concept of political subjectivity was lacking.

Subjectivity connotes two meanings – the individual as constituted from within and from without. From without, individuals are forms as subjects by the rights and responsibilities of citizenship as well as by the normative rules of other group memberships. From within subjectivity concerns an individual's self conception, what one claims as identity. The negotiation of the inside and outside of subjectivity has long been the concern of philosophy. Michel Foucault's works in all their divergences have been dedicated to the inquiry into the nature of subjectivity.

Foucault's work is compelling because of his recognition of the contextual nature of subjectivity, adding to the necessary task of dispelling the myth of Enlightenment autonomy. Yet, Foucault's analyses conspicuously under appreciate the multifaceted nature of identity. His structural conception of the subject paired with his ideas of transgression and resistance offer unsatisfying grounds for social justice based on equality, one of the most important features in an argument for more inclusive democratic participation.

In this chapter, I will use Foucault's analyses of the subjectivation of the individual to deepen the understanding of the social construction of identity used within this dissertation. Interrogating Foucault's useful, but limited, notion of subjectivation, I will consider the theory in light of contemporary accounts of autonomy and agency paying particular attention to the appropriation of Foucault by feminists in debates about autonomy and politics. Although creation and imagination figure largely in Foucault's work, I will argue that Foucault can only advocate reactionary approaches to politics and does not give us grounds for a satisfying political subjectivity. I make this claim against those feminists and democracy theorists who have appropriated the later Foucault's ethics of the self and its commitment to resistance and transgression as a politics in particular because it cannot adequately account for transformative political projects.

Arguably Foucault's genius is as much in his novel approaches to well worn philosophical topics as in the results he offers. Foucault has caught the philosophical imagination of feminists and queer theorists and his work is the starting point for many of the most innovative thinkers today. Foucault repeatedly opposed the appropriation of his work as a systemic theory of anything and at many turns denied the attribution of authorship. Hence, most commentators have divided Foucault's works into the works of Foucaults. Some divisions follow a roughly temporal division and others are topical. A few of these will be considered in what follows. All of the divisions however are a part of a reclamation project that Foucault enthusiasts perform. It will be my contention throughout this chapter that Foucault's work does not ultimately satisfy our purposes even with the divisions. The aim then will be to throw up a cautionary flag about following any of the various Foucaults while acknowledging the utility of his questions.

I. Foucaultian Subjects and Autonomy/Agency

In the influential essay "The Subject and Power," Foucault unifies his project by contending, "My objective…has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects."[160] Foucault's genealogies and archaeologies chronicle what he called the power/knowledge complexes operative in society that serve to produce truth. The subject is also constituted in this trifecta of power/knowledge/truth. If autonomy, as the basis of both personal identity and public, political subjectivity, requires that an individual be entirely un-coerced, self-directing and rationally detachable from any specific social context as was the case in Enlightenment theories of the subject, then Foucault ably demonstrates the impossibility of such subjects.

Reaching its apex with the Enlightenment philosophy of Immanuel Kant, the construction of a universal theory of knowledge and ethics had been a task of philosophy. Following Kant, many have sought to ground this pursuit upon an autonomous subject whose universality and reason would serve as the guarantor of our ethical and knowledge claims for now and for all time and for everyone. Against this conception, Foucault posited, "One has to dispense with the constitutive subject, to get rid of the subject itself, that's to say, to arrive at an analysis that can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework."[161] Foucault called the historical constitution of the subject the mode of subjectivation. Like most of his insights, Foucault's conception of the mode of subjectivation has several iterations that can appear both complementary and contradictory depending upon the question asked of them. At some turns, especially in his early work on madness and punishment, Foucault seems to suggest that the individual is oppressively created by larger discursive and structural forces. In the middle and later works and interviews, Foucault allows that the individual may resist normalization but these forces still loom as a constant, inescapable threat. The major charge against Foucault's subjected subject is that it vacates autonomy, a concept important to our ideas of responsibility and freedom.

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[160] Michel Foucault. "The Subject and Power," in *Power: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984.* James D. Faubion, editor. New York: New Press, 2000, 326.

Many rescue attempts have been made to revive an agent from Foucault's many contradictory statements that would make the above charge defeat the usefulness of his work for any moral or political pursuit. In one such attempt that is helpful for our project, Mark Bevir divides Foucault's thought into two, works and words by the "composed" Foucault and works and words by the "excitable" Foucault. One makes sense and the other is incoherent. In dividing Foucault this way Bevir knows that he is performing a maneuver that loses some of Foucault's mystique. But he is, as many commentators are, compelled to reorganize Foucault so that his more excitable moments do not detract from his compelling points. At one turn, Foucault proclaims that the subject is a creation of power/knowledge and thus determined by complexes outside of the control of any individual, leaving no room for self-directed action. At another bend, Foucault seems to revel in the possibility of a free, acting, self creating individual opening the possibility of radical subjectivity.

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[161] Michel Foucault. "Truth and Power," in *Power. Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984.* James D. Faubion, editor. New York: New Press, 2000, 118.

Bevir argues that what the composed Foucault points out to us is that “No individual possibly could constitute himself as an autonomous agent free from all regimes of power.”[162] Thus, Bevir makes a distinction between autonomy and agency to side step the problem. “Autonomy suggests that we could act outside of society while agents, in contrast, exist only in specific social contexts, but these contexts never determine how they try to construct themselves…Agents are creative beings, it is just that their creativity occurs in a given social context that influences it.”[163]

Bevir’s agency/autonomy distinction is, in part, a play with terms. It is not necessary to do away with the concept of autonomy all together even when we recognize the social constitution of subjects. Many theorists have performed this maneuver with autonomy and other words that carry along a lot of baggage with them. Recent feminist attempts to theorize “relational autonomy” are such moves. Relational autonomy theorists contend that, “if the agent is socially constituted, as many feminists believe, capacities of the agent like autonomy are also constitutively social and relational.”[164] Calling what people do as creative agents according to Bevir or calling it relational autonomy is not a vital distinction. What is both critical and vital is the retention of the necessity of individual action and possibility. Disputing the possibility or centrality of autonomy to political and social theory both misinterprets our feelings and desires about our experiences.

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[162] Mark Bevir. “Foucault and Critique: Deploying Agency against Autonomy.” *Political Theory*. Vol.27., No.1. (February, 1999), 66.
[163] Bevir, “Foucault and Critique: Deploying Agency against Autonomy,” 67.
[164] Mackenzie and Stoljar. “Introduction.” *Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, Agency, and the Social Self.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, 23.

What both Bevir and the relational autonomy feminist have in common is the idea that we must incorporate both socialization and a sense of individual choice in our theory. Against those feminists who would have us eschew autonomy in favor of some other socially dictated personhood, I follow Bevir and the relational autonomy theorists. These feminist thinkers such as Cynthia Willett assert that while autonomy may still be a “vital dimension of the individual,” our attentions should shift from autonomy toward concern for some sort of sociality. Against autonomy theories, Willett asserts, “Emerging social practices, however, cast doubt on autonomy as the *pivotal* feature of the moral and legal person. I argue that proponents of human rights need to situate the discussion of autonomy within a larger economic and cultural vision. This larger vision would shift the central axis of moral and legal theory from the autonomy/heteronomy dichotomy to the role of social bonds, and the dangers of their violation, for individual well-being.”[165] What Willett misses is that individual well-being, after the basic needs of food, water and shelter are met, is primarily about autonomy. That the choices of who we love, how we express our desires, where we live and how we choose to eke out an existence in the world, are indeed social in that they involve our voluntary and involuntary relationships with others, but that it is the *violation* of an individual’s ability to make those choices and have those choices supported politically and morally that we must confront if we are to take human rights seriously.

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[165] Cynthia Willet. “Rethinking Autonomy in an Age of Interdependence: Freedom in Analytic, Postmodern, and Pragmatist Feminisms.” In *Feminism and Philosophy*, Proceedings of the American Philosophical Association, 2003, 121-123.

Without a strong sense of agent-directed action – autonomy, we risk too much. We risk infantilizing members of marginalized groups by casting them as more "social" than individualistic, distorting their desires to be a part of, as well as, the claims against the groups in which they are members. We risk becoming utilitarian about life options and choices, especially those of the minority. We risk denying the multiple levels of experience in an either/or dichotomy – either autonomy or sociality. We risk socially transformative solidarity practices in favor of traditionalist group politics. While it is clear that my position is first and foremost one that seeks to protect the rights and possibilities of individual action, it should be clear by the end of this brief study of Foucault on resistance, solidarity and transformation, that my position is not in opposition to more socially oriented theories of subjectivity but rather that moral and political aspects of subjectivity, if we are concerned with freedom and equality, would be best theorized in light of choice and action in relation to social justice.

II. Foucault and Liberalism: Freedom as Separate from Justice

Does this desire to keep autonomy mean that we have to be committed to an Enlightenment form of subjectivity? The simple answer is no. If we agree with the basic idea of relational autonomy as stated above, and disengage ourselves from the dispute over authentic and inauthentic action autonomy, it is interesting to see how Foucault points to an account of agency/autonomy that takes a step toward our goal of understanding what an effective, creative political subjectivity might look like and how pushing for the practical realization of such a subject, increases our chances for a more equitable and free existence that is neither anti-social nor problematically self disregarding.

Returning to Bevir's analysis of creative agency in Foucault and the arguments against it, helps to separate concerns about Foucault's tenability for this project. Bevir contends that the main argument against Foucault is that "in rejecting freedom and reason he leaves no ground for critique or to build ethical theories."[166] Essentially, Bevir argues that Foucault does have a basis from which to critique other theories and a tenable ethics of his own. Yet, Bevir's account of the creative agent in Foucault and the subsequent feminist interpretations considered below only works if it is able to account for social justice and freedom.

It is not that Foucault rejects freedom, he does not. He has a concept of freedom that does a lot of work in his later thought. No, Foucault, as Bevir argues, has an ethics and a ground for critique. Foucault's problem is that he focuses on an individual's ethical relation to her or himself solely and not on how that relationship is tied (or should be tied) to the social and transformative politics. Throughout this chapter I will argue Foucault ascribes to a negative concept of freedom as found in the liberal political tradition and therefore his freedom shares both its admirable and defective components.

There is no evidence to suggest that Foucault would have considered himself a liberal.[167] Yet in his works and interviews, his idea of freedom's relation to other important political and social factors is decidedly liberal. Most problematically, like many liberals, Foucault disconnects freedom from equality and justice. A disconnect that must be reconsidered. Whereas others have shown Foucault's affinity to liberal politics – whether it is in criticism or support of that likeness, there is a further point to be made about this disconnect. Interpreting Foucault’s later work on resistance and transgression and ethics as personal politics through the lens of this disconnect, makes plain the flaw in using Foucault’s aesthetics of the self as the basis for political subjectivity and as the starting point for any sort of transformative politics.

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[166] Bevir, "Foucault and Critique: Deploying Agency against Autonomy," 70.

[167] Foucault may have denied the label but much has been written on the liberal tenor of his thinking. Cf. Jon Simmons. *Foucault and the Political*. London: Routledge, 1995.

In the tradition of John Locke, noted liberal thinker Isaiah Berlin in his seminal “Two Concepts of Liberty,” asserted that “Everything is what it is: liberty is liberty, not equality or fairness or justice or culture, or human happiness or a quiet conscience.”[168]For Berlin and Locke, freedom is measured by the lack of coercive forces acting upon an individual. Importantly, as seen in our discussion of the social construction of individuals above, Foucault denied the possibility of subjectivity outside of the coercive, formative forces of power in society. Yet, even the most diehard liberal these days cannot convincingly deny the social construction of individuals. The modern liberal view, then, is updated by admitting social construction while retaining two important liberal ideals – that of the primacy of individual choice as autonomy and the separation of the private and public spheres. I hold the first to be politically and morally necessary and the second to be contentious.

Freedom from coercion as a liberal principle sets only one rule for justice, a principle of noninterference. The state ought to legislate my actions as little as possible and I am free to do what I wish to do as long as my actions do not impede your sphere of freedom and vice versa. Arguments against this simplistic understanding of freedom are numerous. Most directly, the range of choices available to me because of who I think I am, who I am thought to be, where I live and how I live are all tied to society its norms and practices.Institutions and other people both familiar and strange form the context of my freedom. Even if negative liberty fails to capture this point, the liberal intuition that if we are to base our principles on the individual as the basic unit of social and political interaction which needs to be both protected and fostered, then we must attend to the importance of individual choice even in light of our social determinations remains. Foucault takes up this important intuition in his turn from analyzing social and discursive practices to what an interviewer characterized as a “practice of self-formation of the subject.”[169] Freedom is directly related to the power to resist the normalizing forces of society. According to Foucault, a person can said to be free only in so far as they are free to choose otherwise and resist. Choice, then, is related to power.

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[168] Berlin, *Four Essays On Liberty*, 125.

Nothing has excited intellectual curiosity about Foucault more than his analyses of power. Calling it an analytics of power as opposed to a theory of power, in oft cited pages of the *History of Sexuality Volume One*, Foucault outlines what he calls several “propositions” concerning power.[170] In this assessment of power as ubiquitous, Foucault poses two important challenges to theories that would characterize all power as bad. If power is everywhere and diffuse, and power relations are inevitable. Then, we must consider how it is possible to be free inside of relations of power. Foucault forces us to consider that there is no outside of power. Two, since power is everywhere, at all times, power in itself is not bad. What is bad is the stagnation of power. Many have sought to argue against these formulations on at least two grounds.[171] The first charge is that by casting power as already at work everywhere, the possibility of using the care of others and solidarity as the bases of non-hierarchical social relations seemed to be precluded. The second ground for rejecting Foucault's idea of power, is that setting stagnation as domination and "unbearable domination" as the only unacceptable form of power, seems to level all relations of power. Further, Foucault seems to think of unbearability in some sort of common sense terms. What happens when what one person finds unbearable is not apparent to others as in the case of 1950's United States, middle class white women's complaints about the division of domestic labor? Or in the case where groups such as conservative white supremacists claim that left politics that promote justice and equality are restrictive? We want to say that the middle class white women had a claim and that the supremacists do not. Differentiating between dominations is an important task for a politics that seeks to promote social justice. What is equally important, if not more so, is that the relational autonomy critical to political subjectivity must be accounted for. Can Foucault's concept of freedom as resistance and transgression accommodate both social justice by differentiating between competing claims and relational autonomy?

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[169] Foucault, “The Ethics of the Concern for Self as the Practice of Freedom.” in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth. Essential Works of Foucault Volume 1, 1954 - 1984,* Paul Rabinow, editor. New York: New Press, 1997, 282.

[170] See Michel Foucault. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. Robert Hurley, translator. New York: Vintage Books, 1990, 92-102.

III. Resistance, Transgression and Transformation: Interpretations of Foucault and Politics

In most commentary on Foucault formulations of resistance are lumped into one. But this grouping denies the nuances of Foucault's account, the details of the project are important. Although they share many points of agreement, it is in the details that the positive thrust of the proposal of creative public sphere and the political subjectivity it

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would support and would require can best be considered in relation to Foucault’s negative considerations. Brian Pickett has astutely divided Foucault’s notions of freedom into three roughly chronological conceptions that correspond to the other popular division of Foucault’s work in to early middle and late. Foucault’s thoughts about the character of freedom take three forms – freedom as resistance, freedom as transgression and freedom as an ethical practice of the self. The transgressive Foucault overlaps with resistance in the early and middle works while and in his later works the practice of freedom as an ethics of the self is most prominent.[172]

In all of these formulations, Foucault subscribes to anti-coercion idea of freedom. Resistance and transgression are not only implied by the complex of power that give occasion to their expression but there is a way of reading Foucault that implies that freedom is only the anti-normalization moment. Freedom is always a defensive maneuver. And while he recognizes the complexity of history and power dynamics to some extent, Foucault’s defensive freedom bears an uncanny resemblance to liberal freedom in its negative insistence. The major difference might even be that at least with the liberal notion, freedom of choice indicates that an individual has power to not just be merely reactive.

Many feminists who have appropriated Foucault’s notion of resistance and transgression dispute that Foucault’s subject is merely reactive in a negative sense. Each in her own way amends Foucault to support what they believe to be a new, feminism-informed subjectivity and politics. Further, each contends that for Foucault criticism and creation are partnered. The frictions between criticism and creation, correction and vision are found in most political theory. Foucault's contribution to the critical project of politics is apparent. We should be suspicious of the projects that cast Foucault's work as a positive politics, however, because Foucault gives us very little go on for a positive, antiracist, anti-classist, anti-sexist, politics. These suspicions should be clear in the analysis to follow.

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[172] Cf. Brent Pickett. “Foucault and the Politics of Resistance.” *Polity*. Volume 28, Number 4. (Summer 1996), 446-447.

