# Democracy and Pluralism

The political thought of
William E. Connolly

*Edited by*
**Alan Finlayson**

# Democracy and Pluralism

William E. Connolly's political theory forms a distinct and influential contribution to contemporary debates about the nature and prospects of democratic life in the twenty-first century. His original conceptualisations of pluralism, naturalism, the politics of the body, religion, secularism and his daring incorporation of contemporary neurobiology into political theory and analysis, have opened new paths for intellectual enquiry. Connolly has brought an American tradition of pragmatist political thinking into fruitful conversation with the best of contemporary continental European philosophy and given to both a new energy and focus.

In this edited collection, a distinguished panel of political theorists from both Europe and the USA provide a critical and nuanced assessment of his contribution to the discipline, especially in the field of democratic theory. They identify the sources of Connolly's work, its connections to other ways of thinking about the political and they evaluate his continuing contribution to our understanding of the problems and promises of the present and to our appreciation of what it might mean to fulfil the promise of the democratic way of life.

The final chapter provides space for Connolly himself to reflect on his interlocutors and further develop his conception of a 'world of becoming', considering the links between political theory and the science of complexity while focusing on the immediate challenges facing both American and world politics.

*Democracy and Pluralism* provides a critical introduction to the work of William E. Connolly and to contemporary debates in political theory encompassing topics such as radical democracy, the body, religion, time and contingency.

**Alan Finlayson** is Reader in the Department of Politics and International Relations at Swansea University. He has written widely on political theories of radical democracy and on the critical analysis of ideology and governmentality in British politics.

# Routledge Innovations in Political Theory

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# Contributors

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# Acknowledgements

# Introduction

## Becoming plural

*Alan Finlayson*

## Introduction

William E. Connolly is the most interesting and original North American political theorist of his generation. His thought stands apart from mainstream political theories of justice, right and liberty, yet is not defined by simplistic opposition to them. He has creatively employed many elements of twentieth-century continental European philosophy while remaining an identifiably American theorist. He has incorporated into his thinking insights and ideas gleaned from diverse sources    including biological science, cinema and theology    but has always maintained a clear, direct and committed focus upon contemporary political situations and the problems and possibilities to which they give rise. He shares in the political sentiments and convictions of the 'left' but has not sought to earn radical credentials simply by adhering to easily identifiable dogmas. At the forefront of political theory that is responsive to 'identity politics', he has remained a grounded and trenchant critic of economic inequalities, showing the deep and significant imbrication of both with affective and spiritual dispositions that cannot be understood if classed only as secondary epi-phenomena. Finally    and perhaps above all    while developing a political theory concerned with the cultivation of an ethos of 'presumptive generosity', 'critical responsiveness' and 'agonistic respect', Connolly has also enacted this ethos in the openness his work shows to other streams of thought and in the manner with which he engages interlocutors.

  This book contains a variety of essays that celebrate this combination of theoretical creativity, political commitment and intellectual generosity. They explore, examine, apply and criticise Connolly's work, always striving to open up rather than close down his thinking. This Introduction offers a more general perspective. In addition to reviewing these chapters, it puts Connolly's work into an intellectual but also    and especially    a political context. It also stresses the extent to which that work is part of an American tradition. This is not done in order to confine, label or file away that work. Rather, in appreciating this specificity of Connolly's work, one can also see its eminently practical nature and can then begin thinking how best to adapt it to the tasks at hand in other places and at other times. Connolly does not just instruct

readers on what he thinks political theory or politics must be. Rather, he offers tools, resources and suggestions with which we can think and act politically. These have to be employed in different ways in different contexts and those of Connolly's readers who go along with him must be prepared to devise their own mobile and adaptable strategies in their part of the ongoing struggle always to be more than we are    to become plural.

## Writing Connolly

One of the most appealing aspects of Connolly's work is the way in which (contrary to the sectarian spirit of academic culture) it often proceeds by running streams of thought alongside each other and then seeing what happens when the currents are made to cross. In reading other theorists (both in and beyond the recognised canon), Connolly does not seek to distil the essence of a form of thinking, to find its most fundamental component and then either claim this as his discovery or seek acclaim for its simple refutation.

Like the universe they encourage us to enjoy and celebrate, Connolly's writing and thinking are always expanding. His readings attempt to create more thought and more opportunities for political and intellectual experience. They are a form of writing aptly described, by Michael Shapiro in Chapter 4 in this volume, as 'cinematic'. These are hallmarks of Connolly's work: cuts and juxtapositions; the unexpected meetings of characters one thought one knew but who, recorded from a new angle under a new light, suddenly look different; a combination of forward movement with the exploration of conceptual space; and, importantly, an appeal to the reasoning intellect while all the time tugging at the very affects under exploration.

In tune with this cinematic expansiveness and openness the chapters in this book often celebrate Connolly's work not by presenting mere explications or extensions of it, nor economia to it. Each is a different kind of *engagement* with Connolly's thought (sometimes also an experiment). Staging little films, plays and dramas of their own, the essays pick up elements or review past instantiations of Connolly's thinking and put them alongside other themes, thinkers and theories in order to see what illumination can thereby be created.

For instance, David Howarth, in the opening chapter, feeds Connolly into the conceptual and methodological preoccupations of Discourse Theory and finds the former helps him further to think through his conception of the various 'logics' of social and political moments, and to extend his sense of what it is for political analysis to take the form, not of positivist explanation but of ethico-political interpretation conscious of its own 'onto-political' conditioning. Then, in Chapter 2, Stephen White considers Connolly's interest in ethos and, placing it alongside Charles Taylor's reflections on selfhood, addresses himself to the contemporary 'predicament' of democratic polities that are becoming ever more unequal and composed of ever more diverse identities. White's concern is that this can erode the foundations of social and democratic solidarity. In considering what a sustainable democratic ethos

could be in such conditions, White connects Connolly's conceptions of 'presumptive generosity' and 'critical responsiveness' with his own thinking about 'weak ontology' which he then seeks to defend against those who call for a seemingly more robust because extreme politics.

Thomas Dumm, in Chapter 3, very appropriately reads Connolly in one hand while attending to Thoreau in the other. Reflecting on the interacting experiences of embodiment, writing, time and affect, he proposes that we hold Connolly to be 'a phenomenologist of the plurality of existence' and in turn makes visible the character of the 'secular mystic'. In Chapter 4, Michael Shapiro   who has long had a deep interest in multiple forms of cartography, in our mental, physical, literary and visual imaginations of space    places Connolly next to the novelist Milan Kundera. He succeeds in illuminating both while generating further reflections on time, intimacy, exile and ethos and in drawing our attention to the interweaving of emotional and geopolitical cartographies.

In a sense, these first four encounters are all concerned with aspects of methodology   but not in the restricted sense given to that term by textbook introductions to the study of politics and society. They are also interested in 'method' as we might apply this term to the work of an artist or craftsman: the way in which one approaches an issue, problem, theory or theorist; the attitude, orientation, mood or ethos we adopt with regard to it; the things we try to hold in mind as we do so; the strategies, techniques and tactics employed to find a way round or through, over or under, the blockages and obstacles in the way of completing a work; the style with which we use a particular tool and the ways we find novel employments for it.

Connolly is acutely aware   and has been throughout his work   of the ways in which subjective orientations enter into our research, analysis and thinking. In common with mainstream hermeneutic approaches to the study of politics, Connolly sees this as an opportunity rather than a threat to analysis. One's own subjective orientations are a part of the overall social and political phenomena we are considering. They are part of the work. But Connolly departs significantly from mainstream hermeneutics in that he does not want to fuse horizons shut, bring perspectives into harmony or unite them under some transcending universal principle. And he does not want the interpretive encounter to leave everything as it was before (other than with a little added 'understanding').

Connolly appreciates the ways in which the interaction of subjective dispositions (with each other and with the situations in which they find themselves) can transform not only substantive perceptions but also how perception is understood, how it is responded to, even how it takes place. He also knows that in any encounter between 'others', there will be an excess, an exchange of visceral affects that cannot be fully accounted for in advance. To think that we can overcome these by some act of rational will (as if it were entirely separate from our visceral emotional experience) is to misunderstand the nature and potential of such encounters, perhaps also to hide from

ourselves the existential resentments that cause us to be fearful of possible challenges to our present disposition. In thinking, writing and acting we need to be alert to things going on within us that might overwrite or deflect us, and identify these as moments of both danger and creative opportunity. Connolly is particularly interested in the fact that an encounter between others might lead not only to a greater understanding of, or appreciation for, what 'is', but to something new that nobody was preparing for. Where some modes of political or philosophical inquiry    not to mention some theories of politics    want to contain or restrain the excess energies that might transform situations, Connolly wants us not to be afraid and to see this as a desirable potential source of democratic political energy. Instead of merely acknowledging a given fact of 'reasonable' pluralism, he urges us to be on the lookout for opportunities for ongoing pluralisation. In the way it is written, his work both employs and encourages techniques for generating, accessing and extending just such energies.

However, this does lead to a series of questions concerning the subject that experiments upon its experiences as well as the subject that theorises politics or undertakes political analyses in terms of these affects. Connolly's approach clearly involves a 'decentring' of subjectivity. It emphasises the 'layered' character of experience, the interaction of body, brain and culture. But he does not seek simply to extend the range of political analysis. Connolly also proposes remedial actions, and recommends us to work on ourselves and our own dispositions, as well as on those of others, in particular ways and with particular goals. Connolly's de-centred subject can act upon itself, becoming aware of its own over-coded responses, cultivating within itself a generous outlook, a preparedness to temporarily hold certain dispositions in abeyance in order to practise critical responsiveness.

Connolly's method of political theory and analysis may, then, seem to privilege a kind of normative ethical care for the spiritually deformed self over assessment of structural injustices and the forces that sustain them. This is a concern for Sophia Mihic in Chapter 5. She puts Connolly back into a drama from the 1970s, replaying debates about interpretive political theory and analysis in which he played an important part. She reconstructs his arguments, alongside those of Charles Taylor, as part of a broader claim that the legacy of interpretivism within American political theory and science has been a subject-centred analysis contained within a framework of normative engagement that deflects attention from the processes by which objects of thought and analysis are constituted.

In Chapter 6, Moya Lloyd raises a different    but connected    concern. She juxtaposes Connolly with the black feminist writer Audre Lord who demonstrates the way in which our capacity to work on affects and, for instance, to convert resentment into generosity, may be limited by the violence of greater societal exclusions (such as those established by racism) that induce resentment of self more than of the other. Drawing on Judith Butler, Lloyd argues that in such instances persons may find resentment and anger, the affects from

which they can draw most sustenance in making their democratic demands. If this is so, then perhaps our political interpretations and recommendations might take a slightly different direction to that Connolly intends, departing from presumptive generosity.

In Chapter 7, James Martin also considers limits to presumptive generosity by assessing the possible place within a theory of radical democracy for a conception of evil. He discusses Connolly's writing on this topic and then confronts him with the reflections of the Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo and the political theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. This enables Martin to embrace Connolly's 'post-secular reason' while simultaneously articulating his concern, and his challenge to Connolly, that there must be limits to presumptive generosity if we are to protect pluralism from evils that render us 'unable to project ourselves towards a world of open possibilities'.

Chapter 8 addresses Connolly's post-secularism more broadly. Luca Mavelli locates Connolly's critique of secularism in relation to conceptions of modernity and the 'analytic of finitude' before critically reading his attempt to move beyond the 'empirical transcendental doublet' by running it against Jürgen Habermas and Talal Asad. Mavelli wants us to revisit and reconsider the concept of transcendence: to see it as not necessarily a source of fictive universality, or a sly justification for normalisation, but as a potentially rich source for the political and ethical imagination.

Gulshan Khan, in Chapter 9, is interested in imaginative ways in which we might 'do' politics. She connects Connolly's writings on 'neuropolitics' and on the strategies and tactics of political intervention with Situationist conceptions of subversive practice. Assessing the contributions of recent 'direct-action' artists, she opens up a range of questions about the kinds of radical political coalitions that are possible today and about how they might be created.

In Chapter 10, Jairus Grove runs a different kind of experiment, and tells a story in the genre of science fiction, by thinking about Connolly while also thinking about robotics, artificial intelligence and the problem of how 'human' is defined. Contrasting Connolly with Habermas, he links these issues to a broader history of struggle over the idea of the human that has been reactivated by genetic modification. He thus seeks to enrich and extend 'presumptive generosity' outwards from the realm of political life towards life as such.

Finally, in Chapter 11, Jeremy Valentine focuses on time and contingency in relation to the theory of pluralisation and radical democracy. He explores Connolly's thinking of contingency in relation to the theoretical terrain constituted by Althusser and those, such as Derrida, who tried to think beyond, not simply against, this problematic. Ultimately Valentine is able to identify and characterise Connolly's political theory of pluralisation as one, promising, response to the constitutive failure of liberal modernity which, instead of asking 'How can we modern liberals make those others more like us?', asks 'How can we modern liberals become more like ourselves by becoming other than what we are?'

These chapters attest to the breadth of Connolly's work, all of them returning to characteristic concerns with affect, presumptive generosity, critical responsiveness, embodiment, neuroscience, contemporary political cultures and the connection between democracy and becoming. Throughout his writing Connolly has demonstrated a great gift for bringing our tradition of political theory into a relationship with many other varied and stimulating strands of thought, from the philosophical and theological to the aesthetic and fictional. Sometimes weaving these together, at others pulling them apart, he has sought productive perspectives from which to think the political but also to live and act democratically in relation to it. This is amply demonstrated in Chapter 12, Connolly's response to this book's consideration of his work. There he calls for a deeper engagement between political theory and the contemporary science of complexity just as he calls for new kinds of interweaving between varied political movements and emerging forms of socially and ecologically oriented theology. This is typical of William Connolly. Where some thinkers might have made a life's work out of defending, extending and revising the ideas found within a prize-winning book (such as his classic *The Terms of Political Discourse*), Connolly's thought has always flowed onwards and outwards. Indeed, from one angle Connolly appears as the proverbial philosophical fox who knows many things: the philosophy and method of social science; transformations in Western political economy; the phenomenology of cinema; the most recent developments in neuroscience; the history of religion in the West, and so on. Then again, viewed from another angle, Connolly looks like the philosophical hedgehog who knows one thing and knows it well    and that one thing is pluralism.

## Pluralism, materialism and the ethos of democracy

From his early considerations of pluralism as a theory shaping the enquiries of political science, to his later works converting it into a theory of democratic dynamism William Connolly has always sought to expand the horizon of pluralist thinking and to deepen its appreciation of from whence it comes. He has, in his own phrase, sought to pluralise pluralism (see also Chambers and Finlayson, 2008). In so doing he has revitalised an approach to politics, and to political analysis, that had seemed to many not merely moribund but hopelessly mired in its own highly ideological 'common sense', and given to political thinking a new dimension awaiting exploration.

Central to this new dimension is Connolly's distinct conceptual materialism, expressed in his idea of 'immanent naturalism'. He holds that human activity takes place without the involvement of any supernatural force but unlike reductive or eliminative materialisms he does not believe we can represent the world without mediation, or establish the incontestable laws that govern it. In Connolly's philosophy, consciousness is a 'layer of thinking, feeling and judgment bound to complex crunching operations that exceed it' (Connolly, 2002: 44). These operations are not immaterial or transcendental

but they are in a sense ineffable and inscrutable. Although they may be 'worked on', they are part of a 'register subsisting beneath close conceptual discernment that nonetheless has effects on the colour of perception, the texture of action … fugitive layers of intersubjectivity that exceed our best powers of representation' (ibid.: 44 45). Individual thought, then, is construed by Connolly as an activity of a brain which is in turn part of a bodily system operating beyond the purview of conscious rationality and embedded in multiple cultural and historical contexts. Our thought is always larger and deeper than we are. But its 'fugitive' layers, far from being a scandalous disruption to reason as such, are a creative source, an 'affective means' that can 'magnify, enrich or modify elements in an affective register'.