Judith Butler's and Ladelle McWorter's works concentrate on Foucault's understanding of normalization. As a critic of the normalizing forces in society Foucault is perhaps unsurpassed. As stated earlier his work points to the many ways that we are subject to power, and knowing how one is normalized is a part of the larger battle. McWorter and Butler both challenge the feminist tendency to reify the concept of woman. Foucault, they argue, gives us the tools to see that "woman" as a category is an identity that comes with normative baggage. The idea is to resist that identity and transgress the limits of that category. As McWorter writes, "Maybe if the category woman is sufficiently destabilized and decentered, I could start working on ways to think woman as something other than a category, something more like a site of volatility. Affirmations of womanhood could then become not affirmations of a static presence or truth but rather affirmations of something precisely not fully present and not fully envisioned."[173]

Butler's sentiments are similar, in her seminal *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, she argues,

> The critical task for feminism is not to establish a point of view outside of constructed identities; that conceit is the construction of an epistemological model

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[173] Ladelle McWorter. "Practicing Practicing." in *Feminism and the Final Foucault*. Dianna Taylor and Karen Vintges, editors. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005. 157.

> that would disavow its own cultural location and, hence, promote itself as a global subject, a position that deploys precisely the imperialist strategies that feminism ought to criticize. The critical task is, rather, to locate strategies of subversive repetition enabled by those constructions, to affirm the local possibilities of intervention through participating in precisely those practices of repetition that constitute identity and, therefore, present the immanent possibility of contesting them.[174]

Butler and McWorter emphasize that our identities should be contested and that through practices of resistance and transgression, we are free to radically recreate ourselves. This idea is attractive for several reasons. As an individual, the thought that I might and should be able to change myself into something of my own creation in spite or even because of society seems like something I should be able to claim as some sort of right. Indeed, in spite of the way both McWorter and Butler attempt to distance their projects and Foucault from liberalism, this seems like a liberal idea. Self fashioning and determining figures prominently in the Enlightenment thinkers, Mill's liberal utilitarianism, Locke, Berlin and John Rawls. But just like with liberalism and feminism, there is a tension between wanting to have a resistant, transgressing self, in relation to the larger political aim of social justice and equality. What do the decentered, anti-normative "women" of McWorter and Butler have to unify them in political struggle? Is it possible to even talk about a group politics? And if we admit that group considerations are too tenuous a place to begin, what about the selves they promote? What does such a self look like on one hand? Is any created self a good self? Even if that creation is merely a reaction to the norm? What relation does such a self have to others? These are the questions that critics of Butler and McWorter have ably posed elsewhere, searching

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[174] Judith Butler. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. New York: Routledge, 1990*, 147.

Foucault’s works for the answer leads to the middle and late works. [175] Prior to the works on the history of sex, the technologies of the self and governmentality, Foucault’s comments on group relationships and morality can be interpreted as almost exclusively about transgression and the (mere) rejection of norms. If there is a positive political and moral case to be made with Foucault, then it occurs after the student and worker movements of 1968.

In a 1982 lecture on the “Technologies of the Self,” Foucault differentiates these technologies from other technologies of power/knowledge. Technologies of the self are those that “which permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.”[176] These technologies are operative in all societies. They are part of the process of normalization which occurs internally. They are the ways that we use power (or that power is used) to create our-selves. Mandates about morality, public manners and life planning are part of these technologies. These technologies are to be differentiated from the idea of the care of the self Foucault finds in Ancient Greece. The care of the self is a relationship to oneself as the technologies would have it and to others. The editors of *Feminism and the Final Foucault* assert that “self care and care for the polis were linked in antiquity, a relation that is significant for our times."[177] It is possible however that the editors of this volume and others have read too much into Foucault and the care for others. In the 1984 interview, "Ethics of the Care For the Self as a Practice of Freedom," Foucault states,

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[175] Cf. Butler’s *Gender Trouble* cited above and Ladelle McWorter. “Practicing Practicing.” in *Feminism and the Final Foucault*. Dianna Taylor and Karen Vintges, editors. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005.

[176] Michel Foucault, “Technologies of the Self.” in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984 Volume 1*. Rabinow, editor. New York: New Press, 1997, 225.

> Ethos also implies a relationship with others, insofar as the care of the self enables one to occupy his rightful position in the city, the community, or interpersonal relationships, whether as a magistrate or a friend. And the care of the self also implies a relationship with the other insofar as proper care of the self requires listening to the lessons of a master. One needs a guide, a counselor, a friend, someone who will be truthful with you. Thus, the problem of relationships with others is present throughout the development of the care of the self."[178]

What sort of care for others is important? Foucault emphasizes the other's utility for an individual's self projects as – guide, counselor, friend and master. None of these relationships, except perhaps for that of the individual as magistrate, seem to require any political or moral responsibility on the part of the individual who is creating themselves. Foucault's list omits relationships such as familial and romantic relationships, as well as the relationships one has to their neighbors and strangers. Greek Antiquity chronicled for us by the philosophers and poets suggest that the love of the polis and others hinged upon sameness of class. The friendships that were to be cultivated, if we are to believe Aristotle's account, were not those based on necessity or desire but peerage. The exclusion of the needy, female, different and foreign from the public life of Ancient Greece and Foucault's reclamation of the idea of self care through tutelage encourage caution examination of the foundations and implications of the ethics of care of the self as a relation to others.

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[177] Dianna Taylor and Karen Vintges, "Introduction." *Feminism and the Final Foucault.* Urbana: University of Chicago Press: 2004, 3.

[178] Foucault, "The Ethics of the Concern for the Self as a Practice of Freedom," 287.

What sort of self should one cultivate according to Foucault? Foucault purposely gives us very little to go on. If we follow the interpretations of McWorter, Butler and William Connolly, then many different forms of self are permissible. In fact, any self might be permissible. Stressing the anti-normative moments in Foucault, the cultivated self would not be a pure or deep self nor an existentialist project, but rather a destabilized always changing self. Foucault warrants such an interpretation when he suggest that in antiquity there were less normalizing self technologies and that he care of the self was a pursuit characterized by a lack of state or dominate power coercion.

Although Foucault situates the self to be cultivated in the society and against the norms operative in that society, there is a tension between the conservatism of this view on the one hand and his talk of anti-normalization on the other that is often overlooked. The self is not some brilliant sui generis thing. Yet, with an emphasis on tutors, masters, friends and guides, Foucault's self come close to that of a bourgeoisie, gentleman of Enlightenment. The neglect of the role of parents and the formative power of other social relationships grant Foucault's individual the awesome power to pick and choose between the things he has been taught and create for himself any life as long as ultimately he is his own master.[179] Foucault sounds a lot like the Kant of "What is Enlightenment?" and that same old master who encouraged us to give the law to ourselves. But when he his less like Kant, and more like Nietzsche, Foucault's self is selves, a constant changing, shifting signifier, always suspicious of authority, even self authority. Foucault's vacillations between these two selves, the cultivated and the anti-normal, serve to render any reading of the self's relations to others as tenuous if not tangential. What both of these projects have in common is that the other is either someone to be used solely for my own self benefit or to be resisted.

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[179] Foucault and self mastery will be considered in more detail in the last section of this chapter.

Must there be a dichotomy in the relationship between the self and other? Must the other always be thought of either as a tool or as a foe? Might the other not just be the negative condition or limit to myself but also someone who's well being and flourishing are among my political goals? These questions of political subjectivity are at the heart of this dissertation. Can we think these conceptions of the other together with a political self that is also a creative agent?

Margaret McLaren sees Foucault's ethics of the care of the self as a positive political and ethical notion. Following traces in Foucault, she insists that, "this cultivation of the self, however, is not an individual project; it takes place within established social practices, discourses, and institutions," and "for Foucault, the formation of the subject is a social practice; it relies on communication with others."[180] McLaren is stretching to make Foucault's ethics of the self the ethics of a social self.

In the same interview about the "The Ethics of the Concern for the Self as a Practice of Freedom," cited earlier Foucault asserts "Care for others should not be put before the care of oneself. The care of the self is ethically prior in that the relationship with oneself is ontologically prior."[181] This claim in itself is not problematic, what is problematic is that intersubjective relationships are underdetermined in Foucault's work. Othering and dividing is recognized as a part of subjectivation but social grouping and identity as self determining as well as the complex meeting of individuals in the public space is neglected. What grounds does Foucault give us for thinking through these relationships?

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[180] Margaret A. McLaren. "Foucault and Feminism: Power, Resistance, Freedom" in *Feminism and the Final Foucault*. Taylor and Vintges, editors. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004, 227.

[181] Foucault, "The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom," 287.

Adding to her claim that the cultivation of the self has to do with the care of others because of the element of communication, McLaren adds (as do many other commentators) Foucault's "own aesthetics of existence" as the example of what an "ethos as politics" might be.[182] This is all the more dissatisfying. As an activist intellectual, Foucault's forays into the public sphere were undertaken in such a laissez-faire fashion, how could it be the model for any progressive social change? McLaren makes several connections between Foucault's personal-political lives and his works to feminist praxis. She argues both Foucault and feminists have emphasized the personal as political and contends "Feminists should be sympathetic to resisting norms as a form of political action."[183] She also adds, Foucault's late notion of Greek *parrhesia*, truth telling, to the list connecting it to the major feminist concerns about "not speaking for others" and the importance of consciousness-raising as strategies. These strategies as political strategies have to be assessed in accordance with their effectiveness. Do they meet the goals they set for themselves? Does the change they produce have the desired after-effects? These practical questions are the sorts that show both the critical force of Foucault's ethics and feminists that make use of them as political and their transformative weaknesses.

Mark Bevir attempts to answer the question of how Foucault could have a concept of freedom that would work for a transformative politics by relying on his interpretation of the previously mentioned "composed" Foucault. Bevir argues, "If identities were no longer fixed as the premises of a political syllogism, and politics no longer understood as a set of practices derived from the alleged interests that belong to a set of ready-made subjects, a new configuration of politics would surely emerge from the ruins of the old."[184] There are many reasons to criticize this hope that by refusing our old, given identities. New politics will emerge. The most damning come from contemporary critical race and social theorists. Patricia Hill Collins suggests that what might arise when we no longer take note of these identities or deny their social meaning may not be libratory, rather new politics of containment; that what may occur without intentional, norm producing a political theory is domination by other means.[185]

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[182] McLaren, "Foucault and Feminism," 227.
[183] McLaren, "Foucault and Feminism," 228.

Moreover, even if we should be free to reject prescribed identities and act in concert with others as we fit – does Foucault give us grounds for social justice? Why shouldn't I treat others in any manner I see fit? Further, doesn't justice require an idea of equality?

What champions of the anti-normative Foucault and perhaps Foucault himself in his more un-composed moments, seem to neglect is that justice is not an antisocial relationship of individual to other but that questions of justice are central to both self creation and possible political subjectivity. Foucault's self at all points is about the production of the self in isolation from the concerns and needs one has in relation to others. What about poverty, sexism and racism? These dominations are group based even thought they are individually felt. Although it is a caricature of the aestheticization of the self Foucault champions the critical claim that putting on a wig and reading the Marquis de Sade does not change normative abuses is apt. The type of self available in context of domination must be interrogated. Foucault and his proponents either miss the point that individual freedom is best achieved in the context of equality and justice or like liberals such as Berlin, they theorize the connection between social context, relationships and individual freedom too thinly.

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[184] Bevir, "Foucault and Critique: Deploying Agency against Autonomy," 149.

[185] Cf. Patricia Hill Collins. *Fighting Words: Black Feminist Thought and the Fight for Social Justice.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.

Returning to the claim that Foucault's analytics of power has been perhaps the most influential part of his work, considering Foucault on power further illuminates the frailty of his notion of the ethics of the self as a political theory even as it offers a forceful account of power relations. In *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1,* Foucault stresses that power is not merely the purview of the state apparatus or larger social institutions. Rather, every relation is strategic and the possibility of resistance is built into the exercise of power. This hope for resistance in the face of power is the spring that feminists and democracy theorists mine for inspiration in Foucault's work. Indeed, Foucault gives the individual hope that there is a local space of resistance. According to Foucault, "These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network. Hence there is no single locus of great refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions or pure law of the revolutionary. Instead there is a plurality of resistance each of them of a special case."[186]

There are two points made here, one that is useful for a feminist, antiracist, anti-classist transformative politics and one that should be resisted. Power as decentralized and the idea that power is exercised in every relationship, in and of itself is not contrary to transformative, creative political projects. Local resistance to the effects of oppression are not only necessary but ought to be encouraged. The individual as a political subject should be able to resist their identities in the way that Butler and others suggest. But there are limits to this expression of personal aesthetic as a political function. If we follow Foucault and consider power as that which functions in every relation, we eschew the question of the legitimacy of the exercise power and the creative force of politics. The metaphysics of power as uncontrolled or uncontrollable seem to make this analytics a mute political point.

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[186] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, 95-96.

Foucault's desire to root out the norms of society, including the normative force of power, puts them outside of responsibility and control. The claim against sovereignty neglects a few very important facts – there are those who do control official power/knowledge; there are those who benefit from the unstated but nonetheless forceful social norms of oppression operative in institutions and social practices; and most importantly, there are those who lose in the struggles of power.

> We must not look for who has the power in the order of sexuality (men, adults, parents, doctors) and who is deprived of it (women, adolescents, children, patients); not for who has the right to know and who is forced to remain ignorant. We must seek rather the pattern of the modifications which the relationships of force imply the very nature of their process. The "distributions of power" and the "appropriations of knowledge" never represent instantaneous slices taken from process involving, for example, a cumulative reinforcement of the strongest factor, or a reversal of relationship, or again, a simultaneous increase of two terms. Relations of power-knowledge are not static forms, they are a 'matrices of transformations."[187]

Foucault's point about the historic-structural functions of power/knowledge are one level of social relationships, such an analysis offers us many insights into the machinations and unintended effects of power. Yet, we must resist this Foucault who encourages us to look away from the fact of historical dominations and removes the possibility of structural and institutional change brought about through intentional, social change.

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[187] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, 99.

Amy Allen is sympathetic to the idea that we must resist Foucault. She argues that if on Foucault's account all power is strategic, and many feminist considerations of care and social justice reveal that some social relations are not strategic and offer us possible ways to fight oppression and change society, then Foucault and feminism may face insurmountable incongruence as politics. In her contribution to *Feminism and the Final Foucault*, "Foucault, Feminism, and the Self: The Politics of Personal Transformation," Allen considers the rare points where Foucault seems to understand that self-other relations may not always be strategic and the adequacy of his accounts for both for self cultivation and a politics. [188]

> In these passages and others like them, Foucault clearly recognizes a social dimension to practices of the self, but there are two things to note about his account of this dimension. First, the movement is from an already formed self seeking to refine his existence so that it has the most beautiful form possible outward to others, not, as in the feminist models that I considered above, from certain sorts of social relations that serve necessary preconditions for attaining and maintaining a sense of self at all toward the formation of the self. Second, the sort of relation that does the work of linking self and other in this case is one of domination, mastery, and control, and not, as in the feminist models of the relational self, communication, reciprocity, mutuality."[189]

Allen's concerns should be those of any feminist proposal to theorize political subjectivity. Her analysis reveals that Foucault's subject does not require that the other be necessary to self formation but the other is not wholly necessary for the types of resistance and forms of ethics that Foucault advocates. A political self on the Foucaultian account is creative agent as Bevir contends but that creativity is limited by the limited space of social interaction that Foucault leaves. The individual may do all types of self work and create a "beautiful life" through resisting social norms, but in Foucault's works there is no extended support of the claim that the individual could or should have a hand in creating a society that would support others' desires to create lives for themselves. Of course, because Foucault is many Foucaults, there are places when Foucault seems to get the point that selves require social relationships which involve mutuality but there are few traces in Foucault that would warrant support an understanding of what happens when these strategies are not merely resistant or reactionary but set as a goal the change of society through the cooperative creation of new norms. Foucault argued that "Resistance really always relies upon the situations against which it struggles."[190] Resistance always trumps transformation. Transformative politics is a positive project. Goal setting and strategy for the future requires more than reactionary movements. Allen shares the concern that Foucault cannot account for solidarity, and to that concern we should add that Foucault cannot account for a political subject that would set as a goal societal change and not merely personal change.

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[188] Amy Allen, "Foucault, Feminism, and the Self: The Politics of Personal Transformation," in *Feminism and the Final Foucault*. Taylor and Vintges, editors. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005.

[189] Allen, "Foucault, Feminism, and the Self: The Politics of Personal Transformation," 245.

In a 1976 interview concerning the analytics of power and the role they play in politics, "Truth and Power," when asked "What we can finally make of all of this in everyday political struggles?," Foucault's answer, is in part, about what he believes his role as an intellectual might be in these struggles.

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[190] Foucault, "Sex, Power, and the Politics of Identity," in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth. Essential Works of Foucault Volume 1, 1954 -1981*. Rabinow, editor. New York: New Press, 1997, 168.

> The essential political problem for the intellectual is not to criticize the ideological contents supposedly linked to science, or to ensure that his own scientific practice is a accompanied by a correct ideology, but that of ascertaining the possibility of constituting a new politics of truth, The problem is not changing people's consciousness – or whatever's in their heads – but the political, economic, institutional regime of the production of truth.[191]

Foucault's answer gives a positive dimension to the anti-normalization approach to the self and politics by alluding to changing the "political, economic, institutional regime of the production of truth," but gives the reader no hint as to how to perform such a task. Change suggests replacement and not merely destruction. Where then does Foucault give us the tools for such a change?