Filling out these claims via appeals to the complexity theory of Prigogine and the neurological researches of scientists who experimentally observe the centrality of affect to thinking   such as Antonio Damasio (see 2004; 2006; Damasio and Damasio, 2006)   Connolly has instituted a 'conversation' between cultural theory and biology that can further description and understanding of the commingling of cultural life with body brain processes, conceptualising nature as unpredictable and historical rather than as the cause or subject of a regulative ideal. As Connolly astutely writes, we cannot, in the manner of some socio-biologists 'enclose humanity within a crude concept of nature', but nor can we, as many culturalist and intersubjectivist theorists do, 'eschew reference to "first nature"'. The latter, he writes,

> too tacitly accept a flat, determinist model of it [nature] … they often lift language, thinking, identity, choice and ethics out of it. They implicitly elevate these capacities above biology to preserve freedom and dignity, as they are allowed to conceive them … [they] … underplay the layered, biocultural character of human perception, thinking, culture, identity and ethics.
>
> (Connolly, 2002: 62)

Connolly proposes a vision of the body/brain connected up to culture, interacting with social-historical institutions that engender dispositions, perceptions, beliefs. He draws our attention to the organisation of varied forces and processes   'attachments, consumption possibilities, work routines, faith practices, child-rearing, education, investment, security, punishment' and joins together 'practices of memory, perception, thinking, judgment, institutional design, and political ethos' (ibid.: 20).

In developing this picture, Connolly invents, employs and expands a distinct vocabulary of 'layers', 'folding', 'viscera', and, perhaps most importantly, 'technique'. In Connolly's thought, 'technique' joins the brain and culture. It is the 'hinge that links thought (as corporeally stored thinking) to ethical sensibility' (ibid.: 107). The tactical employment of techniques rewires connections, constituting a micropolitics of 'relational techniques of the self' defined as 'choreographed mixtures of word, gesture, image, sound, rhythm,

smell, touch, that help to define the sensibility in which your perception thinking, identity, beliefs, and judgments are set' (ibid.: 19). A political ethic of the self involves investigation into how we may 'educate' our 'affectively imbued dispositions' (ibid.: 76) and how, in Nietzsche's phrase, we may 'convince the body'. This requires the cultivation of technique, the running of 'little experiments on ourselves' (ibid.: 77), 'existential experiments' (ibid.: 78) conceived not as corrective therapy bringing sensibilities in line with a given transcendental principle, but as an opening up of creative possibilities and new forms of thinking. Ethics, then, is not a matter of obeying a categorical imperative. Rather than intellectualised reflection, categorical assertion or argumentative deliberation, ethics is the cultivation of 'presumptive responsiveness and generosity in a pluralistic culture' (ibid.: 105) and the diminishment of 'existential resentment' (ibid.: 107). Thus, Connolly presents what he considers to be a democratic, pluralistic and open conception of politics joined to a rounded conception of our biological body matter, in a complex way that does not lapse into either determinism or neo-Kantian assertions of the necessary transcendental conditions that order the whole, and that is also capable of directing us to material on which to act politically.

   This is a novel conception of politics and political activity. It is also a remarkable revision and extension of the idea of pluralism, fusing elements of epistemological, valuational, analytical and methodological pluralisms to develop a dynamic conception of democracy as the process and capacity to reflect on, revise and finally to overcome our selves. But to appreciate more fully the significance of this conception    and its place within contemporary political theory more generally    we need to reflect on the context against which Connolly has developed his political thinking.

### Connolly's political context

Connolly has been writing about politics and political theory since the 1960s. Those forty years have been marked by very particular political and intellectual experiences. In the 1960s and 1970s, Connolly was particularly (though far from exclusively) concerned with the methodology and purpose of political inquiry, and, as Mihic discusses in Chapter 5, took a prominent role in the mounting of a challenge to behaviourism that was at once philosophical, methodological and political. In particular, as Howarth discusses in Chapter 1, he was interested in the way our perspectives and interests enter into our political theories and interpretations. At that time already committed to reinventing pluralism, Connolly also focused (as does Gulshan Khan in Chapter 9) on the practicalities of bringing about political change and on the identification of 'places where new information, moral considerations and pressure are likely to be most effective'. He was keen to locate those able to challenge 'prevailing practice' and to 'mobilize potential forces and maintain pressure over the long haul' (reprinted in Chambers and Carver, 2008: 32). But that was 1969. The years since have seen the deepening of a particular

historical crisis in leftist aspirations; this crisis is certainly global in nature, but it surely has its specific American inflection.

An irony of political theory in the United States   and one insufficiently remarked upon   is that Rawls' philosophical defence of moderate distributive justice has dominated political theorising across a period when the ideals of distributive justice have been cast to the margins of American political life. For all its analytic elegance and its skill in reinventing Kant for secular and capitalist liberals, Rawls' political theory has, in historical terms, been an abject failure. This failure has been compounded by an incapacity to say anything meaningful about it. The explication of political conjunctures forms no part of Rawlsian political philosophy. It has produced no concepts of use in formulating either an analysis of, or strategic response to an actual social-historical political impasse. Rawlsians have instead chosen to take comfort in an academic distinction between an imaginary 'ideal' world and an equally fictive 'non-ideal' one. For this very reason William Connolly ought to be widely admired by political theorists: much earlier and much better than many of his theoretical contemporaries, he saw the way in which some of the very successes of the 'great society' and of the 'welfarist' left were feeding resentment among the classes and sections of society on whose support they most relied; and he also sought to analyse and theorise this and connect it to an ethical political theory and practice.

In *The Terms of Political Discourse*, Connolly proposed that 'conceptual contests are central to politics' and enabled us to see that conceptual revision is a core dimension of political life: 'a form of interaction in which agents adjust, extend, resolve, accommodate and transcend initial differences within a context of partly shared assumptions, concepts and commitments' ([1974] 1983: 6). He pursued this further in the sadly under-read *Appearance and Reality in Politics* (Connolly, 1981). This book showed how the neat and venerable philosophical distinction in its title is inherently problematic for students of politics, for in politics our interpretations (how the world 'appears' to us) constitute the ('real') political terrain. But where some analysts might wish to trump this with a formula for identifying our 'real interest' or ignore varieties of interpretation so as to preserve the 'capitalist-realist' belief in the supremacy of individual rational self-interest, Connolly, characteristically, combined a political analytical insight with a philosophical and ethical commitment. Agents' conceptions, he said, should be taken seriously, and even respected as attempts to maintain 'dignity and integrity' despite difficult circumstances. Agents have the potential to comprehend the 'epistemic and existential' predicaments facing them and to 'individually and collectively, strive to avoid, deflect, delay, transcend or eliminate these predicaments' (Connolly, 1979b: 463 464). But, he observed, there is conflict between such self-reflexivity and our inequitable and exclusionary mode of social organisation which puts people into contradiction with their own identities and forces them to undertake blunted, remedial actions of interpretive revision. This analysis, in turn called forth a theoretical category that, although derived

from Nietzsche, is distinctly Connollian (but in need of further elaboration by his interpreters): resentment (see Connolly, 1981; 1991; 1995).

In an excellent piece of political analysis, Connolly drew attention to the centrality of an ideology of self-sacrifice to the lives of many male, white, blue-collar and low-pay white-collar workers. For these social groups, Connolly argued, a sense of personal dignity derived from, first, a patriarchal position as head of a household and, second, from their commitment to protect their wives from having to work, and to improving the prospects of their children. In describing this 'form of life', Connolly did not for a moment seek to belittle it. He understood that it was an expression of a particular kind of life, part of an attempt to give stability, security, meaning and dignity to existence. And Connolly also understood how it was challenged by civil rights, feminism, the policies of the Great Society and the de-skilling of industrial labour. 'If a man's identity revolves around menial work', Connolly wrote,

> 'freedom through voluntary sacrifice, the protection of family, and attainment of a better future for his children through sacrifice, then social movements, political rhetoric, public programs, and a changing job market that jeopardise these relations between dignity, sacrifice and freedom will be experienced as attacks on the very fundaments of his being.'
>
> (reprinted in Chambers and Carver, 2008: 66 67)

The subsequent resentments could then find expression in religious fundamentalism (which had an affective affinity to the culture of self-sacrifice) or in the kind of nationalism that promises collective dignity by making the state into the international expression of a generalised resentment.

But Connolly does not leave resentment at this anecdotal level. He argues that such specific resentments in turn have their basis in a more general existential resentment intrinsic to the experience of identity. Identity is forged from our contingent difference to others. Yet that same difference constitutes a potentially threatening contradiction of identity. In an imperfect world we can all too easily seek security in an imagined inviolable, sovereign identity or by positing some identity as marginal, the source of all that is wrong and in need of suppression.