IV. Foucaultian Society and Change

Mark Bevir and Brent Pickett, who both divide Foucault into at least two persons and thinkers offer two ways of thinking of Foucault's positive tools. From Bevir's composed Foucault we get liberal criteria for social change.

> Provided we are willing to grant that the capacity for agency has ethical value – and this seems reasonable enough – we will denounce violent social relations champion instead a society based on more benign power. We will favour forms of power that recognize the other agent as an agent and so provide openings for resistance. As Foucault suggested, we will judge societies against an ideal of a 'minimum of domination'. A good society must recognize people as agents and encourage forms of resistance. What is more, of course, if we are to recognize people as agents and encourage forms of resistance, we must tolerate, perhaps even promote difference."[192]

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[191] Foucault. "Truth and Power," 133

[192] Bevir, "Foucault and Critique," 74

Bevir’s formulation asserts that the conditions of possibility for the sorts of creative agents Foucault is a society that protects negative liberty. Pickett takes his theory of Foucaultian politics a step further and claims that instead of characterizing Foucault by the concept of negative liberty at work in his thought, Foucault “is best used…as a theorist of democracy.”[193] Granting that Foucault’s ideas about resistance are not the straight forward way to a progressive politics, Pickett explodes Bevir’s intuition that Foucault’s politics would require a society that would recognize individual freedom, Pickett contends that such a society would only be possible through a “deepening of democracy.” He argues, a progress politics requires a “collective response; it is only through common projects, as least in part upon shared values, that it is possible to combat the processes that Foucault identifies.”[194]

Pickett argues, “The connection between the Foucaultian idea of freedom … and many forms of positive freedom is that both require democracy and participation as prerequisites of freedom.”[195] We must ask if this is really the case. What does Foucault say about participation? What key does he offer us? What positive element of participation does Pickett find that would counter the position set out here that Foucaultian politics are individualistic featuring participation only as resistance and never as social as a democracy in the way that Pickett describes would offer given that political subjectivity – how individuals might act, do and be in public are constantly obscured in the Foucaultian account?

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[193] Brent Pickett. *On the Use and Abuse of Foucault for Politics*, Lanham: Lexington Books, 2005, 1.

[194] Pickett, *On the Use and Abuse of Foucault for Politics*, 2.

[195] Pickett. *On the Use and Abuse of Foucault for Politics*, 102

Pickett's project is admirable. His Foucault, where the self and the community are characterized by their interaction and construction is close to the sort of public sphere and political subjectivity sought here. Yet, Pickett's interpretation is one of the abuses he writes about in his book. What Pickett points to as support is just as easily read as anomaly. His genuine Foucaultian interests are turned into something unrecognizably Foucaultian. In fact, it is the reason why his novel thesis is novel.[196] Solidarity, as a "clear" goal for Foucault through the recognition of "law as given to oneself" as legitimate, is anything but clear in Foucault. This is not to say that one cannot create a politics using much of what one finds in Foucault, but it is to say that there is a difference between the use of Foucault and the usefulness of Foucault. More appropriately, Foucault may have praised solidarity in is late interviews, but these traces don't even attempt clarity or explanation. There is no ground for me to be in solidarity with my neighbors on the Foucaultian account apart from the negative liberal project that I do not want others to interfere with me.

Consider one of the interviews that Pickett uses to support his Foucault as democrat thesis, "Revolutionary Action: Until Now." [197]The interview is a published discussion between Foucault and several interlocutors (presumably university students) about the events of the summer of 1968 for the journal *Actuel*. Foucault and the students discuss the repressive, insidious nature of school and the official knowledge that it is the locus of, Foucault offers that there is other knowledge, in particular struggles by trade unions that were left out of the school books. Foucault asserts that two types of power and corresponding knowledges are created. That of the ruling class, who is supposed to be “immune” to the event, whose official knowledge “must appear inaccessible” to events. And the knowledge of the proletariat, that “develops a form of knowledge which concerns the struggle for power, the manner in which they can give arise to an event.”[198]

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[196] See Pickett's own assessment of the novelty of his approach, *On the Use and Abuse of Foucault for Politics,* 106.
[197] Michel Foucault. "Revolutionary Action: Until Now." in *Language, Counter-memory, Practice.* Daniel Bouchard, translator. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977.

Foucault applauds the trade unions and student movements because of their confrontation and rejection of the normative forms of power/knowledge at work in society through humanism. Foucault argues “In short humanism is everything in western Civilization that restricts the *desire for power*.”[199] Against Pickett’s interpretation, here Foucault praises the rejection of humanism because it is a rejection of the enemy, “conservatism and repetition.” Agonism, inspired by Nietzsche, as brute anti-normalization, is what is praiseworthy. Pickett would argue that a democracy is the best site of such agonistic social interaction and that the anarchistic moments of Foucault and his interpreters miss this point. But what Foucault has to say in that same interview about positive politics makes Pickett’s claims dubious. Foucault seems to outright reject in move toward systemic change, including the purposive installation of a social democracy.

The interview turns on questions that are the connecting threads of this chapter. If we want to break down the structure that reiterates and normalizes oppression, as the students wished to do, then mustn’t we think about what we would have in its place? Isn’t that precisely what is missing in Foucault’s account? The – what is next for us? The interlocutors in the interview question Foucault’s claims against teaching the “new knowledges” created by the proletariat and his admonition against theorizing about a future society. Foucault adamantly rejects the positing of future society and the use of current structure for transformation. Echoing his earlier sentiments about transgression,[200] Foucault expresses hope about the many fronts of resistance but does not ultimately give them a positive goal beyond resistance itself nor does he seem hopeful that the brief revolutionary moments could coalesce into something more enduring and transformative. Obscurely, Foucault offers,

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[198] Foucault, “Revolutionary Action: Until Now,” 221.
[199] Foucault, “Revolutionary Action: Until now, 221. Emphasis in the original.

> In more general terms, this also means that we can't defeat the system through isolated actions; we must engage it on all fronts – the university, the prisons, and the domain of psychiatry – one after another since our forces are not strong enough for a simultaneous attack. ..It is a long struggle; it is repetitive and seemingly incoherent. But the system it opposes, as well as the power exercised through the system, supplies its unity.[201]

When asked what happens next? Foucault responds "I think that to imagine another system is to extend our participation in the present system." Nearly all of the young interlocutors reject the idea that a new system or a type of utopianism is unnecessary. Foucault is adamant. "Reject theory and all forms of general discourse."

> I would rather oppose actual experiences than the possibility of a utopia. It is possible that the rough outline of a future society is supplied by the recent experience with drugs, sex, communes, other forms of consciousness, and other forms of individuality. If scientific socialism emerged from the *Utopias* of the nineteenth century, it is possible that a real socialization will emerge in the twentieth century from experiences.[202]

Foucault was encouraged by what he saw as a movement without hierarchy that unfortunately collapsed in a few weeks. There is no space for whole or enduring change through collective action. "The whole of society" is precisely that which should not be considered expect as something to be destroyed. And then, we can only hope that it will never exist again."[203] There is something wrong with this.

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[200] Cf. Foucault, "A Preface to Transgression," in *Language, Counter-memory, Practice.* Daniel Bouchard, translator. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977.

[201] Foucault. "Revolutionary Action: Until Now," 230.

[202] Foucault. "Revolutionary Action: Until Now," 231

It seems to me that the desire to break down the structures of society is not a particularly revolutionary idea. What the marginalized and oppressed want is a transformation of society not its end. What they decry is ill treatment and hypocrisy that reproduces itself. The desire to trounce society and leave it in unformed shambles strikes me as a scary hope and a nightmare. People would like to eat, breathe and love bigger but they don't wish to do that outside of a society.

Conclusion

In the introduction to *Feminism and the Final Foucault*, the editors believe that Foucault's later works and interviews on the technologies of the self and the ethics of the care of the self offer insight into avenues for feminist praxis.

> Foucault's notion of "politics as ethics" emphasizes the practice of political commitment by way of a personal ethos. Personal and political identities, in other words, are conceived in terms of personal and political commitments. Approaching "ethics as politics" elucidates the need to rethink politics in the face of contingency. When politics is conceived in terms of ethos, political movements like feminism are seen as shared yet open practices or identities that critique reality without the aid of what Foucault himself refers to as "blueprints."[204]

"Blue prints," however dangerous they might be, help us map our way out of suffering. We can distrust blind utopianism that would accomplish its ends through the leveling of difference. While understanding that justice and the possibility of political expression requires us to make plans. Not making plans seems far more dangerous.

Famously Foucault once stated,

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[203] Foucault. "Revolutionary Action: Until Now," 233

[204] Dianna Taylor and Karen Vintges. "Introduction." *Feminism and the Final Foucault.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004, 2.

> My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but a hyper- and pessimistic activism. I think that the ethico-political choice we have to make every day which is to determine which is the main danger.[205]

Philosophers are so concerned with constructing identities I worry that they are not concerned with things like physical violence, social domination and the fact that people don't eat. There is an intellectualizing of living that happens in philosophy, especially political life. The administration of day to day life is trivialized as pre-philosophical when it is precisely in the everyday that people desire to be more effective and find their attempts thwarted. Creating political spaces for the exercise of political subjectivity that recognize individuals as creative agents is not a Foucaultian project, even though many of us have attempted to make it one. Instead Foucault chose to ne a nominalist and praise any and all resistance and transgression.

Foucault's understanding of the socially conditioned nature of the self coupled with the possibilities of an aesthetic of the self, gives the individual room for personal change. However, politics as the arena where individuals come together in order to determine how they might live together is left out of his account. Change, resistance, transgression, are all self involved even when they are done in concert with others. When norms and institutions are changed or overthrown through resistances, Foucault problematically counsels us not to consciously create new norms and institutions. All political action, then, is reactionary and negative. We can be critical political subject, but nothing more. Foucault saw this as the task of the philosopher.

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[205] Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics," in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth. Essential Works of Foucault Volume 1, 1954-1984*. Rabinow, editor. New York: New Press, 1997, 256.

> In its critical aspect – and I mean critical in a broad sense- philosophy is that which calls into question domination at every level and in every form n which it exists, whether political, economic, sexual, institutional, or what have you. To a certain extent, this critical function of philosophy derives from the Socratic injunction "Take care of yourself," in other words, "Make freedom your foundation, through the master of yourself.[206]

Freedom is contextual. The argument here is to construct a positive role of philosophy that uses its tools not only to question domination but to invent. The goal is to theorize reactions and possibilities that would foster equality, social justice, and freedom. How might one do this in a diverse society where the institutions are omnipresent, the social norms entrenched and where one person's political proclivities might entail the domination of another is the focus of the next chapter.

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[206] Foucault, "The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom," 300-301.

Chapter Five: The Metaphor of Space and the Politics of Space: Towards a Theory of Specificity

As theorists continue to recognize the multiplicity of selves and the inner diversity of groups, metaphors of space serve as powerful tool to describe the complexity of social relations. Individuals and groups and where they "stand" in respect to one another, in the social field, to borrow a term from Pierre Bourdieu, lend themselves to the spatialized descriptions now common in feminist and other social theory. The popularity of identity theories of positionality, standpoint and *mestization* has not declined in this first decade of the 2000's, while increasingly concerns of globalization and universal human rights add to the discussion of who we are as individuals and how we are linked to others through webs of seen and unseen interactions. At the same time, location as particular place within political frameworks is almost missing altogether from work on identity from these same theorists. If location, most usually in the form of one's country of citizenship, is referred to it is most often as a cautionary reference pointing out problems of essentializing one's own privileged experience in the face of the facts of hybridity, Diaspora and global relations. This is also the case in those theories that move beyond theories about individual identity to theories of the public sphere. The public sphere is called the space of politics and there is much to be said about what should take place in that space. Yet, where these public spheres are and how location is one of the conditions that makes politics possible is given little consideration.

The discourses of transnationality and globalization have trumped the concerns of localism in progressive political theory even as the importance of the local as a political construct and site of possibility has garnered increased support in the field of geography.

Reading feminist and historical materialist geography, one is instantly aware of the connections to the style and substance of contemporary social and political philosophy. In geography as in the human sciences for a time, postmodernism precluded speaking of anything but the particular and local but many found it wanting because of its inability to commit to a program of social justice signaled by its resistance to foundational concepts and universal theories. In an effort to reclaim some ground for what had become the ever more abstract realm of difference as necessitated by the postmodern trend, feminist, cultural and Marxist geographers have sought to re-politicize space. In particular, increasingly since the mid 1980's Marxist geography has led the way in the call to theorize place as important to the subject-producing character of political economy. While the tenor my theory is not Marxist, the materialist versions of the importance of place for just social and political interactions in Marxist geography are unparalled for the breadth and depth of its inquiry.

Exploring the relationship between recent geographical thinking about place and identity in juxtaposition with theories of subjectivity in recent feminist theory occasion this chapter. Theories of the self and subjectivity especially in relation to group membership and political possibility must be further complicated by adding location to the string of recognized markers – sex, gender, class, ethnicity, race and the like. Defending this view through a negative strategy, I will demonstrate that location is the remainder, after offering a critique of exemplars of popular theories of positionality including standpoint, intersectionality, and hybridity,.

In the end, returning to the major claim of this dissertation, I assert that geography and individual participation offer us inroads to theorizing about a more just politics inspired by theories of radical democracy, setting up the concluding chapter where the focus will be on the necessity of practical visions of local politics for increased opportunities for justice.

Identity is a troublesome concept because it works from within and without. It is both what we claim for ourselves and what is given to us as a label whether or not we choose it. That we all have identities that sometimes benignly intersect and at other times straightforwardly contradict one another, is a truism about our negotiations with our own inner-selves and the world. These relationships of self and self to the world do not happen no “where” but occur in multiple “wheres”, places and locations. The character of my identities claimed and conferred differs in social settings. The meaning of my identities is dependent upon the sites of their currency.

Standpoint theorists and borderland thinkers have understood the role of location in identity primarily in terms of a metaphorical space. They have most often sought to understand and politicize hybridity, intersectionality and standpoint through race and gender in local/national contexts and nationality in international context. Only in the latter sense is location about a specific where. There are theories about US women and Third World women, migration, immigration and forced exile that dominate discussions about subjectivity and identity. Political scientists are left to describe how particular sites of politics operate. Theory about how these sites should and might operate is left to philosophy. Although the two projects are related, it is rare that the two meet.

In experience, however, an individual internalizes and enacts the marks of her identity through interactions with others that occur on particular streets in particular neighborhoods of particular towns. While race, class, gender and nationality of two people may be the same – two black, working class, US women one from the south and one from the north could experience their related identities in many different ways that have consequences for social justice. To particularize identity even further a person sharing these identity markers will have different salient political effects even in the same region. A black, working class, woman in Atlanta, Geogriga, may have markedly different experiences than a black, working class, woman in a rural town of Louisiana, although both reside in the southern United States. These historical, social and institutional particulars are important.

I. The Politics of Location and The Borderlands: Space/Place in Rich and Anzaldúa

Much recent feminist theory about place's role in identity is inspired by seminal texts by Gloria Anzaldúa and Adrienne Rich. Rich's "Notes on the Politics of Location" and Anzaldùa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* both offer complex insight into the feminist potentialities and problems of social and political location. The works by Rich and Anzaldúa considered here are hybrid texts that alternately communicate through prose and poetry. As theorists, they both employ metaphor of space. While each in her own way contributed to feminist theories of standpoint and positionality, for Rich the body as the locus of functions of power and identity emerges as integral, whereas Anzaldúa focuses on the psychological effects of the borderland and the *mestizaje* of the subject. What both do, because perhaps it cannot be helped entirely, is slip from talking about place to space without particular care. The two, place and space, may be mutually constitutive but careful treatment of each makes plain that place as location is the political element of the space/place aspect of identity.

Adrienne Rich's autobiographical-theoretical address, "Notes on a Politics of Location," begins with a duel narrative. She starts her remarks with the admission that she had once thought first and foremost of the commonality of women's issues – that her feminism was a "universal" politics.

> A few years ago I would have spoken of the common oppression of women, the gathering movement of women around the globe, the hidden history of women's resistance and bonding, the failure of all previous politics to recognize the universal shadow of patriarchy, the belief that women, now, in a time of rising consciousness and global emergency may join across all national and cultural boundaries to create a society free of domination…[207]

But Rich does not really begin her remarks with such a remark of universal feminism that she associates with Virginia Woolf's admonition that "As a woman I have no country." Instead Rich counters her own work of the mid-seventies with her child-self's habit of writing letters to a friend that placed her location in the world in ever growing relations of scale – street, city, state, continent, hemisphere, "Earth, Solar System, Universe." She reflects that such a practice of address could be interpreted in two ways; her street could be the center of the cosmos or just one small part. Rich goes on to question the presupposed centrality of her feminist praxis and problematizes the privilege associated with its supposed universalism.

> As a woman I have a country; as a woman I cannot divest myself of that country merely by condemning its government, or saying three times, "As a woman my country is the whole world." Tribal loyalties aside, and even if nation-states are now just pretexts used by multinational conglomerates to serve their interests, I need to understand how a place on the map is also a place in history, within which as a woman, a Jew, a lesbian, a feminist, I am created and am trying to create.[208]

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[207] Adrienne Rich, "Notes toward a Politics of Location," in *Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979-1985*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1986, 210.

[208] Rich, "Notes toward a Politics of Location," 212.

Rich brings out two important features of feminist standpoint theory – the situatedness of identity and hence, the necessity of examining our own perspectives as we attempt to theorize feminism and the political importance of social position (positionality) and place. Yet, Rich's analysis does not carry out the promise of this statement.

Rich's "politics of location" is Janus-faced. On the one face, she continues to ascribe to a universalizing feminism by locating the body and the labels inscribed on it and the places it is allowed (she references a segregated hospital as the first place she is marked as white) as somehow the link between women. She prefers the use of "my body" to the abstraction of "the body" but ultimately returns to a generalized female body as the first location of politics. On the other face, the body as the site of the politics of location prompts her to recognize and take responsibility for the interplay of privilege and domination her identity as a Western white woman involves.

> *To come to terms with the circumscribing nature of (our) whiteness*. Marginalized though we have been as women, as white and Western makers of theory, we also marginalize others because our lived experience is thoughtlessly white, because even our "women's cultures" are rooted in some Western tradition. Recognizing our location, having to name the ground we're coming from, the conditions we have taken for granted…To experience the meaning of my whiteness as a point of location for which I needed to take responsibility.[209]

Standpoint feminism in its relatively short history has been about just this recognition of one's position in the metaphor of spatial social relations. As feminist philosopher Sandra Harding explains in her introduction to *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*, standpoint theory is "about relations between the production of knowledge and practices of power."[210] While in her work in the mid-80's Rich was concerned that white US feminism had yet to take responsibility for the "marginalization" of other women's experiences, standpoint theory has become more sophisticated in its goals and language. As both a theory of self and a method of inquiry, standpoint theories emphasize the empowering politics of knowledge production once the "standpoint" of the inquirer is interrogated.

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[209] Rich, "Notes toward a Politics of Location," 219. Emphasis in original.

> Each oppressed group can learn to identify its distinctive opportunities to turn an oppressive feature of the group's conditions into a source of critical insight about how the dominant society thinks and is structured. Thus, standpoint theories map how a social and political disadvantage can be turned into an epistemological, scientific, and political advantage.[211]

Harding and Rich emphasize the "map" of social location but in each case, the early version of standpoint advocated by Rich and the newer, more straightforwardly academic version by Harding, the "location" of the inquirer/theorists is still treated with a degree of abstraction indicated by the use of the metaphor of the map and the nod to place such as nationality but with superficial specificity. Whiteness, Western-ness, as markers of a standpoint are highly general. The presupposition that listing such labels automatically reveals the content of such identities still exists in our theory. Concrete histories of racial, economic and even international social relations require a map with deeper strata.

Picking up on the problems I have pointed out above, Caren Kaplan critiques Rich's "politics of location" on the grounds that "Rich remains locked into the conventional oppositions between global and local as well as Western and Non-

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[210] Sandra Harding. *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies.* New York: Routledge, 2004, 1.
[211] Harding, *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies,* 7-8.

Western."[212] In a thorough critique of a politics of location that has continued to center a dichotomous understanding of womanhood and feminism at the expense of other sources of feminist scholarship, Kaplan compares Rich's theory of the politics of location with those posed by African American feminists Michele Wallace and bell hooks. She lists Wallace's grievance with Rich as one about the "certainty" of location. According to Wallace, identities are not as stable or immediately knowable as proposed by Rich and that the dichotomies lead to an appropriation of diversity instead of an appreciation of the "schizophrenic" nature of identity.

Kaplan concentrates on this appropriative aspect of the practice of standpoint theory and cites hooks' "politics of location" as an alternative to Rich's still-appropriative politics. The pluralism claimed by Rich and others, on Kaplan's view, is only a nod to diversity and does not signal a change in the theory or practice of feminism. Kaplan's concern is with academic feminism and she denies the theory/practice distinction often made by referencing hooks. She argues, "Marking such a strict boundary between action in the world and action in language erases or fails to acknowledge bell hook's argument that language is a place of worldly struggle – that is, hooks struggles to bring the world into language, to bring her worldly locations into the realm of poetics." [213]

Kaplan's language here points to the problem I have mentioned about the slip from space to place in feminist theory about the "politics of location." In these conversations location is most often seen as national and politics is almost always not about politics as what we practice in the world together but rather about literary discussion. This is not to say that there must be a strong divide between theory and practice, we can totally agree with hooks and the feminist standpoint theorists that knowledge production is indeed political. Changes in the histories written, the narratives told and the practices of science open up political horizons. Yet, it seems that practice –as strategy, action and implementation in the public sphere, has totally been eschewed for theory. While there is still a need for a struggle in the "realm of poetics" – there must also be a struggle against oppression and domination for more egalitarian governance in the political realm which must include attention to the details of the map – where space is marked with meaning and power is exercised.

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[212] Caren Kaplan. "The Politics of Location as Transnational Feminist Critical Practice." *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Feminist Practices.* Inderpal and Grewal and Caren Kaplan, editors. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994. 141.

[213] Kaplan, "The Politics of Location as Transnational Feminist Critical Practice," 145.

Endemic to feminist theory about place/space/location are theories of the *mestiza*, understood as an individual who participates in more than one culture, language and state in ways that transform our thinking about subjectivity. The *mestiza* is a hybrid subject. A subject who is the embodiment of postmodern theory in its transitory, insider-outsider status formed in the "borderlands". Gloria Anzaldúa's groundbreaking *Borderlands: the new Mestiza = La Frontera*[214] signals the theoretical arrival of the *mestiza* and her border subjectivity.

> The actual physical borderland that I'm dealing with in this book is the Texas-U.S. Southwest/Mexican border. The psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands and the spiritual borderlands are not particular to the Southwest. In fact, the Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy.[215]

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[214] Gloria Anzaldúa. *Borderlands: the new Mestiza = La Frontera*. 3rd edition. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2007.

[215] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands,* 19.

Anzaldúa takes the thesis that had been proposed by many critical race and feminist theorists, that certain individuals live at the margins of society and hence, have an outsider within status and complicates it further. While Third World feminist criticized mainstream Western feminism because it silenced them and black feminists such as bell hooks mentioned above contributed to the theories of standpoint epistemology and critical social theory by stressing that there was knowledge (especially knowledge about social justice) to be had at the fringe by the underrepresented, Anzaldúa's theory added another location to the spatialized identity theories of feminism.

Borderland theories have burgeoned in the twenty years since the publication of Anzaldúa's important work of poetry, prose and essay. Anzaldúa's borderlands inspire – "the psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands and the spiritual borderlands" as sites where identity struggles against itself and society, and ultimately creates something new. Anzaldúa and the subsequent border/*mestiza* theorists populate these borderlands with careful conjecture, poignant analysis and hope for a positive theory of society and self– the "new *mestiza* consciousness."

> A counterstance refutes the dominant culture's views and beliefs, and, for this, it is proudly defiant. All reaction is limited by, and dependent on what it is reacting against...But this is not a way of life. At some point, on our way to a new consciousness, we will have to leave the opposite bank, the split between the two mortal combatants healed so that we are on both shores at once and, at once, see through serpent and eagle eyes. Or perhaps we will decide to disengage from the dominant culture, write it off altogether as a lost cause, and cross the border into a wholly new and separate territory. Or we might go another route. The possibilities are numerous once we decide to act and not react.[216]

Anzaldúa places faith in the power of the conflicting identities of the individual to affect change in society. Not merely reactionary but creative, the *mestiza* position is alluring precisely because it attempts to wed postmodernism with positive politics, which I argued in the previous chapter many contemporary theories have fail to do. Yet, is the theory of the border helpful in many of the social and political contexts I consider here? I caution that while there are certainly lessons to be learned and positive elements to be developed, the theory of the *mestiza* and the borderlands, at least as presented by Anzaldúa relies too heavily upon under-theorized identities resulting in an old, "Woolfian" idea of feminism partly because of its "poetry of place."

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[216] Anzaldúa, 101.

Much of *Borderlands: the new Mestiza = La Frontera* is an autobiographical, literary text through which Anzaldúa attempts to shed light on the social, political and personal flux of "the actual physical borderland" of "the Texas-U.S. Southwest/Mexican border." These insights, as both a brand of "coming to voice" through the enunciation of specific, raced, gendered and multi-ethnic positions and a demonstration of hooks' admonition that "language is a place of struggle," ground Anzaldúa's narrative into a work that has something to tell us about the politics at work at the border and possible ways that the public sphere in that border must be reworked in order to afford effective political subjectivity to scores of people who inhabit it.

However, Anzaldúa develops those other internalizing, subjectivizing borders in more detail. Although the book itself is not systemic, the borderlands and its *mestiza* inhabitants are presented as a theory of subjectivity and of political possibility – an abstracting psychoanalytic theory that slips back and forth over subjects in actual places to metaphorical spaces that are reminiscent of Woolf's universal woman without a country. Anzaldúa writes,

> As a *mestiza* I have no country, my homeland cast me out; yet all countries are mine because I am every woman's sister or potential lover. (As a lesbian I have

> no race, my own people disclaim me; but I am all races because there is the queer of me in all races.)I am cultureless because, as a feminist, I challenge the collective cultural/religious male-derived beliefs of Indo-Hispanics and Anglos; yet I am cultured because I am participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet.[217]

The *mestiza*'s claim to every position at once, or at least all of the ones that are counter-hegemonic seems naïve in a world where the groups that you claim and that claim you matter immensely politically and personally. By being in every position at once, the very differences purported to be in tension are divested of any actionable meaning. The major flaw of first and second wave feminism was precisely the universalizing of white women's experiences. Anzaldúa universalizes the experience of the border in a way that presupposes many things about the minority and non-Western women she situates in the borders ostensibly by creating a dichotomy between White/Western and other.

> The dominant white culture is killing us slowly with its ignorance. By taking away our self-determination, it has made us weak and empty. As a people we have resisted and we have taken expedient positions, but we have never been allowed to develop unencumbered – we have never been allowed to be fully ourselves. The whites in power want us people of color to barricade ourselves behind our separate tribal walls so they can pick us off one at a time with their hidden weapons; so they can whitewash and distort history. Ignorance splits people, creates prejudices. A misinformed people is a subjugated people.

The sentiment, the desire, the rhetorical position that sets up un-theorized white power as the "bad" opposite appeals to those of us who have experienced racially and culturally motivated discrimination in the hands of the "invisible" white-favoring powers to be. Indeed, the notion that self-determination has been routinely curtailed, obstructed, and undermined by the illegitimate, unjust exercise of state, cultural and patriarchical power is impetus of the effort here to theorize a creative public sphere. The public sphere envisioned involves coalition building through mutual respect and the importance of self regard that can be found in Anzaldúa's theory, with an important exception. Anzaldúa's radical difference turns into a universalizing of "Other-ness" that lacks the attention to detail and specificity that a truly inclusive political sphere demands.

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[217] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 102-103.

In many passages of the theoretical consideration "Towards a New Consciousness," Anzaldúa lumps all of the different counter-stances she mentions into one even as she acknowledges both the personal, inner struggle of subjectivity and the transformation it can produce in society.

> The struggle is inner: Chicano, *indio*, American Indian, *mojado, mexicano*, immigrant Latino, Anglo in power, working class Anglo, black, Asian – our psyches resemble the bordertowns and are populated by the same people. The struggle has always been inner, and is played out in the outer terrains. Awareness of our situation must come before inner changes, which in turn come before changes in society. Nothing happens in the "real" world unless it happens in the images in our heads.[218]

As mentioned above, the importance of creativity, imagination and a politics that supports the sort of social change that we might envision is the purpose of these inquiries, but also as mentioned above, the divestment of difference of its difference is the danger of any theory of subjectivity or politics that promotes a robust universalism. It is dangerous precisely because politics as the shared sphere of public interaction cannot be just without the differences that matter.

We are not all *mestiza*s. We are all not the same other. We are different in ways that matter. Our experiences may overlap and may provide opportunities for political cooperation, but even in the abstractions such cooperation requires, there must still be a cacophony of voices. I would challenge that *mestisaje* itself may be both an accurate, albeit overly psychoanalytic description of the felt and lived identities of some Chicana/os and others who have experience in border negotiations such as Anzaldúa, and also a political identity, a call to action for many who find her vision of a transgressive, transformative "new consciousness" forceful but there are others of us whose everyday experiences are not like border towns. There are those of us whose experiences are so privatized and marginalized that in public we are invisible: Think of the description of Bigger Thomas in Richard Wright's *Black Boy*. And then there are those of us who do find ourselves doubled or divided because of the way that the mainstream gaze constructs our bodies and attitudes in the public sphere in ways counter to our own self understanding, but whose inclination is not towards flux as the norm but rather a desire for continuity, here think of W.E.B. Dubois in the *Souls of Black Folks*. And there also those women, who find in their myriad social interactions and private experiences an identity which is made in the margin, as the theory of *mestisaje* suggests, but do not see the answer as a generalized "Other-ness." Here we can bring to fore the literary works of Toni Morrison in particular *Pardise*, and the thought of Patricia Hill Collins, whose work was considered in Chapter One and will be considered in the Conclusion, that stress the localness and the specificity of those experiences. Even in a move to account for the distinctness of these different views of experience and selfhood, when Anzaldúa acknowledges the need for border people to "know each other's histories," she far more fervently assumes the commonality of the "other" experience. Integral to that description of self formation and enactment is a theory of the self.

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[218] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands,* 109.

Admittedly, this criticism of Anzaldúa’s border theory is an extension of my criticism of the fragmented self it suggests. And admittedly, a survey of the literature will prove that this critique is unpopular. Unpopular both because it does not have much currency in our current feminist theory and because it could be generally read as contrary to the views set forth by much of that theory. It concerns the self and subjectivity. One of the paradigmatic ways of thinking of socially constituted selves is to oppose them to Enlightenment ideas about the subject that considered the individual as an undivided, rational being capable of full autonomy from any social situation. Rooted in the psychologizing of the self made popular at the end of the nineteenth century by Nietzsche and Freud and that has been feverishly supplemented since that time, feminist theorists have bought the notion of the fragmented self wholesale.

Many forms of psychoanalysis inspired by Freud encourage us to think of ourselves as an interrelated bundle of needs, wants and practices that ultimately constitute us as not just one self but as many selves. Yet this essentializing of the one and the many into a denial of wholeness, for lack of a better word, rings false. It is, I would propose, a particular account of the life experiences of certain individuals and in that manner is not in itself problematic until such a conception of the self is superimposed onto the life experiences of others who do not share it. As a basis of "all" subjectivity the fragmented self claim leads to a reification of experience that colonizes the experiences of others. I would argue that fragmentation, self dissociation and division are marks of a certain brand of white, middle class feminist theory. While it shares some ground with Black feminist thought that is its contemporary, ultimately the theory of the incomplete, fragmented self serves to undermine the very “coming to voice,” many of its writer’s profess to be an essential step in feminist political theory and praxis. We may want to problematize the Enlightenment paradigm of the self but must we replace it with a postmodern self which denies the importance of specificity and location in the very enunciation that “all is difference”?

In a thorough review of many of the appropriations and criticisms Anzaldùa’s theory of *mestizaje* and the borderlands, Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano asks the important question:"If every reader who identifies with the border-crossing experience described by Anzaldùa's text sees her/himself as a "new *mestiza*," what is lost in terms of the erasure of difference and specificity?" [219] Yarbro-Bejarano suggests that the problem with Anzaldùa's text, is that others have essentialized the *mestiza*, although during the course of her analysis she acknowledges that the text itself lends itself to such an interpretation. I think that it is the elements that lend themselves to the interpretation that must be considered. Cristina Beltran succinctly presents two of the most pernicious problems of the theory of borderlands Anzaldúa lays out. One, which has epistemic import, is that the *mestiza* is somehow elevated to the status of a privileged knower. And the other, that the *mestizaje* that she advocates requires a unity for political purposes that undermines both her postmodern invocations and the problem of pluralist society. In an interpretation that conflicts with the benign interpretation that the problems with the theory are in its appropriation as argued by Yarbro-Bejarano, Beltran argues that Anzaldúa emphasizes the privilege of the subject position instead of the strategic use of the standpoint of the *mestiza*.

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[219] Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano. "Gloria Anzaldùa's Borderlands/La Frontera: Cultural Studies, "Difference," and the Non-Unitary Subject." *Cultural Critique*. No.28. (Autumn, 1994). 8.