Here, then, are two kinds of resentment. One is specific and formed in response to social-historical dislocations; the other is a general form of 'existential resentment' intrinsic to the contingency and finitude of existence. The two are combined in the contemporary world characterised by the 'accentuation of tempo in interterritorial communications, entertainment, tourism, trade, and population migration', which, Connolly suggests, 'exposes numerous settled constituencies to the historical basis of what they are and the comparative contestability of faiths and identities they have taken to be universal or incontestable' (Connolly, 2000: 597). In Chapter 11 of this volume

Jeremy Valentine identifies such dislocation as a characteristic of what he calls the 'constitutive failure' of modernity.

From this position, Connolly devises a politics and a theoretical-ethical project, concerned with overcoming such resentments; one that sees the two kinds or levels as inter-connected, and that seeks to cultivate    and to reflect in social and civic institutions    existential gratitude; to find awe in the way the world exceeds us; to help us to live with contingency; to accept imperfection; and to facilitate openness to the revision and transformation of identifications. Consequently, Connolly calls for a political analysis that explores the impediments to such revision (including epistemic and social pressures) (Connolly, 1981: 46) attending to the ways in which existential and spiritual dispositions are triggered and intensified. He urges us to examine how media presentations, for instance, 'work below the level of explicit attention and encourage the intense coding of those experiences as they do so' (Connolly, 2005a: 880); and how sensibilities weave in and out of, infiltrate and inflect, 'a variety of perceptions, creeds, interests, institutions, and political priorities' (ibid.: 872). This has enabled Connolly (2005a; 2008) to develop a distinct take on the uniquely American fusion of capitalism and Christianity. He also calls for forms of political action that avoid seeking to destroy these impediments (lest they repeat the very resentment, the same assigning of all imperfection to an identifiable and eliminable social evil) but instead attempt to 'expose ideas and norms implicit in the old roles, to shock the audience into recognition of its own complicity in the way of life that breeds its discontent and to articulate new ideas and norms' (Connolly, 1981: 70).

Some questions that insist on being asked at this point concern the validity, or not, of resentment; the extent to which a pluralistic embrace of the revisability of norms abolishes any distinction between the true and the distorted; and the extent to which an individual subject can simply free themselves from 'impediments' to the revision of their conceptions. In differing ways these kinds of issue are raised in this volume by Mihic, Lloyd and Martin. But they can also be considered as something like 'the problem of ideology'.

The orthodox Marxian critique of ideology posed an opposition between the world of appearance, within which subjects might grasp their relation to the structures of society via various forms of distorted or imagined identification, and the world of objective reality in which classes possessing specifiable interests found themselves necessarily in an antagonistic relation. Much contemporary 'critical' political theory can be understood in relation to the collapse of this division between objectivity and ideology. That collapse came about partly as a result of tensions internal to political and theoretical Marxism (see Althusser, [1964] 2005; Barrett, 1991; Laclau, 1979) but also because of the combined weight of phenomenological, hermeneutic and linguistic philosophies that emphasised the capacity of mind, culture or language to constitute objects of thought and experience. One effect of this was the coming-to-prominence of the idea that politics necessarily consists of a plurality not of objective individual, class or elite interests but of contending

constitutive conceptions (including conceptions of interest). But, as a result of these developments, in the 1980s and 1990s the political-theoretical left fragmented.

Many considered these developments to be deeply problematic. Some, in the name of true Marxism, denounced what they saw as debilitating 'relativism', a vacuous pluralism of nominally equal but historically rootless subjective demands such as that characteristic of the cultures of commodity capitalism (see Eagleton, 1991; Jameson, 1991). Still others, unwilling to assert directly a substantive conception of objective interests, but nevertheless greatly desirous of one, took the roundabout route of proposing the procedures through which we might 'legitimately' critique at least some of the identities ideologies or subjectivities available (and primarily the ones that aren't ours): forms of neo-Kantianism such as Rawls' constructivism or, more systematically, Habermas's discourse ethics. A third group developed Hegelian versions of hermeneutics where an ethic of 'recognition' would be both the cause and the outcome of properly constituted civil society, or they regressed into Aristotelian-Thomist communitarianism where culture and tradition are their own guarantee.

A fourth constituency turned Nietzschean. In a sense, they did not eliminate ideology but expanded and pluralised it. We are, they argued, always 'in' ideology (or discourse or language or a perspective), our subjectivity constituted by our imaginary relationship to the conditions of our existence. But, they insisted, there is no final and fully constituted 'master' discourse (or language or ideology). There is a plurality of them, contending, overlapping, interacting, complementing, contradicting, containing, exceeding, excluding, subverting and hegemonising each other. 'The political' is not the arena in which objective interests are manifested or distorted nor in which the given interests of groups or individuals compete or aggregate. It is the process through which interests and identities are constituted, contested, signified and re-signified. And the primary ethical-political task is that of always overcoming any enclosed identity, keeping open the space for 'becoming'.

William Connolly is of course most associated with this last group and certainly has considerable affinities with thinkers such as Judith Butler and Ernesto Laclau. But these two, to an extent not always acknowledged by their interpreters, emerge from out of Marxism (and specifically Althusserian Marxism). Connolly, although certainly committed to the broad ideals of socialism, was never a part of the Marxist tradition. Indeed he was a clear critic of its less humanist and seemingly more structural forms (see Connolly, 1979). Consequently he has been less preoccupied with the entanglement of the subject within the network of forces that constitute it, and much more interested in the self-creation of subjects; rather than Derridean or Lacanian lack, a Deleuzian abundance (Connolly, 2005b). His route out of the impasse of contemporary left political theory has been greatly inspired by these theorists. But it also possesses a distinctly American sensibility.

## A self-conscious American

A recent introduction to Connolly acknowledges his Americanism only so as to be clear that he cannot be confined to it. Carver and Chambers write 'even if one wishes to somehow position Connolly within a tradition of American political thought, one will be unable to confine him there', and say that his thought 'speaks so much more broadly than any simple "American context" would allow' (Carver and Chambers, 2008: 2). I don't wish to 'confine' Connolly but I think it is vital to position him within an American tradition and context. Certainly Connolly thinks far beyond the restraining doublet of 'Anglo-Americanism' and one of his undoubted achievements is to have made continental thought speak directly to American political theory. It remains, however, for the continental tradition fully to listen to what America has to say to it.

As we have seen, Connolly's conception of pluralism bypasses the normative problem of objectivity amidst contingent variety by appealing to the capacity of the individual to revise their conceptions. The burden is thus shifted away from a philosophical proof of the truth or falsity of this or that interpretive schema but it is not placed on a procedure, nor is legitimation held to inhere in some natural community spirit. Connolly is not a moral philosopher establishing the best way to constrain behaviours with deontological imperatives but neither is he invoking an historical teleology or dialectic of oppression and resistance. Instead, he seeks to reconcile socialist conceptions of equality with liberty by appealing to an idea of self-consciousness. As he put it back in 1977 (in a way that can today be recognised as very distinctly his):

> Self-consciousness requires access to alternative interpretive systems. That is how one becomes more fully aware of the possible limits to thought and action posed by one's own ideas … space for exploratory thinking and open discourse necessarily places a strain upon the individual's natural (unreflective) identification with prevailing community norms … Self-consciousness, not required in the more extreme formulations of an individualist idea of freedom, gives life to the socialist idea. But it also sets limits to the socialist quest for consensus.
>
> (Connolly, 1977: 465)

From this perspective, a critical concept of ideology is not important and, indeed, difficult to accommodate to the extent that it would seem to limit the range of alternative interpretive systems in advance of their being accessed. Instead of awareness of the clear line marking the division of truth from ideology Connolly's political subject requires self-consciousness and awareness of the mutability of all the metaphysical universals, the regulative ideals and identities, by which we live. We should be able to practise what he calls a 'double-entry orientation'      a simultaneous recognition of the visceral

importance such universals may have for us, and of their usefulness, and awareness of the extent to which they are revisable and contestable. One should develop a certain openness to, a critical responsiveness or agonistic respect for, those others. But where some kinds of radical liberal pluralism would wish to stop at this point, imagining that respect or tolerance is sufficient to put all contesting identities into the stable holding-pattern of cosmopolitanism, Connolly goes further. For him, recognition of the plurality of universals, self-consciousness of the contingency of one's own being, should lead to ongoing pluralisation, to the cultivation of new identities and experiences rather than their settling down in a polite *modus vivendi*.