> Anzaldua's theory of bridging, for example, involves not only an acceptance of conflict and vulnerability but unitary subjects who require the assistance of more-evolved hybrid subjects. Implicit in Anzaldua's *mestiza* consciousness is the belief that it is only through a life in exile, in the borderlands, that women and men will ever be able to evolve beyond the destructive pattern of dualistic thinking and exclusive categories. [220]

Beltran and I read Anzaldúa through similar lenses. The theory of *mestizaje* flattens difference even as it hopes to embrace it. Beltran reads Anzaldùa's theory as postmodernity internalized and then essentialized as not only a particular standpoint from which theory and practice can be derived but the only place (or at the very least the best place) from which knowledge and politics can be garnered: "Anzaldùa's theory celebrates ambiguity and the tearing down of dichotomies, yet she continually constructs a dominant narrative of subjectivity in which some subjects represent multiplicity and insight while others signify unenlightened singularity."[221]

Of the problems with Anzaldùa's theory, the one that strikes me most is the one posed by the future orientation of the "new *mestiza* consciousness". This is cautionary for the explorations here. Why doesn't Anzaldùa's future work? Because the agents in that future, even in their hybridity, are too much alike. Yarbro-Bejarano classes Anzaldùa's theories with other postmodern attempts to create political unities in the face of differences such as that by Stuart Hall. Citing Hall heavily she writes,

> Hall proposes the possibility of another kind of "politics of difference." New political identities can be formed by insisting on difference that is concretely conceived as "the fact that every identity is placed, positioned, in a culture, a language, a history." This conception of the self allows for a politics that constitutes "unities'-in-difference", a politics of articulation, in which the connections between individuals and groups do not arise from "natural" identity

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[220] Cristina Beltran. "Patrolling Borders: Hybrids. Hierarchies and the Challenge of *Mestizaje*." *Political Research Quarterly*. Vol. 57. No.4 (December 2004), 604.

[221] Beltran, "Patrolling Borders," 604.

> but must be articulated, in the dual sense of "expressed in speech" and "united by forming a joint.[222]

This gloss of Hall's work indicates the difficulty of negotiating difference as we attempt to theorize politics. It is paradigmatic with its emphasis on communication and articulation and the denaturalization of subjectivity and identity. taking a que from the less problematic origin of Anzaldùa's *mestiza* consciousness in the borderlands between the US and Mexico, I would add location as place to "the fact that every identity is placed, positioned, in a culture, a language, a history." Given the generalizations of political theory, this addition of a more micro level of thinking about subjectivity and politics is transformative if we think about the impasse of communication. Critiques of communicative theories of the public sphere abound. The disputes over formal rules and logic often waylay the considerations of the limits of the desired solution. And one of those limits, location as place, is often both a limit posed by language and culture but also in transportation and mode of habitation.

It is a limit informed and shaped by geography man-made and built. It is a terrain mapped out of streets, roads and alleys, that are the effects of both human agency and the structural power of historical and material inequalities. An example of this comes to mind. In a housing project near where I grew up in Richmond, Virginia, all of the streets were one way. Signs were posted on each corner indicating the correct path of travel and ominious "Do Not Enter" signs adorned each possible turn in the few blocks before one reached the corner of a major cross street. There were also numerous "No Loitering," "No Stopping," "No Standing," and "No Cruising," street signs. These signs were a curiousity to me. Due to the layout they restricted vehicular movement and on more than one occasion, friends and I had to "walk out" of the projects to meet my older sister who feared she'd made the wrong turn or passed by one too many times. One afternoon leaving the neighborhood recreational center, I had the occasion to ask a police officer why the streets were laid out this way. He offered that it was a deterrent to drug traffic. They helped the police detain "suspected" drug dealers on traffic violations. It was also a deterent to other forms of traffic. If you missed your turn to drop someone off or pick something up, or just passed a parking spot, these signs informed you that you may have legally missed your opportunity. It restricted walking traffic and outdoor activity by residents. Any neighborhood organizing that might occur on porches or on walks around the block faced the prohibitions of the signage and the regular patrol of police cruisers. The theories of standpoint and *mestizaje* presented here often miss the import of such places.

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[222] Yarbro-Bejarano, "Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La frontera,*" 10.

Part of the difficulty of explaining the relationship of place to identity and the priority of place for politics in light of the dominate literature on the topics, is the easy slippage between space and place. In the metaphors of space used in the literary language of the identity theories listed above and the abstractions of space that accompany these theories, space and place are leveled. Space, I would contend is an organizing principle of thought (à la Kant) while place is the site of practice, of living. So while the public sphere is conceptualized as the space of politics, in its actualization, in the moments where individuals engage in politics it is within certain places. Space theory dominates location/place theory. Both need to be theorized more fully.

II. Place and Identity: Standpoints and Geography

In a work that mirrors many of the concerns here, *Mappings : Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter*, using much of the same language and sources, Susan Stanford Friedman continually slips from space to place devaluing the latter while ably conceptualizing the former.[223] Friedman is concerned with feminism as a theory and discipline. She advocates a return to the singular use of the term feminism instead of the popular enunciations of feminisms. She sees this reunification as a border theory that presses the limits of many fields of inquiry and politics. Friedman calls her geopolitical theory a locational feminism and asserts,

> A locational approach to feminism incorporates diverse formations because its positional analysis requires a kind of geopolitical literacy built out of a recognition of how different times and places produce different and changing gender systems as these intersect with other different and changing societal stratifications and movements for social justice. Locational feminism thus encourages the study of difference in all its manifestations without being limited to it, without being limited to it, without establishing impermeable borders that inhibit the production and visibility of ongoing intercultural exchange and hybridity.[224]

Yet, rarely in the book does Friedman turn her interpretive gaze on the locations that she mentions in passing here at the beginning of the work. Instead, cataloging the theories of identity and subjectivity listed here along with others, she is most concerned with the metaphorical use of space and place for feminist standpoint theory. Her “new geopolitics of identity” remains tied to knowledge production, about the “deconstruction and reconstruction of the symbolic order" and "the rhetoric of spatiality – to the locations of identity within the mappings and remappings of ever-changing cultural formations."[225]

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[223] Susan Stanford Friedman. *Mappings : Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998.

[224] Friedman, *Mappings*, 5.

Theories that prefer place over space are interrogated by Michael Keith and Steve Pile, editors of *Place and The Politics of Identity*.[226] Noting trends in the literature they assert that even as place is deemed important, metaphors of space win out.

> Most readily seen in the unproblematic use of metaphors of, and allusions to, the spatial, there is a sense in which the geographical is being used to provide a secure grounding in the increasingly uncertain world of social and cultural theory. As some of the age-old core terms of sociology begin to lose themselves in a world of free-floating signification, there is a seductive desire to return to some vestige of certainty via an aestheticized vocabulary of *tying down* elusive concepts, *mapping* our uncertainties, and looking for *common ground*.[227]

Keith and Pile conscious of the difficulty of even broaching the idea of certainty after the effectiveness of pluralist and postmodern concerns seek a middle ground between the metaphor of space and the "actuality" of places, which they deem "spatial immanence and spatial relativism" respectively. They "argue that spatialities draw on a relationship between the real, the imaginary and the symbolic that is not beyond truth and falsity, but is different from it."[228] In their analysis of "territorialized politics" reminiscent of the case of the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative referenced in the first chapter of this work, Keith and Pile use the example of London's Dockland and the local response to plans of business withdrawl and redevelopment as "a particular mobilization of place and identity." They argue, "Centrally, the community groups wanted the power to be able to control development, and to control the resources to enable development." Thus, "The notion of the Docklands became a symbol around which people mobilized; a way in which residents identified their neighbourhood[sic]; and an administrative and economic zone; an imagined geography and a spatialized political economy – a way of seeing and a way of life."[229] It is the politicization of geography through identity and the practice of politics in the public sphere that proves a difficult, always necessary, yet always incomplete task.

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[225] Friedman, *Mappings*, 8,19.
[226] Keith, Michael and Steve Pile, editors. *Place and The Politics of Identity*. London: Routledge, 1993.

[227] Keith, *Place and The Politics of Identity*, 6.
[228] Keith, *Place and The Politics of Identity,* 9.

As feminist geographers Valerie Preston and Ebru Ustundag indicate,

> A growing literature notes that women are poor because they experience disadvantages in the labor market and in the home. Local circumstances, particularly the extend and nature of local social networks, may ameliorate or exacerbate poverty. In Worcester, Massachusetts, poor black women benefited from strong local social contacts that helped them to juggle the demands of paid and unpaid work. In contrast, minority women living on welfare in Grand Rapids, Michigan, had limited social networks that were impoverished in terms of resources. Consequently, they relied on mainly formal services for assistance. Research that specifies the factors that contribute to these local variation in social capital is an essential prerequisite for developing public policies that will ameliorate the circumstances of poor women in different cities. Among the most important consideration may be the stigmatized representations of poor minority women that are often associated with residence in marginalized and undesirable locations.[230]

Feminist geographers in their descriptions of the local conditions of experience and the politics of women's lives have started to theorize the importance of location to identity more fully than they have ever done. This concern as indicated earlier goes hand in hand with historical materialist, sometimes Marxist identified geography. Perhaps the most influential of all of these social and political geographers is David Harvey.

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[229] Keith, *Place and The Politics of Identity*, 12, 14.

[230] Valerie Preston and Ebru Ustundag. "Feminist Geographies of the "City": Multiple Voices, Multiple Meanings," in *A Companion to Feminist Geography*. Lise Nelson and Joni Seager, editors. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005. 216.

Harvey is prolific and if one attempts to pin down a recurring claim in his work it is about what he has seen as the neglectful omission of theorizing the "excesses of capitalism" by geographers. Even as he theorizes the interconnections between the use and limits of social space and the concrete material condition of lived place, Harvey's geographical Marxism reamin transnational in its political scope. Even as he writes with exposing detail about the institutions and structures that reinforce the inequalities of capitalism through place, Harvey seeks to eschew the local for the global in his politics. Keeping with the Marxist notion that anti-capitalism can be used as a political organizing principle and labor role as a political identity in his profoundly challenging, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*, Harvey attempts to theorize both what people can do inside the constraints of current socio-economic and political constellations, while taking seriously Marx's emphasis on creation through a "revolutionary imaginary."[231] Harvey deploys his Marxist criticisms against theories of communitarians, theories that privilege time over space and place and postmodernism. While pointed, many of his critiques miss the mark because of his unevaluated Marxist position. In particular, arguing that class is the category of social identity that cuts across race, gender, and even nationality, not only does Harvey de-politicize place in the leveling of all political interests to the socio-economic to the exclusion of solidarity among classes, Harvey's analysis of class ultimately fails because his notion of class is theoretically structured around the industrial labor.

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[231] Harvey, David. *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1996. In the final chapter I will consider Iris Marion Young's critique of localism and her proposal for a model of "City life." Harvey's analysis will also figure in these discussions.

If we concentrate on the particular experiences of many people in the American context, labor is post-industrial. The information services age has been overplayed (Harvey acknowledges this much in his treatment of Rush Limbaugh), but what Harvey misses is the new service class that differs from prior classes of proletariat in its excess to goods as well as the degree of alienation between individual and labor and even more so between co-worker and co-worker. The specific analysis of a service class largely constituted out of historically racially marked and thus, oppressed peoples, such as that undertaken by Patricia Hill Collins in her *Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search of Justice*, require us to reconsider any straightforward-seeming class analysis.[232]

Even in its excesses, the focus of this dissertation is never far off. I am at all points concerned with how individuals might exercise effective power over the governing of their own lives (freedom) as well as be influential in the public sphere of politics (justice). Justice and freedom are political problems that require political solutions. These solutions have to be both practical and contain an element of vision. What philosophers and thinkers of many bents, especially those of feminist, critical and race theory, have posited most important for our contemporary politics focus heavily on the ways in which people can resist the negative effects of power. Identity is employed as the main vehicle of challenge. How we are formed as subjects and interrelate with those social categories are theorized not only as characteristics of our individual selves but also as tools for resisting oppression and exploitation by dominant power. Political interest and identity politics coalesce.

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[232] Collins, Patricia Hill. *Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search of Justice*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998. Cf, Chapter One: “The More Things Change, The More They Stay the Same: African-American Women and the New Politics of Containment.”

Above I have considered several of the typical ways that identity has been employed theoretically and politically. Along the way I have said that location as both an element of individual identity and as a vital characteristic of the possibilities of politics that would promote equality and freedom has been woefully under-theorized. I have mentioned and will now try to explain in further detail the potential of the local. I will contend that the public sphere can be advantageously re-envisioned in at least two ways. Emphasizing the importance of participation in the government of one's lived space allows us to evaluate our current political practices and offers the sites of resistant so important to current theory. At the same time, I am advancing a theory of politics that emphasizes the necessity of a multilayered, relational public sphere in which issues of relevancy, authority and right are always contestable. Radically democratic and indebted to pragmatism, the political position maintained throughout is thoroughly "everyday" and about the creative potential of the everyday. By everyday, I follow Michel de Certeau's assertion that the articulation of the logic of our everyday practices is both necessary and beneficial. De Certeau sets the articulation of the everyday and ordinary as his task in his influential work, *The Practice of Everyday Life.*[233] De Certeau was theorizing against the academic trend to efface and disclaim the everyday, mundane way of doing things and being in the world as trivial or somehow pre-philosophical and also as uncreative. The masses, the people, society, on many views, are treated as determined in the structure of society which lays outside of agency and even more opaquely outside of substantial mechanisms for change. De Certeau emphasizes the way that people have, through their everyday practices transformed the prescriptions of consumer culture in creative ways. This potential to create in the face of strong structural and social configurations is important.

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[233] Michel de Certeau. *The Practice of Everyday Life.* Steven Randall, editor. Berkeley: University California Press, 1984, 1988.

De Certeau's theory is inspired by Foucault. He calls the acts that people carry out outside out of dominant power "the network of an antidiscipline".[234] My work differs in that what I am struggling to articulate is a new logic of governance that diffuses power even further whose architecture could support a radically democratic way of life. I emphasize that the goal is positive theory for possible practice. Instigating a normative dimension to what has already always begun as local resistance to totalizing power that does not merely function as the resistance to dominance or the attempt to overthrow dominance but the authorization to create a world legitimately through state sanctioned and nationally recognized local politics. What de Certeau has attempted to articulate as the "art' of production available in popular culture in relation to the products of consumption, I hope to attempt to articulate the creative potential of the practices in the realm of political theory.

Geography is one of the many conditions of the very possibility of any political action (and identity for that matter) even if place and environment are not consciously acknowledged. The built environment, even and especially when it is crumbling, burned out and abandoned, of our neighborhoods is an architectural testament to the social and political forces in effect. The natural environment and the resources we take from it conditions and incites our projects. The layout of our streets and the placement of our lines of transportation are the marked veins of the way the political has carved itself into the landscape.

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[234] De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* xv.

Just as we put up walls to build a house and use them to keep in the heat and keep out the cold, physical boundaries are also erected in the places where we live work and play to mediate movement much like the social and political boundaries we erect to mediate social relations. It is my contention that not all of these boundaries are bad – oppressive, repressive, exploitive – even if they are sometimes exclusionary and separatist. Boundaries are dangerous, but in agreeing with Foucault, everything is dangerous. The task is to recognize the danger and remain vigilant.

Feminist geographer Linda McDowell poses the dangers of thinking about local geography through her consideration of community as a theoretical concept and identity construct: "Like the term place or locality, community is one of those rather unsatisfactory words that have been used in a wide range of ways and have many definitions. It is usually, although not always, used to designate a small-scale and spatially bounded area within which it is assumed that the population, or part of it, has certain characteristics in common that ties it together."[235] McDowell's definition of community brings up important issues over the usage of community. For many theorists the word community brings to mind shared beliefs or solidarity. While this might often be the case in the locations that I am interested in theorizing - neighborhoods and city sections - the assumption, as McDowell indicates, is that a community is somehow shared by a feeling of belonging or a shared set of core beliefs and leads to the stereotyping of the members involved and a misrepresentation of what a "community" is in our times when most people are strangers to their neighbors before they move in and the only thing that may be assumed in most neighborhoods is a similarity in tax bracket.

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[235] Linda McDowell. *Gender, Identity and Place*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999, 100.

Community when thought of in terms if shared political goals or social of shared identity effaces the lived experience of inhabiting an area with others in a certain type of house, with access to certain modes of transportation and employment and homogenizes people who, although they may look alike, as in the case of structurally segregated communities, but they nevertheless have acutely different worldviews. In my treatment of local groups and the potential of local democracy, I reserve the word community for those instance cases I have previously mentioned where the individuals in question have chosen to make a statement of identity locking in an agenda for the upcoming battles. Communities are not identity markers on par with what communitarians theorize about. Locations as place, below referred to as local participatory geographies remove the kinship and like-mindedness element from our talk about sites of local politics.

This move to talking about locales combats the prevailing view of much theory where, community is equivocated with something -like civil society writ small and the only difference between associative behavior is cast in terms of private groups and public institutions. For example, in her analysis of women's political activism in cities, McDowell emphasizes the burdens of women's roles in supplementing lax or unavailable institutional services.[236]In lieu of making issues such as health and child care political, the "community" internalizes the issues and seeks to ameliorate the problem through creating informal patches - single working mothers who trade child care services based on work shifts or by creating more formalized service organs through civic organizations

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[236] Cf. McDowell. *Gender, Identity, and Place,* 116.

- such as church organizations who provide food delivery services to the elderly. In these two cases the communities that the geographers and social theorists invoke have two different motivations and a distinction between them should be made.