Across his work Connolly has deepened and complicated but always maintained this commitment, first, to a concept of persons as able to reflect on their circumstances, inner and outer, and bring about revision and, second, to the view that this process is theirs and for this reason has something about it that is intrinsically worthy of respect. He has thus continued to give individual reflection a predominant role in his accounts of political activity and, importantly, the techniques on which he tends to concentrate concern changing individual consciousness (although not always one's own). But he has not simply maintained interest in 'the bourgeois subject' as some critics aver (see Vázquez-Arroyo, 2004).

It is clear that from within Connolly's conception the subject cannot be conceived of as a purely rational and simply self-interested actor for it is always-already exposed to the affect-imbued actions of things outside itself and is changed by the very act of choosing or deciding. Nor can it be imagined an 'unencumbered self' since it cannot free itself from its contextual affective experience if it is to continue thinking and reasoning. Furthermore, these encumbrances should not be conceived of as a kind of property held by a people as of right (in the manner of liberal or postmodern multiculturalism) or as the expression of a deeper yet transcendental intersubjective order. As Connolly puts it, 'the materiality of culture exceeds the concepts and beliefs that enter into it' (2002: 47).

Connolly breaks decisively from mainstream liberal as well as Marxist conceptions of the relation of reason to political action and experience. In neither rejecting the sentiments as inferior to reason, nor as reducible to a blankly physical state, but grasping them as an intrinsic aspect of thinking, as part of our psycho-physical state, he comes to see them not as a limit but as an opportunity for political knowledge and activity   in ways that enable such states to be modified. And because our affects are both intrinsic but also intrinsically subject to criticism (indeed just this is the route to creative thinking), the way is clear for a possibly transformative conception of politics.

This conception is, of course, connected to the outlook of American pragmatism, particularly the philosophy of William James. But in its incorporation of the Deleuzian ontology of material productivity Connolly's philosophy does not so easily lapse into the comfortable quiescence we might associate with Richard Rorty's apolitical pragmatism. The political spirit that animates

Connolly's conception is, I think, foreshadowed in the kind of celebration of individualist spontaneity found in Walt Whitman. 'One's-self I sing, a simple separate person,' writes Whitman. 'Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-Masse, Of Life immense in passion, pulse, and power, Cheerful, for freest action form'd under the laws divine, The Modern Man I sing.' Connolly sings that person too. In Whitman, an Emersonian desire to immerse oneself within the natural and practical world, the better to follow inner divine laws, is connected with the Thoreau-ian conviction of the importance of self-reliance and independent, free action. But to these is added a powerful awareness of individuals' non-divine material connectedness to others. Whitman's poems communicate, simultaneously, a spirit of individuality and of generous attachment to others, both organic and inorganic. He celebrates 'Interlink'd, food-yielding lands!' that are at once 'diverse and compact' and portrays a dynamic mode of being in which the individual subsists in participation with, not in isolation from, others. Reading, in Chapter 3 of this volume, Thomas Dumm's reflection on the forms of writing employed by Thoreau and Connolly, we are reminded of Whitman, describing the unmediated communicability of poetry and of a form of sociality:

> Hereby applying these leaves to the new ones from the hour they
>   unite with the old ones,
> Coming among the new ones myself to be their companion and
>   equal, coming personally to you now,
> Enjoining you to acts, characters, spectacles, with me.

The American political theorist George Kateb understands Whitman's as a distinctive theory of democratic individualism    one characterised by the combination of self-expression with a tremendous receptiveness and responsiveness to others and to the world around one. And Whitman certainly expresses a distinct democratic sensibility. But in his poems democracy emerges as so much more than individualism, a legal order, a series of protections from interference, a distribution of civil powers, a system of plebiscitary acclaim; more even than a particular ethical orientation. Democracy, in Whitman's writing, is no abstraction. It is a thing of flesh, blood, iron, coal, gold, herds, gardens, winds, sierras, peaks, oceans. It is a real place, a real land, of real people and that place is America:

> The Louisianian, the Georgian, as near to me, and I as near to
>   him and her,
> The Mississippian and Arkansian yet with me, and I yet with any
>   of them.

But is this only an ethic of individualism lacking a politics beyond itself (see Connolly, 1991)? The challenge here    and it is one taken up by Connolly    is to take this conception of the democratic individual (a multifaceted

composition, open to the world outside itself, sometimes fusing with it and at other times separating and moving on) without containing it within a simply individualist ethic. Connolly does that by building on a Jamesian ontology, placing the democratic individual in a democratic universe, that is 'strung-along, not rounded in and closed', a universe in which 'Things are "with" one another in many ways, but nothing includes everything, or dominates over everything' (James, [1909]: 321).

In his essay on *The Sentiment of Rationality*, William James suggested that philosophies ought to help us see reality in a way that is 'congenial to the powers which we possess', affording us a place in, and a handle on, the universe (James, 1917: 145). But James insisted that because our temperaments vary, we will not all want the same place or the same kind of handle. 'Sentimental natures', he suggests, those 'fond of conciliation and intimacy', will tend to the idealistic faith, making the universe at one with their own thoughts, perhaps, in the more egotistical cases, consecrating the 'sentimental and priggish'. In contrast, and perhaps in reaction to this, the materialist temperament, according to James, seeks communion and acts on 'an over-powering desire at moments to escape personality, to revel in the action of the forces that have no respect for ego, to let the tides flow, even though they flow over us' (ibid.: 147).

In these terms, Connolly's democratic theory is not sentimental but materialist. It is an attempt to articulate, and facilitate that immersion in this wild, flowing tide of social experience, and to set in motion experiments with it and on ourselves. Connolly adapts this understanding to our experience of the present into a project of the same kind as that ascribed to Thoreau by Jane Bennett: 'to develop ways to cope artfully, reflectively, and carefully in a world understood as neither divine creation nor docile matter' (Bennett, 2002: xxviii). Fusing nineteenth-century American thinking with continental philosophies such as those of Spinoza, Bergson and Deleuze, Connolly creates a kind of 'protreptic' discourse, an exhortation to adopt a particular practice of life, engaging techniques, tactics and strategies of the self for being democratic in America today

To think about democracy in this way is not what political theory normally does. It is to think about it as a real experience and an actual way of being. It is to think about it in a practical way. Instead of a general theory of the abstraction of democracy Connolly proposes a way to live a democratic life in a particular place, at a particular time: in this land, with these resources, with these people, at this moment. In a way this is a philosophy not of consciousness, nor even of being, but of experience. And in the context of political theory it becomes primarily concerned not with the politics *of* experience but with experience *as* politics; a politics of bodies with the capacity for reflective experience, that are the loci of transformation and have the capacity for a form of origination.

At a deeper level, Connolly is here giving theoretical expression to the constitutive problematic of American politics from its beginnings: how to

mediate between the one and the many; to privilege both and neither; to arrange and inter-relate the parts of a constitution so as to make this possible; how to form a polity in which sovereignty is not singular but in which a variety of powers in multiple locations are enabled to interact and inter-penetrate. Three expressions of this problematic predominate in American political and intellectual culture. The first thinks this arrangement by opposing the people to the powers of politics and measuring freedom as the extent to which one need not be bothered with society. This has expressions on both sides of the political spectrum. A second, perhaps in the spirit of the founders of the US Constitution, is continually seeking a most perfect arrangement, the dispersal of persons and powers across the physical and metaphysical territory of America in such a way as to maximise collective power while minimising collective interference. This is American liberalism and traditional pluralism. A third, of which Connolly is a part, sees the solution in mobility; in the continual disorganisation of the arrangement of parts, in a removal of limits to what might be assembled within them; in pluralisation. This is the spirit of Madison who, in order to oppose the dominance of factions proposed their proliferation. This was, and remains, a uniquely American solution to a specifically American problem. It is also a contribution to the extension of the ancient theory of democracy    and one from which Europe has yet to learn the full lesson.