The women who barter services may indeed form a "community of care" to make up for the lack of resources. They may indeed be friends and neighbors. But without some evidence of some sort of declaration of group purpose, this ad hoc group of women is not a community in any robust sense. What they share may be nothing more than a need. Their motivations may be entirely self-centered and the services that they offer one another may be entirely provisional and temporary. The church based food service initiative differs from the group of women who help each other out when they can because the church group's motivation is most probably bound up in a shared belief that requires adherents to take care of the sick and elderly. Bonded together through creed and membership, church members are a community who posits goals, shares duties and responsibilities and creates services that supports its mission. Church services like services from other civic organizations have budgets, agendas, reviews, and meetings. There is most likely a director or leader and the group is subject to review by not only the church membership but also from outsiders such as foundations who give grant money and the state and federal governments who provide financial support and watch for criminal activity.

Most neighborhoods are not a community in either the sense of the women care-givers or the church, although many neighborhoods are the location for exactly these sorts of groups and therefore as a place shares many of their features. The makeup neighborhoods are functions of choice albeit restrained choice from many sides such as class, traditions of race and language segregation, and urban planning preferences. As a black woman in Atlanta there are a few neighborhoods whose doors were closed to me when I wanted to move based on my income bracket, while still other neighborhoods seemed unsafe or unwelcoming. Both of which I would argue have to do with functions of my identity (both perceived and endorsed).

Philosophical theories of democracy and political participation posit as essential "the public sphere." Although metaphors of space and location are used to describe the arena of political interaction, very few theorists of the public engage its geographic dimension in sufficient detail. When geography is considered a salient feature of politics, it is most often in discussions of globalization. Little is written about the possibilities of local participation nowadays because localism has been convincingly argued against as impractical because of the sheer size of our population and the scale of political and economic relations. Yet, it could be argued that it is precisely these issues of size and scale and the complexity they create, along with the specificity of social groups and political claims which arise that requires us to take location seriously. Moreover, the philosophical neglect of local geography is surprising considering the importance of location in the way that we practice politics in America today and more fundamentally the way that we experience our social interactions. Neighborhood, city, region and state are all important features of lived experience and political possibility. Like the issues of civil and individual rights that we have come to recognize as properly political, increasingly environmental issues, from the conservation of wildlife and natural resources to the desires to create green space, are political issues that play themselves out most often in the confines of local politics and not in a national political space.

In discussions of group difference and the relationship of pluralism to democracy, location is the remainder. It is the bit of our interaction that we neglect to theorize when talk about the value of pluralism and democratic participation. In search of a theory of democracy that offers hope for a wider area of personal influence over individual life choices and the increased chance of social justice, I offer the idea of local participatory geographies. While we may easily recognize social groups based on religion, race, gender, ethnicity, and class as important to individual experience and group claims for social justice, where these groups meet and the specific, political circumstances in which individuals are negatively and positively impacted by these meetings, is a part of what I will call their local participatory geography. By geography I mean both the man-made and natural environments where people live, work and play. Location, in the sense of residency, employment, recreation and worship, is an all important feature of our political experience. If we grant more local control to people over these aspects of their lives than we can come closer to achieving actual equality and freedom through tangible justice.

My attempt to theorize local participatory geographies is an extension of the radical democratic projects of theorists such as Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau. Radical democracy theories stress three things: 1. Democracy means first and foremost popular sovereignty; 2. Popular sovereignty requires us to reconsider the current forms of representational government and the effective power it affords citizens; and 3.The radical democratic position requires that we abandon certainty as a political hope and instead recognizing the coercive, agnostic nature of politics, we must defend a notion of participation that is wholly democratic. Local participatory geographies contribute a practicable, ethical dimension to radical democracy theory. The position is a pluralist position which seeks to affirm and promote differentiated approaches to politics. The public, on this view, is the site where individuals qua individuals, as well as individuals as members of social and interest groups, confront one another and hash out the solutions to the problems that they face and create new ways of living with one another. Because the very nature of this interaction is dynamic and democratic, it is a space open to change and revision. Its commitment to pluralism seems like a commitment to relativism that gives us no grounds to reject injustice or even worse, radical democracy's acceptance of social conflict is characterized as a sanction to political violence.

The first criticism, that a radically democratic pluralism especially in the form of local participatory democracy is tantamount to a relativism that does not allows us to confront social injustice and inequality, usually goes something like this: There are plenty of places in America, that if the local people were given more direct control over things like policing, zoning and schooling, people who look like me would not be welcome. The Jim Crow south is the most vivid example of what may go wrong when local, public control is practiced and sanctioned by higher levels of government either through outright confirmation or noninterference.

Equality and justice are concrete matters that involve all areas of living, working, worshiping and playing. Politically that means, at least in my estimation, that it is possible to theorize the possibilities of local control while simultaneously theorizing the limits of that control through a revision of liberal democratic thinking. Such a project is in line with other radical democratic projects in that these recognize that commitments to democracy in our times, also entail a commitment to liberal values. To quote Chantal Mouffe, “Modern democracy as a new regime is constituted by the articulation between the logic of democracy and the logic of liberalism; by the assertion of popular sovereignty together with the declaration of a set of fundamental human rights that need to be respected.” [237] This bivalent logic gives the radical democrat grounds, however provisional, for criticism. We may confront the racist, the sexist, the separatists, and economic inequity on the grounds that they infringe upon rights we have established even if we think that these rights are open to revision. It means that we can accept pluralism as a fact, and not all difference as a value.

That individuals themselves are distinct from one another bodily and psychically is one of the most mundane facts of pluralism. We have different needs, wants and desires that originate in our bodies and minds. We are also relational beings. We are born into memberships. We are born citizens of countries. We have families and from them we inherit membership in social groups with varying influence, from neighborhoods to religious groups. As we grow, we become joiners and exiters. We leave many of the groups we were born into, we are converted to different religions, we move, we even denounce and reject. If we open our eyes widely, we see that there are countless other individuals who live in other neighborhoods, other countries, who are members of other groups who have different ways of seeing and being in the world than our own. Pluralism as a fact.

For quite some time, feminist and multicultural theorists have argued that our political attitudes are limited by the historical institutionalization of a hegemonic worldview that privileges the white, male, western and affluent over any other group. They contend the appropriate challenge to heterosexism, gender bias, racism, class prejudice and even the exploitation of third world countries is to appreciate difference and take it seriously. Pluralism as a value.

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[237] Chantal Mouffe. “Preface: Democratic Politics Today,” in *Dimensions of Radical Democracy*. London: Verso, 1992, 11.

It would be a mistake to characterize the admonishment that we take difference seriously as blanket relativism. The critic claims that what feminist and multicultural groups are asking for when they ask that we appreciate difference leads to a slippery slope that all difference is to be appreciated - a political postmodernism. These views, it is claimed, are self refuting because in rejecting universalism, they reject the very principles that would allow us to criticize things like racism, sexism and classism. But this criticism misses the important insights feminists and multiculturalists offer into the causes and possible cures for injustice and inequality by drawing attention to the specific instances in which they occur. Trivializing difference allows us to theorize about things like justice, freedom and equality without regard to context. While we have come to desire things like individual choice and the check of state sanctioned coercion. And freedom, equality and justice are values that have some of their best support in the arguments of modern liberal thinkers, one of the major flaws of liberalism is that coupled with its tendency to treat these important ideas in abstraction, it treats all group membership as association. Treating groups as associations allows liberals to eschew the heart of the matter when what we desire is some grounds to separate pluralism as a fact from pluralism as a value. In the concluding chapter I will return to thinking about the fact of pluralism and justice and claim that political subjectivity and the public sphere must continually be re-imagined light of place.

Chapter Six: Concluding Remarks on Justice and the Local: Future Steps Toward a Creative Public Sphere for an Actually Existing American Democracy

> "Justice constitutes an article of faith expressed through deep feelings that move people to action. For many Black Feminist thinkers, justice transcends Western notions of equality grounded in sameness and uniformity."[238]

I. The Preoccupation With Justice

The preoccupation with justice that underlies this work is prompted by a preoccupation with social welfare and hope. Theories of justice, such as Rawls' justice as fairness that seek a universalism outside of history, context and location do not work in theory or in practice. If they did, if people all towed the rational rights line, and used their power as agents to change the structural components of society in conformity to theory, then we would all be free and the concern about justice would be a concern about the application of existing law, not the continual clamor for resistance and change that sounds in our theory and activism. The liberal subject, with its sets of rights and protections is not enough. The critics are right. Liberalism for all of the goods that it has given us, for all of the tools it has put in our kit for building a more egalitarian society, lacks historical sense and has a truncated social psychology. Without understanding the dispersal of power over time and its exercises through institutions, discourses, on minds and bodies, in places, a theory of justice falls flat. History is both the story that we tell ourselves about ourselves and the slippages of time that we remember forget and revise. Location as place is the anchor of time. The past happens both then and there. A theory of justice without a then and there cannot help us in the here and now and hence has very little to offer for the how and why of the future.

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[238] Patricia Hill Collins. *Fighting Words: Black Feminism and the Search of Justice.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998, 248.

The connection between the attempt to theorize justice – to find the meaning of the elusive form that prompted Plato to pen *The Republic*, so many years ago and the public sphere is both an obvious one and one that defies easy answers and articulation. To theorize about just social relations and the possibilities of political practices that would appreciate the complexity of each individual who might participate in the public sphere, taking participation to mean the ability to not merely be a part but to be an effective force in the government of one's own life, leaves the brain and the tongue tired and despairing. Part of the problem of articulation is symptomatic of many philosophical theories about politics. Philosophy has been, can be, and may often encourage the thinker to be, blind, deaf and dumb to the practice of politics. The degrees of separation between our thoughts about what could and ought to happen in the public sphere and what does and doesn't already happen there are obtuse.

In the preceding chapters I have considered contemporary paradigms of political claims (Chapter One), found inroads to framing the problem of the public sphere in the work of John Dewey (Chapter Two), investigated the work of Hannah Arendt for ways of understanding political subjectivity (Chapter Three), used the theory of subjectivization and considered the possibilities of social change found in the work of Michel Foucault (Chapter Four), complicated those considerations with the works of recent feminist who use metaphors of space with concerns about place (Chapter Five), all in an effort to take steps toward a sensitive, practical theory. Ever looming in the background were the assumptions I have listed in the Introduction and the question of justice in relation to the claims I have been making about political subjectivity and the potential of a creative public sphere. Questions of justice in relation to freedom are the most substantial questions of this attempt at political philosophy and the most under theorized, even if it is the most often written about. This concluding chapter will pose the problem of pluralism as the major difficulty for justice and end not by solving the problem but by using the insight of the foregoing investigations, suggesting several potential moves towards a creative sphere for an actually existing American democracy that center on the local participatory geography of individuals.

II. Pluralism, Tolerance and Justice: Critical Points

Difference is easy to acknowledge. We are different. Yet differences are hard to theorize when we want to work together as well as when we want to make judgments about differences that matter. Tolerance and theorizing pluralism seem to go hand in hand but intolerance is one of the differences we must come to address. We have to consider not only the big differences that make us fighting mad but the little differences that are pernicious.

John Rawls, in his influential works on liberalism and justice, sets the tone of how contemporary American theorists engage questions of pluralism and gives us one way to think about how it may be possible for us to intervene in group or local practices when they are unjust. Rawls begins his *Theory of Justice* and its later restatement, *Justice as Fairness,* with a thought experiment. He wants to know want sort of politics is possible given what he calls the “fact of reasonable pluralism.” Rawls’ brief consideration of reasonable pluralism mirrors the basic fact of pluralism I indicated earlier. He says we must assume pluralism as a given in our social world. We do not live in and it is not feasible to think that we might go back to a previous historical situation where people were more united in their worldviews. [239] Rawls' project, then, is to give a philosophical foundation for democracy that would be acceptable to people with varying worldviews.

To arrive at the founding principles of justice as fairness, Rawls imagines a group of rational individuals, who under a veil of ignorance about their own social standing in society, would from that original position agree to justice as fairness based on what they believed to be their own advantage. On Rawls' view, the powers of the state are limited by this initial overlapping consensus and in true liberal form, the state cannot interfere with the private lives or civic associations of its members if they do not accept some state sponsored version of the good life. He argues, "Toleration is not derived from practical necessities or reasons of state. Moral and religious freedom follows from the principle of equal liberty; and assuming the priority of this principle, the only ground for denying the equal liberties is to avoid an even greater injustice, an even greater loss of liberty."[240] So, in opposition to the republicanism of Rousseau and later communitarians, Rawls believes that we should have a high threshold of tolerance. He contends that the liberty of conscience given by constitutional right is not given up even by those, who, because of religion or some other comprehensive doctrine, do not believe in it. As long as the people as citizens do not endanger us, we cannot make claims against them. This right to choose without state coercion is fundamental to an argument for localism. In the last chapter and less straightforwardly throughout this dissertation, I have claimed that reconsidering the local as both a salient feature of identity and an important aspect of actual politics in the public sphere.

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[239] Cf. John Rawls. *Justice as Fairness.* 2nd Revised Edition. Belknap 2001, 4.

[240] John Rawls. *A Theory of Justice.* Revised Edition. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999, 188.

Because we are committed to things like the freedom of expression and the freedom of congregation, we may agree that people should be able to associate in any way they see fit. Forty years ago, Klan activity was reason to lock the doors and hide. Racists should be allowed to have Klan meetings as long as those meetings don't result in mob activity against the groups that they despise. Now, we let the Klan march even if it makes us uncomfortable. We let the Klan march for two reasons. One, we recognize that our own marches and demonstrations against oppression were once illegal and that the public display of ideas should be safeguarded. We also think that the marching clan is no longer a threat to our social stability or our lives. Racist mob violence is no longer common place in American life. Racism still exists but in different forms. It is these different forms of inequality and the ineffectiveness of treating groups as associations and overlooking the struggles of justice and freedom in specific locations to which I will return later in this chapter. But for now, we can say that freedoms of speech and association are extended even to those with whom we disagree and who hate us.

Indeed Rawls's caution that citizens can only interfere with intolerant groups "when they sincerely and with reason believe that intolerance is necessary for their own security,"[241] can be identified with a persuasive argument against making issues of public health, such as vaccinations against infectious disease a local concern. Yet, potential violence or spread of disease does not seem like enough to combat the social injustice that groups often complain about. Feminists, multiculturalists and environmentalists remind us of threats and moral issues that are not adequately dealt with in Rawls version of the harm principle derived from his notion of justice as fairness. [242] In particular, Rawls conception revolves around the so-called right to exit guaranteed in a liberal state and neglects to consider the risks and consequences of membership and further, it provides little in the way of guidance to help us determine what a threat to our security as citizens may be beyond physical harm. I will deal with the latter claim first, and the former, second.

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[241] Rawls, *Theory of Justice*, 192.

In Rawls' liberal thought experiment, tolerance follows from an initial agreement of social justice that provides for liberty of conscience and hence moral and religious freedom. The limited government that this implies can make no demands from groups that are not seen as immediate threats. What an immediate threat is, however, is an issue of concrete or local justice in Rawlsian terms. This seems to be the very issue about which we must theorize and grapple politically. A marching Klan in a large metropolitan city with a diverse population seems like no immediate threat. Even a marching Klan in their one time strong hold of Birmingham may not seem threatening to us from afar. But there is reason to believe that it is our far off view that makes tolerating the march possible. What of the people who live in a still very much racially segregated Alabama, who have good reason to fear that public displays of the Klan will make their existence a common place that may attract members? Members who in their increasing numbers and under the cover of the hooded robe may gain control over the city council and sheriff's office as they once had when they were a more politically effective group, who may never again become violent but use a new politics of covert racism to further oppress those they hate. Rawls theory of justice only allows this to become a problem on a national level. Rawls concludes that as long as the group doesn't threaten social stability, we can live with those dogmatically opposed to equality and justice. As long as there are more of the good, liberal us, and our constitutional rights are in place, we should not worry over these groups.

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[242] He nods to this when he admits that "Justice as fairness is a political, not a general conception of justice: it applies first to the basic structure and sees these other questions of local justice and also questions of global justice (what I call the law of peoples) as considerations on their own merits."(*Justice as Fairness*, 11) Further, "the role of a political conception of justice however, is not to say exactly how these questions are to be settled, but to set out a framework of thought within which they can be approached." Granting Rawls this point, we have reason to want more from a political conception of justice, especially when we want to talk about issues of freedom and equality.

The good liberal in me agrees, but the black feminist in me cautions that this may not be enough. That part of my intellectual self sees that marching Klan may indeed be threatening in a way that must be considered politically, especially because they march down a small street in a small Alabama town. While I am not advocating censure of anti-democratic groups, I am concerned that we may want something more than a threat and security principle of justice on the local level where the confrontations with injustice and inequality are not only immediate but cut deeper. Where fear can be used as a tactic of containment, where protest against inequality can be used to single out specific people for harassment and exclusion – all seemingly within the bounds of the law.

The right to exit is fundamental to almost all liberal conceptions of association. All group association is considered voluntary. People choose groups and can discard them. There are several problems with this view. First, groups are often hierarchical and oppressive to their members. If we take what happens in groups seriously, we see that members are abused and controlled and that even if they choose to exit, the roads to exit may be blocked from within and without. The right to exit is based on an outdated notion of autonomy and choice and an overly simplistic understanding of groups. Second, as far as identity goes, many of our groupings are not wholly voluntary. Things like race and gendered identities are both self proclaimed and outwardly imposed. I cannot tomorrow even if I tried with all of my might, as the autonomous thinker that I may think that I am, decide not to be a black woman. I could never again identify myself as such but when I encounter others this raced, gendered identity has meaning with political and social ramifications even if I prefer that it not. [243] These ramifications are issues of justice and equality that must be addressed in forms that are inadequately conceived by liberals.[244]

Leaving aside identities that are based on visible markers, even staying with associations that may seem to be more fluid such as religious affiliations, the liberal right to exit is still inadequate. When someone exits – where will they go? What options do they truly have? What are the consequences that follow? Even if we agree in principle, that people are always free to change their faith, we must approach what exit means realistically. You leave the faith, especially in a traditional or totalizing sect that demands a complete allegiance, you lose most of the things you once had. You may lose your family ties. You may lose your friends, your property, and your home. And you are thrust into a world that you may not have the tools to survive in educationally and functionally. The liberal right to exit does not take seriously how far our groups form our self identity as well as how much they support us. And the minimalist government that liberal theory applies does not seem to offer sufficient support for people who choose exit.

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[243] Cf. Linda Martín Alcoff. *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

[244] Cf. Anthony Appiah. *The Ethics of Identity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005. Appiah's ideas that politics of recognition are wrongheaded because the people who have those identities should give them up for a more liberal, autonomous view, is untenable. Not only because many of those identities are personally desirable to those who have them but also because racism and sexism are not primarily the problem of those who are raced and sexed. If it were in their powers to end oppression, they would. It is the ongoing, institutionalized features of domination and oppression that are the problem. Appiah ascribes to a myth of merit and choice that neglects power.

In his consideration of tolerance and choice, Michael Walzer takes pains to update the liberal view of voluntary association with a typology of what he calls the constraints of involuntary association. He argues that while there are “creative individuals” who break away from the predetermined life roles their involuntary associations lay out from them – “the norm is continuity.” Walzer enumerates four constraints of involuntary association. These family and social constraints serve as background conditions for our adult choices. Walzer refers to the “cultural determination of available associational forms,”[245] which are the cultural practices and prescriptions regarding marriage, politics and even friendship that form the limit of our possible associational activities. Although member may choose to exist from their family and disavow inherited religious doctrines, should they choose to join up, partner up, or create new groups, these new memberships still retain many of the structural characteristics of the groups they have left. Politically, this often means that dissenters often claim rights and rewards that may have not previously had but which were already available in the wider social sphere, such as women’s claims to suffrage, minority claims to equal opportunity, and gay and lesbian claims for marriage rights. These right however novel they me be for the people who assert them, are similarly practiced by the new and the old. Our new associations mirror our old ones in their structure, rules of governance and organization. Free choice has rules. “Free choice can only work within the limits of cultural provision.”[246]

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[245] Michael Walzer. *Politics and Passion: Toward a More Egalitarian Liberalism.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004. 5.

[246] Walzer, *Politics and Passion*, 8.

The last two constraints of involuntary association Walzer considers are political and moral. Our citizenship is not easily revoked from us nor can we denounce it without great effort and resources. Being born into citizenship, this status places on us many obligations even as it affords us rights. We may have the political right to exit groups we find unfitting but we do not have the right to opt out of citizenship duties such as takes and our obligation to uphold the law. We may have the rights of free speech and association but these rights are limited by our citizenship's constraints upon treasonous activities.

We also see our duties and obligations to our families, cultures and political groups as moral constraints. In our attempts to be "good people," even if we wish to revise or reform our groups, we have a desire to remain loyal to these groups. We wish to respect our elders and parents even when we disagree with them. We have been taught the appropriate rites of worship and reverence of our religions and the proper love of our country. Even the most autonomous of us rarely set out to do things that would bring about the total demise of these groups. We care about our memberships, the groups as a whole and the particular members that we know.

Taking groups seriously for Walzer involves allegiance and passion. Yet following Rawls' lead, instead of teasing out what group membership means in its more mundane forms given the constraints that we are all subject to, Walzer constricts his consideration of tolerance on the intolerant, totalizing groups among us. Walzer contends when intolerant groups make claims for "cultural rights" that assert that they must exact total loyalty from their members and that liberal notions of equality and free choice are inimical to their group identity. These totalizing groups claim that their right to educate (or in the case of women, not educate) their members as they see fit in order to protect their ways of life. On the face of it, the fact of pluralism means that the radical democrat must accept all such claims of survival. However, according to Walzer, one way we may separate the fact of pluralism from the value of pluralism is under the condition of citizenship, which grants us rights we can choose not to use but whose obligations we must accept.

Walzer addresses the liberal hope that social mobility, the increasing overlap of group membership and the growing hegemony of liberal ideals of equality are helping groups that were formally totalizing become more "internally democratic."[247] While this may be the case, Walzer recognizes that the liberal dream that we would all become more autonomous individuals, less dependent upon rigid associations, freely choosing our memberships, is precisely that, a dream. Totalizing groups may have declined but they have not disappeared. In reproducing themselves, these groups handicap their members. In particular, children who are born into these groups may lack the educational opportunities necessary to become productive members in the larger society outside of their group. But what can we do? Telling people what they can and cannot do with their children is a touchy subject. Child welfare, rearing and education are subjects that blur any nice distinction between public and private.

Walzer contends we must take on the touchy subject as a public issue. He argues that our best choice is to make exit easier as Rawls encourages but adds to the right to exit a claim against these groups based on citizenship. Whereas Rawls required immediate threat, Walzer argues that as citizens, people can be required to have a certain democratic education. To be recognized and respected as a group and receive aid from the state, we may demand that they teach some minimal civic education, that we can tolerate them only in so far as they accept this as a condition of citizenship. The conditions of citizenship, on Walzer's view are the difference between pluralism as a fact and pluralism as a value. Civic education may radically alter the way group members perceive their allegiances and possibilities, destroying the totalizing affects of membership. State sponsored multiculturalism leads the way not to relativism but to democracy.

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[247] Walzer, *Politics and Passion,* 48-49.

"Critics of multiculturalism raise the specter of relativism. How can we respect or subsidize totalizing and hierarchical illiberal and inegalitarian communities? In practice, however, relativism is only a specter; respect and subsidy always have a price, as traditionalist groups discover as soon as they claim their "rights." Rights are liberal constructions; they come with conditions, and so they should. But one of the conditions can't be that the totalizing communities transform itself into a standard liberal voluntary association."[248] Walzer thinks that civic education may change groups internally but we must be careful, he asserts "conditions should be coercive, only with regard to citizenship not with regard to individuals. We don't have to, we shouldn't, and we probably can't force individuals to be free."[249] I agree with Walzer on this last point. What a belief in choice however flawed it may be requires of us, is that we allow individuals to choose to be unfree, that we allow them to be a part of groups that we find problematic. But Walzer's view of associational life and identity is still too limited and because of this his solutions are inadequate.

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[248] Walzer, *Politics and Passion*, 56.
[249] Walzer, *Politics and Passion*, 60.

Walzer falls into the trap of all pluralism as a value in his idea that we should support the illiberal and inequitable associations of totalizing groups as a matter of course because he relies too heavily on politics as group claims that arise out of a liberal conception of civil society, which relegates many claims for political justice to the private or at least social, not political sphere. First, we must consider why using totalitarian groups as the standard for tolerance mistakenly over simplifies the issue by creating an extreme dichotomy between us and them. Second, Walzer's solution of connecting the requirements of citizenship and the allocation of state resources to civic groups to alleviate inequality and promote social justice is insufficient. Other solutions that do not depoliticize justice will require the restructuring the levels of authority, deployment of resources and the scale of administration, by creating room practically and theoretically for democratic public sphere.

Totalizing groups such as religious cults who live on compounds and use appeals to the constitution to do so are not only the rare cases but when it comes to the fact/value problems of pluralism, they are not the most interesting or informative. The first reason is utilitarian in origin. Relatively few people in our society belong to closed groups like this, and they request little to nothing from members outside of their groups. Unless and until these groups make demands for public resources their cases do not inform the pressing cases of justice. Additionally, civic education is not a constitutional obligation and even if we were to make it a prerequisite for state funds, groups that are intolerant in the way Walzer describes would not likely be changed. Women and children whose places within the hierarchy of these groups are enforced by indoctrination and physical intimidation would probably be subject to more constraint after the implementation of any state based policy of forced civic education.

The second reason theorizing about pluralism from a standpoint of us tolerating them is inadequate is because it doesn't appreciate the many dimensions of group membership that make the fact/value distinction of pluralism a political question. Walzer and Rawls have to make the other into a total other in order to simplify the problem of pluralism. As long as we can easily separate us from them and as long as they are in the minority – whether it is because of traditional closed lives or because our liberal tendencies prevail – taking their group differences seriously is a matter of course. These differences are not powerful or threatening, thus setting up a safe, digestible dichotomy. Even with his more nuanced view of association Walzer fails to consider what feminist standpoint theorists have called intersectionality with its pros and cons.

To briefly restate the concerns of Chapter Five, versions of that theory state that we are all members of many groups whose conflicting memberships pose the horizon of personal identity. Our social groupings are not completely separate from one another, they can and do overlap. My religious affiliation is not easily separated from my political affiliations, my civic associations or my more trivial recreational affiliations. My many identities also subject me to many, specific social consequences. Walzer comes closest to seeing this point when he considers the liberal hope that social mobility and shared group memberships will lead to tolerance, that interaction will be the catalyst for more equitable less rigid membership. This hope, that "tolerance will exhaust its enemies" doesn't, even on Walzer's account, suffice against totalizing groups. Further, the notion of exhausting difference is not a true pluralism. Not all memberships can or should be run like a liberal government. Lassiez-faire participation, unqualified exit and the equal standing of all members does not sound like what we have come to want or expect from many of our groups. Of more consequence than even that, is a point that many feminist and multiculturalists have also missed, claims of social justice based in group membership and identity play themselves out in specific geographic locations. While feminist and multiculturalists often hint at the importance of place and space, theory about how geography is both subject constituting and politically relevant is limited. Space and place are fundamental to feminist epistemology and literary criticism but still under theorized in those fields and it can be argued that our political thought lags even farther behind. The seriousness of difference, the distinctions that have to be made between valuable difference and difference used to promote injustice, require us to consider the local conditions of politics.

In his conception of the roles of civil society and the state, Walzer contends that a balance must be struck between state interference and civic associations. He argues that inequalities exist because many social groups do not have the resources to organize around their interests. Strong associations get stronger because their members are able to mobilize more resources. Their interests are reflected in politics and civil society because they are better organized and have more know how. The state should help the groups who make identity claims achieve equality in both resources and respect by helping them become better organized through education and resources.

Walzer offers, like many contemporary theorists of democracy and liberalism, that the solution to institutionalized social and political problems lies in the realm of civil society, while this may help alleviate some social ills, I do not think it is sufficient to address practical issues of inequality and injustice. We cannot use the state to merely funnel money into civic associations and hope that they will address the issues of inequality that still pervade our society. Political philosophers have too long thought of communities as either civic associations or traditional, closed groups and not as the geographic locations that we inhabit. This line of thinking, tied to place, scale and institution creation, gives us far more grounds for democratic political possibilities and to object to injustice and inequality.

Permit me to use a few examples to illustrate the problem with theories which advocate a strengthening of the social or civic sphere instead of changing the way we do politics. I hope these examples will also clarify what local participatory geographies can offer.

I currently live in the city of Atlanta, Georgia. In the city of Atlanta, the mayor is a black woman, the police chief a black man. Historically black institutions such as churches, colleges and universities are bedrocks of the city. The NAACP, the Urban League and many other race based civic associations thrive. And there is no denying that these institutions and groups have used identity politics to help transform Atlanta. I have heard it said that systemic racism is dead in Atlanta, in part because the controlling governmental and civic associations are black run. But where I work, live and play, the subject of racist practices of policing remains a top concern of many. A quick survey of local citizen papers suggests that a black man is still more likely to be pulled over by police while driving his car under suspicion of criminal activity than a white man.[250] In

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[250] Wendy L. Scales-Johnson. “Letters to the Editor.” *The Citizen.com* http://www.thecitizen.com/~citizen0/node/24285; American Civil Liberties Union. “ACLU Applauds Introduction of 'End Racial Profiling Act' As ACLU Releases Report

April of 2007, the Atlanta police department used information from an informant, who later testified that he was paid to lie in order to execute a no-knock warrant that left a 92 year old woman named Kathryn Johnston dead in her home. The city continues to debate whether police practices are geared toward the protection of the poor and minority or if police action takes on a character of harassment and suspicion in certain neighborhoods.[251] Studies of school matriculation and tracking in Atlanta area schools show that students of color are still more likely than their white, suburban, peers to be tracked into vocational programs and black male students in particular have the highest rates of drop out and expulsion.[252] What is happening in these parts of town that attribute to growing disparities in life chances and ever increasing poverty and joblessness could be addressed as race related group issues with varying degrees of effectiveness. The solution could be the one Walzer advocates. Give the 100 Black Men of Atlanta more money to run extracurricular programs for young black men to help them matriculate and supplement their education. Give the NAACP Legal Defense Fund more resources to take up legal cases minorities might bring against the police, government and business institutions, use civic associations to strengthen weakened, vulnerable minority communities.

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on Racial Profiling." www.aclu.org/safefree/general/17018prs20040226.html; Alyssa Abkowitz. "Walking While Black: Neighbors Say Vague Law Amounts to Harrasment." http://atlanta.creativeloafing.com/gyrobase/Content?oid=181150; http://theatlantavoice.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=530&Itemid=66; All sources accessed January 19, 2008.

[251] Department of Justice. "Three Officers Charge in Fatal Shooting of Elderly Woman." http://www.usdoj.gov/opa/pr/2007/April/07_crt_299.html; Accessed January 19, 2008.

[252] For problems with Atlanta matriculation rates in general cf. http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/metro/atlanta/stories/2007/06/12/0613metgrad.html Assessed January 19, 2008.

Yet, privatizing public matters in this way puts the burden of social justice and reform on minority groups and overlooks the specificity of injustice and inequality. Sure, it is still necessary and perhaps will continue to be desirable for racial minority groups, groups of women and advocates of subaltern cultures to form national or group based civic organizations as service providers and springboards for political action. Supporting these groups with funding from a Federal government that sees their continued existence and claims for widened spheres of freedom and equality as a matter of justice will continue to be a common practice that should become more common. The possibilities for building transnational coalitions around identity based politics will and should continue to prompt us to promote the moral and ethical positions suggested by valuing principles such as equal rights and freedom of conscience. But what supporting such a group based politics – or perhaps what could be better called civics and not politics – neglects is that the injustice and inequality maligned groups experience is most often experienced in their roles as individual workers, residents and students. It may be the case that black men all across America experience the phenomenon of driving while black and that on a national level it may be necessary for Black male civic organizations to remind us that being black behind the wheel of a car is not a crime. However, the national level of "consciousness raising" politics may permit many people to declare that this problem is not an issue in their area or town. It will continue to allow non-written practices of racist policing to continue about their way. But if the issue was tied to locales, and counteracted at the level of politics where black men who live work and play in many areas had input on the policies of policing, different sorts of changes could be imagined. What I am talking of here is not the idea of citizen reviews of prevailing practices but citizen institution of those practices. Giving citizens more than the power to hire and fire but also the power to create. Would police procedure be different if citizens had more of a say of how it should be done? Would the antagonism and distrust between police and citizens that exists in Southwest Atlanta where Kathryn Johnston was killed be changed?

Local publics give us the opportunity to conceive of what I call participatory geographies. Whereas, identity politics is faced with enduring challenges of legitimacy based on arguments of relativism, a growing disbelief in racism because of its less overt forms, and a backlash against feminist and gay movements, by making community mean something in addition to the heretofore traditional communities offered by identity politics and tying community to residency and resources, we give individuals more opportunities to correct long standing social injustices, practice equality and conceive of new ways of living with one another. I propose is that we consider the possibilities of restructuring the way we make and justify public decisions, placing communities in relationships of responsibility and reciprocity connected to local participatory geographies, acknowledging the potential of theorizing the political possibility afforded us by considering geography and resources.

Feminist philosopher Iris Marion Young offers forceful amendments to Rawls-inspired theories of justice that reframe tolerance and the possibilities of the public sphere in terms of responsibility and communication.[253] Of all of the works considered here Young's works on politic theory are most akin to mine both topically and in argumentative style, yet there are differences, which although small, that like the point of a sewing needle, prick. The sticking point that I will address in the following concerns how I hope to reconcile a theory of justice derived from Young's with my own ideas about freedom which sets me at odds with her views about the local even as I think that her idea of regional democracy offers promise thinking about the public sphere.

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[253] See above, Chapter One.

Young's ideas about social justice focus on structural inequalities. According to Young, the politics of recognition, theories of distributive justice and certain brands of deliberative democracy, neglect the historical and material aspects of injustice, thus not transforming unjust society, rather making minor repairs. Her criticisms of these forms of politics can also be levied toward resistance-style politics offered by Foucault and other contemporary theorists who offer no normative vision in their recommendations. Instead, Young contends that all of these factors – recognition, material goods, complex communication and the room to offer resistance, require expanded notions of democracy.