## Conclusion

The philosopher Alain Badiou writes:

> There is no doubt that the philosopher is born of a single question, the question which arises at the intersection of thought and life at a given moment in the philosopher's youth; the question which one must at all costs find a way to answer.
>
> (2008: vi)

What is the question that animates the philosophy of William E. Connolly? What, in Badiou's terms, is the 'wound' his thought seeks to heal, the 'thorn' it seeks to draw 'from the flesh of existence'?

Possible answers to these questions can easily be found in Connolly's works. He has recorded within them various moments and experiences that prompted him to reflection (his father's brain injury, the complex reactions he has to the swagger of a convicted murderer). But Badiou is not referring to this or that personal trauma to which we might reduce all philosophical quests. And Connolly's work responds to very much more than his own subjective experience.

Connolly's work responds to a social and historical wound. In specific terms we might say it is the wound left open by the incompletion of the struggles of civil rights, feminism and the labour movement in the 1960s. In

more general terms we might say that it is the failure of America to live up to a certain kind of democratic promise. Connolly's philosophical question might be 'Why has America not yet become what it might and how can it finally do so?' Connolly is not alone in perceiving a certain kind of failure in American civic life. Many of his intellectual contemporaries have responded by proposing various medications to revive the civic spirit and restore lost community. Some of his political contemporaries have sought instead to expose the wound further, perhaps thinking that this might provoke America to heal itself.

Connolly asks how America can fulfil its democratic promise of open-endedness, of liberty in self-invention, diversity and recombination. His answer is paradoxical. For America to be what it might be, to fulfil itself, it must first accept that it cannot fulfil itself. Its fundamentalists must accept that the world will not be everything they want it to be and must learn to be open to other faiths. Its liberals must also accept that they cannot make themselves the unquestioned master-faith. They must learn to respect the dignity and the forms of life of the others that are America also. They must have faith in themselves, in each other and in their shared existence.

Where Connolly seeks to heal the wound of existence by acknowledging the need for faith without succumbing to it entirely, another rather different American, T.S. Eliot, embraced absolute faith in God and tradition. In *Little Gidding*, at the end of the Four Quartets, Eliot imagines a spiritual healing, a recovery of a culture disjointed by the experience of modernity, that enables an Hegelian homecoming which puts everything right by leaving it as it was always meant to be:

> We shall not cease from exploration
> And the end of all our exploring
> Will be to arrive where we started
> And know the place for the first time.

Connolly too is an explorer, seeking a route to spiritual healing and the recovery of a culture. But he is no Hegelian. His explorations take us to where we started so that we may find it to be other than what it was. And that in turn might help us to be other and more than we might be: to become plural.

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# 1  Pluralizing methods
## Contingency, ethics, and critical explanation

*David R. Howarth*

## Introduction

In a typically generous and illuminating essay on Critical Theory, William Connolly acknowledges that 'every contemporary social theorist must eventually confront the thought of Jürgen Habermas' (Connolly, 1987: 52). Surely the same must now be said about Connolly's thought, as his work not only problematizes the leading currents of contemporary theory, but also tackles issues that are actively forgotten or deferred by mainstream perspectives. Not only do his writings persistently engage with the new challenges that punctuate the discourse of political theory, rather than pretending or hoping that these marginal murmurings were simply not there, but he refuses to be confined to any one available idiom or style of reasoning. Instead, he joyously relays between different camps, straddling the so-called analytical and continental divide, or the division between scientists, normativists and intepretivists, where he is happy to converse with thinkers in contiguous fields of thought, even those that are seemingly uncongenial for critical political theory.

At first glance, the sheer vitality and scope of Connolly's work seem to defy meaningful engagement within the space of a single essay. But this worry is not fatal, as there are numerous arcs and trajectories in his writings and these lines of affinity are brimming with 'surplus energies' (Connolly, 2004a: 342). One such line of flight is his ongoing encounter with the philosophy of natural and social science, especially with respect to questions of explanation and critique. Stretching back to his initial engagement with the 'problem of ideology' in mainstream American political science in the mid-1960s, right up to the publication of *Pluralism* in 2005, Connolly has consistently grappled with the scientific ideals embedded in political theorizing, where he has sought to carve out a legitimate alternative to lawlike, teleological, and ideographic forms of explanation.[1]

This chapter builds upon Connolly's project of harnessing theoretical reflection on ethics and normative evaluation to a particular *way of doing* political theory. This is pursued by articulating key aspects of his work into a general strategy of critical explanation that foregrounds the particular role of

logics. Two immediate theoretical problems present themselves. How is it possible to have explanations that employ general theoretical logics and concepts, yet respect the specificity and singularity of particular cases? How is something like *critical* explanation possible and how can it be conceptualized and practiced? The deeper question is whether or not it is possible to develop an approach to critical explanation that respects, without fully endorsing, certain intuitions in both naturalism and contextualism, while establishing a workable connection between explanation and critique.

## Connolly's history of the present: strategies of detachment and attachment

Consonant with the approach proposed here, and with Connolly's method, the starting point for any adventure in political theorizing is the problematization of pressing issues in the present, where the key tasks are characterization, critique, and evaluation (see Connolly, 2004a). For example, in *Identity/Difference*, Connolly frames his account of the present by sketching out 'a phenomenology of life and death in late modernity' (Connolly, 1991: 16). He begins by endorsing the unavoidable analytic of finitude, which for thinkers like Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Foucault haunts each human existence. In *Being and Time*, for instance, Heidegger ties human finitude explicitly to *Dasein*'s knowledge of its own death, thus conceding to finitude an intrinsically temporal dimension (see Heidegger, 1962: 329). But *Dasein*'s foreknowledge of its own death can be lived out inauthentically or authentically, as a human being can choose to live a meaningful life by 'finding itself' among the myriad of possibilities it encounters (ibid.: 42). Here, in Connolly's words, the 'foreknowledge of death can encourage a human being to establish priorities in life, to consolidate the loose array of possibilities floating around and within one into the density of a particular personality with specific propensities, purposes, and principles' (Connolly, 1991: 17).

But while the analytic of finitude in late modernity gives rise to a series of incipient dangers   the intensification of 'dependent uncertainty' as the self is ensnared in new networks of disciplinary power, the trend for citizens to divest from the common life in the name of privatization and individualism, and the appearance of numerous anxieties associated with what Connolly calls the 'globalization of contingency' (ibid.: 20 5)   it is not without its promises. For though the alienation and fragmentation of the late modern condition may intimate the demand for 'a more harmonious collective identity', an alternative problematization may home in on the nexus between normalizing pressures and their pathological outcomes, *and yet* glimpse new possibilities   new types, traits and dispositions   which resist the drives to conformism and bio-power. What is needed, then, is a loosening up of the bonds that squeeze difference and contingency out of identities (ibid.: 172 173).

Here Connolly invites us to 'broaden' our 'reflective experience of contingency and relationality in identity' (ibid.: 180), and to resist temptations to

naturalize or normalize our conceptions of identity. This process can be fostered by writing 'genealogical histories of the social construction of normality and abnormality' (ibid.: 191), which 'expose the falsification necessarily lodged inside articulations' (Connolly, 1987: 154). The genealogical model seeks not to ground identity in a transcendental or foundational way, or to attune it with a 'higher unity'; instead, it seeks

> attunement to discordance within the self, discordance between the self and identities officially established for it, between personal identity and the dictates of social identity, between the vocabulary which encourages the pursuit of self-realization, identification, knowledge, and virtue and that which must be subdued to enable those formations.
>
> (ibid.: 155)

In short, then, 'critical genealogies are indispensable to cultivation of the experience of contingency in identity/difference' (Connolly, 1991: 181).

However, the indispensable resources of genealogy and deconstruction are *insufficient* to pose effective challenges to dominant modes of analysis, because they 'refuse to pursue the trail of affirmative possibility very far' (Connolly, 1995: 36). Instead, he counters the nihilism of a purely negative critique by articulating the *ontopolitical* dimension of political analysis.[2] He thus supplements Derrida's and Foucault's 'strategies of detachment' with a 'strategy of attachment' that necessarily 'invokes a set of fundamentals about necessities and possibilities of human beings', including what they are composed of, how they relate to nature, to each other, and so on (ibid.: 1):

> To practice this mode of interpretation, you project ontopolitical presumptions explicitly into detailed interpretations of actuality, acknowledging that your implicit projections surely exceed your explicit formulation of them and that your formulations exceed your capacity to demonstrate their truth. You challenge closure in the matrix by affirming the contestable character of your own projections, by offering readings of contemporary life that compete with alternative accounts, and by moving back and forth between these two levels.
>
> (ibid.: 36)[3]

The ontopolitical presumptions that are projected into the objects of Connolly's 'detailed interpretations' draw on Nietzsche, Foucault, Deleuze, James, and others. Its ethical component is premised on what Nietzsche calls an '*abundance* of being' (Nietzsche, 1999: 4)   an ontology of 'existential gratitude', as Connolly sometimes calls it, which 'is an experience of overflowing' or 'vitality' (Connolly, 2005: 244).

Now it is evident that Nietzsche did not really approve of 'the prejudices of democratic taste' (Nietzsche, 1999: 7 8). Yet Connolly most certainly does, for he frames his commitment to abundance and radical immanence by

endorsing a particular democratic sensibility. Indeed, it is because of the 'ambiguity of democracy', especially those forms that are 'infused with a spirit of *agonism*', where 'the culture of genealogy has also gained a strong foothold', that democratic forms of articulation and mediation enable 'anyone to engage fundamental riddles of existence through participation in a public politics that periodically disturbs and denaturalizes elements governing the cultural unconscious' (Connolly, 1991: 191, 211).

Connolly does, however, set important prerequisites for the proper functioning of democratic politics. Hence in more recent texts like *Why I Am Not a Secularist*, *Neuropolitics* and *Pluralism*, he favours a regime of deep and multidimensional pluralism, where 'the cultural centre is pluralized along multiple dimensions and the procedures of governance are set in this dense plurality' (Connolly, 1999: 92). Connolly's regulative ideal involves the creation of a 'majority assemblage' of disparate minorities based on a programme that could narrow income inequalities, widen educational opportunity, and improve job security, medical care, retirement prospects and housing for the many, by instituting a new settlement in which all citizens can participate equally and with dignity in a shared political economy (Connolly, 2005a: 7 8). Finally, this reworked 'overlapping consensus' also acknowledges 'numerous lines of affinity and interdependence between human beings and nonhuman nature', so that 'the pursuit of pluralism and equality is infused with the drive to reconstitute historically dominant relations between the human animal and the rest of nature' (Connolly, 2005b: 251).

## Immanent naturalism

In *Neuropolitics*, these ontopolitical projections are informed by a further methodological twist, which supplements the strategy of detachment and attachment with a 'double-entry model' of political analysis (Connolly, 2002a: 215). This new sensibility challenges the lawlike model of explanation, which is assumed by most empiricists and rational choice theorists to be the *only* rational form of explanation; contests the search for 'deep, authoritative' interpretation by hermeneuticists and social constructionists; and problematizes the positing of a transcendental reason put forward by proponents of the Kantian/neo-Kantian tradition (Connolly, 2004a: 344). Connolly's 'double-entry orientation to the paradox of political interpretation' intervenes in the gap between a first orientation, in which the social critic launches her investigation by acting '*as if* complete explanation is possible', and a second gesture whereby the interpreter contests the hubris that informs the initial 'regulative ideal': critical explanation thus oscillates in the space between the two registers (ibid.: 344).

This relaying movement is rooted in a new ontopolitical compound that Connolly names 'immanent naturalism'. Set against a philosophy of transcendence, and transcendental thinking more generally, his naturalism captures 'the idea that all human activities function without the aid of a divine or

supernatural force' (Connolly, 2002a: 85 86).[4] *Immanent* naturalism is contrasted with *eliminative* and *mechanical* naturalism, where the eliminative variant is 'a metaphysical faith that reduces the experience of consciousness to non-conscious processes' (Connolly, 2004a: 341), and the mechanical view 'denies any role to a supersensible field while finding both the world of non-human nature and the structure of the human brain to be amenable "in principle" to precise representation and complete explanation' (Connolly, 2002a: 85). Instead, immanent naturalists (such as Spinoza, Nietzsche, Foucault, Deleuze, and so on) emphasize the differential intermixing of culture and nature, 'depending upon the capacity for complexity of the mode of being in question', yet query the possibility of necessary and sufficient laws of nature as propounded by 'classical natural science' (ibid.: 85 86).

Drawing inspiration from Deleuze and Guattari, Connolly argues that one of the most basic assumptions of immanent naturalism is its commitment to 'vague essentialism'  'essences that are vagabond, anexact and yet rigorous' which are distinguished from 'fixed, metric, and formal essences', yet still constitute 'fuzzy aggregates' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 407, cited in Connolly, 2004a: 342). A paradigm case of the 'volatile character' of this 'immanent field of matter-energy' is the human self, which is reconfigured as the 'human body/brain system' prior to its cultural immersion (Connolly, 2004a: 342). This results in a layered and embodied conception of the self that is relationally immersed in various worlds of cultural meaning  a complex and unevenly articulated series of 'mind/brain/cultural complexes'  whose multiple relays between consciousness and the unconscious, affect and intellect, technique and sensibility, the visceral and the refined, defy programmes of reduction, subsumptive explanation, and depth hermeneutics (Connolly, 2002a: 90). In short, the various 'layers of the body/brain network' (Connolly, 2002b: xvii), and their insertion in meaningful practices, are 'traversed by surplus energies, unstable mixtures, and static that might, given an unexpected shift in circumstances, issue in something new and surprising' (Connolly, 2004a: 342).

The philosophy of immanent naturalism also leads to a questioning of the dominant models of causality in the social sciences, as well as more sophisticated accounts of multi-causality.[5] Here again, Connolly contests accounts of efficient causality, which predominate in mainstream political science, and 'acausal' pictures of interpretation associated with interpretivism, which are based on the 'mutual constitution' of social phenomena (ibid.: 342). While the logic of efficient causality is not excluded from the picture, it is not deemed sufficient to account for processes of 'emergent causality'. The latter, when it happens, is *causal* 'in that a movement at the immanent level has effects at another level', but it is only *emergent* for three reasons: (1) we do not know the character of the immanent activity before registering its effects at a second level; (2) the new effects are inscribed in the 'very being' and structure of the second level in a way that disallows its complete disentanglement from the effect generated; and (3) there are a complicated array of connections between the first and second levels to engender the sedimented outcome.

## Points of accord

As against the reductive logics of naturalism, social constructivism, or tele-
ological transcendence, Connolly's double gesture of seeking full explanation
in terms of emergent causalities, yet holding the outcomes of such investiga-
tion in abeyance so that other possibilities can be disclosed, yields a dis-
tinctive approach to critical political theory. In this approach, the explanatory
task is to problematize and account for pressing issues in the present, while
the practice of critique 'is to occupy strategic junctures where significant
possibilities of change are under way, *intervening* in ways that might help to
move the complex in this way rather than that' (Connolly, 2004a: 344).

  Now the primary purpose of this chapter is not to dispute Connolly's
account of radical contingency, nor its implications for critical explanation
and political intervention. I want instead to accept a large chunk of what
Connolly says, and then use his conceptual resources as a springboard for
further probing and reflection. First, I endorse his view that we bring various
ethical and normative commitments to our interpretations of problematized
phenomena. We must accept Nietzsche's critique of 'the dangerous old
conceptual fiction that posited a "pure, will-less, painless, timeless, knowing
subject"', which demanded

> that we should think of an eye that is completely unthinkable, an eye
> turned in no particular direction, in which the active and interpreting
> forces, through which seeing becomes seeing something, are supposed to
> be lacking; these always demand of the eye an absurdity and a nonsense.
>
> (Nietzsche, 1967: 119)

Indeed, from Nietzsche's viewpoint,

> [there is] *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective 'knowing'; and the
> more *affects* we allow to speak about one thing, the more eyes, different
> eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our 'con-
> cept' of this thing, our 'objectivity' be.
>
> (ibid.: 119)

Second, I agree with Connolly's doubling gestures that refuse the either/ors of
critical detachment without positive affirmation, and the forced choice
between reductive naturalism, deep interpretivism, and Kantian transcen-
dentalism. 'Ontopolitical interpretation' and 'immanent naturalism' are Con-
nolly's alternative names for these dominant oppositions. But are there other
ways to flesh out the notion of ontopolitical interpretation? And can one play
other games with the philosophies of immanence and transcendence, and yet
remain faithful to the ontological postulates of Connolly's approach? My
answer to these rhetorical questions is affirmative. But first I need to set out
the grounds for such affirmations, after which I can explore their explanatory
and critical implications for political analysis.