> A democratic process is inclusive not simply by formally including all potentially affected individuals in the same way, but by attending to the social relations that differently position people and condition their experience, opportunities, and knowledge of society. A democratic public arrives at objective political judgment from discussion not by bracketing these differences, but by communicating the experiences and perspectives conditioned by them to one another. Communication of the experience and knowledge derived from different social positions helps correct biases derived from the dominance of partial perspective over the definition of the problems or their possible solutions.[254]

Young defends a form of deliberative democracy which takes inclusion as the most important factor of politics and the standard of justice. Like other democracy theorists, Young hopes to achieve this ideal through a clarification of procedures of communication even as she attempts to distinguish her thought from other theories of communicative democracy. Most importantly, Young tries to balance the desire for inclusion through communication with the realities of scale. Her thought is as policy-minded as it is academic philosophy. In opposition to theories of localism which have been grouped with communicative democracy theories, she offers first, in 1990, the "ideal of city life" in *Justice and the Politics of Difference* and then the idea of regional democracy in 2000's *Inclusion and Democracy*. In both works, Young incorrectly associates all localism with communitarianism, even as she seems to be an advocate of the local as I am here.

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[254] Young, *Inclusion and Democracy,* 83.

> Proponents frequently privilege face-to-face relations in reaction to the alienation and domination produced by huge, faceless bureaucracies and corporations, whose actions and decisions affect most people, but are out of their control. Appeals to community envision more local and direct control. A more participatory democratic society should indeed encourage active publics at the local levels of neighborhood and workplace. But the important political question is how relations among these locales can be organized so as to foster justice and minimize domination and oppression. Invoking a mystical ideal of community does not address this question, but rather obscures it. Politics must be conceived as a relationship of strangers who do not understand one another in a subjective and immediate sense, relating across time and distance.[255]

Young's critique of the local is more directly a criticism of communitarian views like those discussed in Chapter One. She criticizes the "face to face" of community and its assumptions of shared identity. Among other things, she charges against community that it participates in a metaphysics of presence and sets up problematic authentic versus inauthentic social relations. Community is not a good political dream for three reasons, communities "suppress" internal differences, communities "exclude outsiders, and the "small...decentralized units that this ideal promotes, moreover, is an unrealistic vision for transformative politics in mass urban society."[256]

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[255] Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*, 234.

[256] Young, "The Ideal of Community and the Politics of Difference" in *Feminism/Postmodernism*. Nicholson, editor. New York: Routledge, 1990. 300.

In the last chapter, I argued that the idea of community operative in our political theory assumes things about communities, understood as neighborhoods and locations that cannot be taken as a given. Young, even with all of the attention she pays to urbanity, like Walzer, like Rawls, like many theorists who write about identity and groups, assumes a homogeneity and traditionalism when she talks about communities as groups. Living together does not automatically, even in the cases of racial segregation (by choice or force), ghettoization (by religion, national origin, or class), reflect shared sentiments. The simplicity of this assumption of shared beliefs discounts the elements of randomness, choice and disagreement present in any group, especially so in the United States and is rooted in another, more covertly racist assumption, that "others" – the brown, yellow and black, along with the non-Protestant, are somehow more alike one another than different. Young's conflation of community as traditional group and the local as place is representative of how well-meaning, such a bad assumption can be.

Young charges that "theorists of community" assume that we can have unmediated social relations. Against this view, she charges that no social relation, not even a person's relation to themselves is unmediated.

> …theorists of community privilege face-to-face relations because they conceive of them as immediate. Immediacy is better than mediation because immediate relations have the purity and security longed for in the Rousseauist dream: we are transparent to one another, purely copresent in the same time and space, close enough to touch and nothing comes between us to obstruct our vision of one another.[257]

Accepting the mediation of social and inner personal relations does not negate the important factor that Young leaves out in her discussion of immediacy. The chances of someone being effective, having the power to disagree, move, or transform themselves and their surroundings may significantly increase when what they are trying to influence is themselves and their local surroundings. She equates immediacy with the feelings of "warmth and sharing" touted by communitarians which is not at all the concern of understanding the local as the space of politics. The local is championed here because it could be away for us to get things done, replacing old ways of keeping things the same. It is about correcting injustices and the positive task of meeting desires. Against Young who says localism is "wholly utopian," I would argue that it is partly what we already do and reconstituting the local as important is one of the things we might do to legitimate the use of power.

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[257] Young, *The Politics of Difference,* 233.

Turning to Rousseau, who Young disparages as a dreamer, we can understand the mythos of the social contract that he upheld along with Hobbes, Locke and the other Enlightenment thinkers, as originating in a realistic, moral claim about the preeminence of the individual. Rousseau, more so than Locke and Hobbes, understood that individuals were embedded in societies and that convention, not any natural order, was the foundation of politics, and his goal was to establish a source of legitimate politics that respected the freedom of the individual in her/his given state of equality. [258] Rousseau overstepped the logical import of these beginnings when he posited the General Will as sovereign in part, because he chose the enforced harmony of wills over the play of struggles. Although, Young denigrates Rousseau, most forms of communicative and deliberative democracy, including her own, can be read as quite similar to his thought. Agreement based on properly established procedure which attends to the common good, well, one only has to read Rousseau closely to see the similarities in the proposals. Young is right to insist that we must come to understand how localities interact without idealizing commonality but she has gone wrong in her assessment of community as having a Rousseauian General Will by not seeing its affinity to her own project and by assuming that that is what one necessarily has to mean by defending forms of localism. No small part of the problem of Young's view is the steps in the arguments she takes to get to her ideal of city life in *Justice and the Politics of Difference* and the ideal of solidarity in *Inclusion and Democracy*.

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[258] Cf. Jean Jacques Rousseau. "The Social Contract." In *Social Contract: Essays by Locke, Hume and Rousseau.* Barker, ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. Especially the first book's first three sections.

Young begins her treatment of the first ideal unproblematically pointing out that in cities, in public spaces, we do not assume that people know each other. She writes, "By city life I mean a form of social relations which I define is the being together of strangers."[259] Setting inclusion in public debates as the goal of the model of the ideal city which recognizes the rights of groups to both interact and remain distinct, Young fives four positives of such an ideal – social differentiation without exclusion, variety, eroticism and publicity. Each of these "pro" arguments for the ideal of the city fails, and are rooted in a sort of majority minded plea bargaining and not in an appeal to morality or other claim to justice.

Young is careful to say that the ideal of the city is not modeled on real cities, but still suggests that the root of her critical social theory is the possibilities found in urban areas. The first pro, of a social differentiation without exclusion, is based on the following claim:

> Though city life as we now experience it has many borders and exclusions, even our actual experience of the city also gives hints of what differentiation without

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[259] Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, 237.

> exclusion can be. Many city neighborhoods have a distinct ethnic identity, but members of other groups also dwell in them. In the good city one crosses from one distinct neighborhood to another without knowing precisely where one ended and the other began. In the normative ideal of the city life, borders are open and undecidable.[260]

Even after citing evidence contrary to this claim, Young insists that experiences in the city are not all of segregated spaces and closed off communities that are based most often on racial and economic grouping. Noting an indisputable point, such as the fact that even Bill Clinton has an office in historically Black Harlem, does not support the point that because someone of a different racial or economic group moves into a neighborhood where they are the minority that those neighborhoods are now inclusive. It does assume, however, much of what I have already mentioned about Young traditional analysis of group as equal to community as equal to neighbor as meaning having the same social values and political agendas. Young could have supported this point better by not assuming unity among local groups but rather, by having assumed diversity, working out how people in those neighborhoods come to identify themselves either as a group with wider political import than their particular neighborhoods, or as a group of individuals who come together and make choices about the institutions and organization of their location without considering themselves as anything more than individuals who have an interest in the governing of those spaces in which they live, work and play. More interestingly political than the idea that there would be no borders in the city, would have been the idea that because there will be borders, how might we draw those boundaries and still meet the moral demands of freedom and equality? This is the radically democratic point, given the hegemony of liberal rights which we do not want to give up and their marriage to democracy and the intricacies of struggle, power, and authority, how can we draw lines for now, look to the future and know that we may have to redraw them tomorrow?

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[260] Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, 239

Young's positives of the ideal of city life build in their objectionability. If the ideal of differentiation without exclusion seems a bit fantastical, then the second idea that we should value city life because of its variety is even more so.

> The interfusion of groups in the city occurs partly because of the multiuse differentiation of social space. What makes urban spaces interesting, draws people out in public to them, gives people pleasure and excitement, is the diversity of activities they support. When stores, restaurants, bars, clubs, parks, and offices are sprinkled among residences, people have a neighborly feeling about their neighborhood, they go out and encounter one another on the streets and chat.[261]

Young's naivety about the use and pleasure individuals get out of social spaces relies on a spectator's view of lived spaces. It does not consider the strong "neighborly" feelings, be they good or problematic, had by people who live in neighborhoods who do not have the benefits of mixed use as she describes them here and become territorial precisely because the resources that they do have are constantly being used without payment or regard by people outside of their neighborhoods.

Major League Baseball's Atlanta Braves play in Turner Field, which is claimed to be in the neighborhoods of both the affluent Grant Park and the economically depressed Mechanicsville. Depending on the marker used to draw a circle around the neighborhood in which the field resides, Turner Field is in an area of high crime. [262] It is also an area where, on any given game night, suburbanites brush shoulders with the people from the lower economic strata as they take their tickets, park their cars, sell them souvenirs and even on occasion, walk passed them to take their seats. On Young's model, Turner Field should be a place of cross cultural interaction, a destination point but what it represents to me is the growing inattention to the use of local resources at the expense of the residents. The residents are policed on game days to insure the safe passage of the suburban visitors, parking lots have sprung up illegally (and legally) on the front yards of houses and noise and car pollution take its toll. But no one stops to inquire about whether or not the neighborhood should benefit from the resources of the park as much as it must put up with its intrusions. Further, the variety of the events at the ball park, which hosts not only baseball games, but also circus and a myriad of other recreation events in the off season, come at a premium that may be too high for people who live in a one mile radius of the park to enjoy. The stadium although located in Mechanicsville caters to people who live outside of the neighborhood.

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[261] Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, 239.

[262] Cf. "Stadium Safety Survey: Turner Field Area is Worst." *The Atlanta Journal Constitution.* April 8, 2000.

This leads to the most objectionable of Young's pluses of the ideal of the city, eroticism. Young lists the differences found in the city as erotic. Nothing about this claim appeals to my sentiments that we should appreciate difference and whereas, as I stated that I too like the idea of the city as our normative model, I find the eroticization of difference as a privileged, economically and racially suspect argument. I will quote Young extensively, as her words in the full context of the first paragraph of the brief section on eroticism are more condemning than the critique to follow.

> *Eroticism*. City life also instantiates difference as the erotic, in the wide sense of an attraction to the other, the pleasure and excitement of being drawn out of one's secure routine to encounter the novel, strange, and surprising (cf. Barthes, 1986). The erotic dimension of the city has always been an aspect of its fearfulness, for it holds out the possibility that one will lose one's identity, will fall. But we also take pleasure in being open to and interested in people we experience as different. We spend a Sunday afternoon walking through Chinatown, or checking out this week's eccentric players in the park. We look for restaurants, stores, and clubs

> with something new for us, a new ethnic food, a different atmosphere, a different crowd of people. We walk through sections of the city that we experience as having unique characters which are not ours, where people from diverse places mingle and then go home.[263]

The other as an object of entertainment, to whose neighborhood we travel for the thrill and the excitement of being among "them," dehumanizes people. It does not appreciate concrete differences. Chinatown regarded as a place for trinkets and eating "strange" food, neglects the fact that the people who live in Chinatown are people who in working out their day to day lives have personal, political and economic worries that in our spectating and eroticizing, we disregard in order to make them a spectacle of "traditional" group values. This eroticization is also most often reflective of power relations. As a Black woman in Atlanta, the social acceptability of me treating Decatur's Little Korea as erotic is high, but traveling, sampling, gazing and gawking in the overwhelmingly gentrified Virginia Highlands leaves me open to questions of belonging and legitimacy. The Asian is available to my erotic gaze, while the White is normal and not available to the same lassiez-faire scrutiny, which poses the problem of Young's last pro of the ideal of city life, publicity.

> Political theorists who extol the value of community often construe the public as a realm of unity and mutual understanding, but this does not cohere with our actual experience of public spaces. Because by definition a public space is a place accessible to anyone, where anyone can participate and witness, entering the public one always risks encounter with those who are different, those who identify with different groups and have different opinions or different forms of life. The group diversity of the city is most often apparent in public spaces…Cities provide important public spaces – streets, parks, and plazas – where people stand and sit together, interact and mingle, or simply witness one another, without becoming unified in a community of "shared final ends".[264]

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[263] Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, 239.
[264] Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, 240.

I have all along defended the view that in neighborhoods and in groups, the diversity of individuals suggests that communitarianism is not an appropriate political goal, nor does it accurately account for many people's experiences. In the same vein, however, social identifiers such as race, make salient differences in people's social mobility, interactions and render this view of the "public spaces" troublesome. The invisibility of certain people in public to others who have more affluence or social capital, such as minority service workers and non-English speaking immigrants, makes this claim of publicity yet another privilege of the privileged. It is possible to ride the subway here in Atlanta and never speak to someone who is not your race, regardless of how many of the "others" there are on the train. It is possible to walk pass the same receptionist in the lobby of the museum without ever noting her name or what she looks like. It is more than possible to disregard the nametag or appearance of your mailperson, the young man at the grocery checkout, and even the waiter at your favorite restaurant. Sure, they were there, but being in public with them does not count as some sort of invaluable experience. Sitting in a diverse movie theater does nothing for politics. And when the different "types" of people, as Young sets them up, do collide, it is often in hostility and misunderstanding, due in no small part to the fact that not everyone can participate in the same way do to the historical and social circumstances of those spaces.

Instead of an ideal city, it might be better to base our visions on the actual city, which can be treated as synonymous with the fact of pluralism. People live together in varying social arrangements based on a myriad of freely chosen, indirectly caused and forced circumstances, our theory should aim toward making the best out of this possible situation while ideally string for justice and freedom. Young contributes to this project in her later ideas about regional democracy, where she lays out a plan for the just, democratic politics based on responsibility.

> The scope of a polity…ought to coincide with the scope of the obligations of justice which people have in relation to one another because their lives are intertwined in social, economic, and communicative relations that tie their fates…I have suggested that dense relations of causal influence and background action obtain across regions. When the political organization of such regions institutionalizes political discussion and decision-making only within separate small jurisdictions, and people in them feel they need to concern themselves only with the others in their jurisdictional community, then such political separation is illegitimate because it does not correspond to the scope and relations of justice.[265]

Following the work of Georg Frug, Young expertly outlines the difficulty of balancing the primacy of one location's claims against another. Philosophically, she attempts to work out the administrative side of a political philosophy of democratic participation. Setting complete group or location autonomy as impossible and undesirable, thereby defeating all claims of all difference as a value, Young gives a compelling analysis of the empowerment of local groups that would require attention to scale and public spaces on multiple levels, as well as the arbitration of differences through the mediation of claims on ever ascending levels. Regional democracy constituted by attention to local participatory geographies would allow us to make claims for the citizen-lead restructuring of the purpose and practices of policing in Southwest Atlanta, the investigation into the justice relations of the use of Turner Field and the possibility of creation of different ways of being and doing that do not require giving up either individual specificity or group difference. The only cautionary moments that must be attached to this view are the ones listed above and the relatively quick treatment of the agonistic nature of the public sphere.

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[265] Young, *Inclusion and Democracy.* 229.

III. Ending with Justice and Freedom

This dissertation has been an exercise in the articulation of a problem within current philosophical theory about the public sphere and political subjectivity. Theorizing democracy as our best possibility in this historical juncture and also our most difficult ideal, the goal of this dissertation has been to reinsert the relevance of the local as place in our theories of politics and identity and assumes that in the name of both justice and freedom, we have to continue trying to find ways that allow individuals to have more avenues of participation. The steps taken toward a creative public sphere for an actually existing American democracy have been small but the critical contributions to the literature through the reassertion of the importance of place as a difference is significant because it begins a collective task of making up for the lack of geographical sense in our current political philosophy. It is my hope that in my future work, I will be able to expand the concept of local participatory geographies through the further study of feminist intersectionality and standpoint theories in relation to political visions.

I have used a selective, yet wide range of texts in this dissertation because the goal of the project was not to create scholarship about one particular source or idea but to interrogate the resources available to me as a philosopher to think about the questions of political subjectivity and politics that I find pressing. As stated in the introduction and throughout, I believe that philosophy offers us a way to form a critical distance from our current and historical practices in order to create new visions for our future. I do not do this as a mere thought experiment, but rather as an attempt at conceptualizing practicable solutions for the particular struggles I have mention here.

I end this work, with a quote from Patricia Hill-Collins, a Black feminist philosopher whose work inspired me to attempt this project. It is found at the end of her philosophically important work, *Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice*:

> Although political struggle requires good ideas, it also needs much more. Without some sense of where we're going and why we want to go there, and some "righteous rage" to spur us on, we won't even know if we're headed in the right direction…In these endeavors, critical social theory matters, because it helps point the way. If critical social theory manages to move people toward justice, then it has made a very important difference.[266]

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[266] Collins, *Fighting Words*, 251.

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