## The games of immanence and transcendence

I want to begin by interrogating the forced choice between naturalism, deep hermeneutics, and regulative transcendence, when we are asked to articulate our perspectives on critical explanation or ethico-political attachment. As Connolly rightly suggests, these 'existential faiths' are usually produced by drawing sharp lines between naturalism and transcendence, on the one hand, and between immanence and transcendence on the other. And although these boundaries are often interrelated in subtle ways, it is generally assumed that the construction of the first division asks us to choose between matter and consciousness, bodies and minds, the sensible and the supersensible, nature and culture, and so on, whereas the second asks us to choose between a purely internal plane of immanence, in which there is nothing beyond or higher than 'a swarm of differences    a pluralism of free, wild or untamed difference' subsisting within and below existence    and the positing of a pure exteriority (such as 'God' or 'the Good') that stands outside or above 'the anarchy of beings within Being' (Deleuze, 1994: 50; Smith, 2001: 174).

Starting with the latter division, it is common today to claim that the philosophies of immanence and transcendence stand opposed to one another in post-structuralist theory. In this picture, Deleuze and Derrida are often presented as exemplars of these rival perspectives, though this may be more of a caricature than a rich portrait of their respective positions. Nonetheless, for purposes of argument, Deleuze is usually taken as an archetypal philosopher of immanence, whose 'genetic principle of difference' ushers in a model of abundance that exceeds actuality by propelling new possibilities into being. By contrast, Derrida's qualification of ideas such as responsibility and forgiveness with adjectives such as 'infinite', 'pure', or 'absolute' is often taken to be paradigmatic for a philosopher of transcendence. His deconstructive reading of the aporetic structure of forgiveness, for example, where forgiveness must, on the one hand, be absolute and unconditional for it to be an act of forgiving, while each singular act of forgiving is always conditional and contextual on the other, highlights the productive tensions his approach seeks to make visible: what we take to be the conditions of possibility of a particular act, concept or phenomenon, turns out on further reflection to be the latter's condition of *im*possibility as well (Derrida, 2001). Indeed, Derrida's reflections yield a more general insight about the structure of human desire, namely that there is something lacking or missing in every structure or field of discursive practice, and it is the role of impossible objects (such as 'justice' or 'democracy') to try and fill this lack by standing in or substituting for this incompletion, though the object itself will always be compromised in the process.

One immediate difficulty that arises from this initial snapshot is the sharp separation of immanence and transcendence, and the privileging of one over the other, thus reproducing a binary opposition that runs against the grain of post-structuralist thinking. But it is important to stress that Connolly does *not*

present matters in this way. For one thing, he insists that a key difference between the two perspectives is not so much their respective philosophical commitments, but the *status* of each perspective for its respective proponents. More importantly, while he clearly subscribes to a philosophy of immanence, the very point of his immanent naturalism is to blur the stark division between immanence and transcendence (Connolly, 2005b). In equal fashion, Connolly also complicates the strong opposition between the natural and the transcendental by first seeking to naturalize the transcendental, and then weakening the capacity of any naturalism to explain the world in a conclusive fashion. In this regard, he repositions Kant's insinuation of 'an inscrutable transcendental field' into the gap between our experience of phenomena and our endeavour to explain them via laws of the understanding (using concepts such as causality, space and time), by rewriting this 'eternal, supersensible, and authoritative' dimension into 'a layered, immanent field' (Connolly, 2002a: 83 85). Connolly thus seeks to '*naturalize a place for mystery'* and this element of mystery is folded into his conception of 'emergent causality' (Connolly, 2004a: 342).

Connolly provides a more complex picture of immanence and transcendence by multiplying the games we can play with these notions.[6] Yet his advances do not exhaust the many ways of interpreting the 'immanent/ transcendental field' (Connolly, 2002a: 87). A further possibility was intimated in my discussion of Derrida. Recall that Derrida claims that certain fields of discursive practice such as ethics or politics are predicated on our identification with objects that promise a fullness which is ultimately impossible. Signifiers such as 'justice', 'democracy' or 'infinite responsibility' transcend any particular practice, though they are intrinsically flawed or compromised when actualized in any specific historical context. This logic presupposes that any existing discursive practice or system is missing at least one object    it is structurally incomplete    and it is this lack that activates and structures subjective desire.

Here we see the emergence of a further dialectic between immanence and transcendence, where the former is always structurally incomplete or lacking, while the latter is caught in a paradoxical play between possibility and impossibility, which highlights the finite and precarious character of any particular transcendent object. It seems, therefore, that Derrida's reworking of immanence and transcendence shares important affinities with an 'ontology of lack', rather than 'abundance'. But it is important to stress that these two ontologies are not necessarily opposed perspectives: just as immanence and transcendence are folded together, so lack and abundance are mutually implicated, as one is the condition of possibility for the other.

In other words, the very production of 'flawed' or 'impossible' transcendents such as democracy, justice, responsibility, and so on, presupposes that something is lacking in a particular regime or practice    an absence of the very things that the flawed transcendents are designed to repair or overcome. Moreover, this interweaving of lack and abundance (or 'excess' or 'surplus') is

a characteristic feature of Derrida's readings. His deconstructive readings of Rousseau's philosophy, for example, pinpoint a proliferating chain of supplementary 'additions', in which each supplementary token functions as 'a surplus' 'a plenitude enriching another plenitude' but also 'adds only to replace'; or, as Derrida puts it, 'if it fills, it is as if one fills a void' (Derrida, 1976: 144 145). The paradoxical logic of the supplement, therefore, speaks both to the addition of something new, and the completion of something that is primordially lacking: a series of 'failed representations' that indicate an 'originary absence' in the thing represented. Excess and surplus are thus internally connected to lack in a strange dialectic. Indeed, this logic is a characteristic feature of Derrida's general deconstruction of a pure interiority confronting a pure exteriority, where he endeavours to reinscribe this binary via the concept of a 'constitutive outside', where a lack in the inside 'requires' completion by an outside (see Staten, 1984).[7]

But for social and political analysis, the key question centres on the conditions under which a void in any regime or practice is rendered visible, thereby triggering the game of immanence and transcendence I have just sketched out. It is here that the category of dislocation assumes importance. Dislocation can be understood as a condition and as an event. First, it highlights the 'always already' split between an identity and its dependence on a constitutive outside: the fact that every identity is marked by an impurity that prevents its full constitution. In a similar vein, Connolly draws attention to the role of 'litter' in the philosophy of William James, whose endemic 'presence' points to the fact that '[t]here are always subterranean energies, volatilities, and flows that exceed our formal characterizations of being' (Connolly, 2005a: 73). In James's words, 'something always escapes' from the world (James, cited in Connolly, 2005a: 73).

Yet, second, the category of dislocation also indicates an occurrence in which the primary unevenness of any identity is manifested. Here, for example, it signifies the moment in which the sedimented routines of everyday life are disrupted by an event that cannot be absorbed within an existing practice without modification or change. And it is precisely in situations like this that new objects emerge a plurality of 'impossible transcendents', for example and different forms of identification become possible. This moves us directly to the field of politics and ethics, where the former refers to the public contestation and institution of the norms governing a regime or practice, while the latter captures the various *ways* in which these norms and institutions are constituted and then lived out by subjects. And it is precisely this nexus of processes and practices that brings us directly to questions of method in a more literal sense.

## Reworking the transcendental/empirical doublet

Having presented a further variation on the game between immanence and transcendence at the ontological level, I now want to turn to some of its

epistemological and methodological implications. These issues move us directly to the relationship between the natural and the transcendental, rather than the interplay of immanence and transcendence. Relative to Connolly, my goal here is to add a little more content to the 'perspective seeing' we presuppose in any empirical investigation, and to situate this layer of presuppositions in a particular conception of the transcendental/empirical doublet. More fully, our 'perspective seeing' is rooted, first, in a thick conception of discourse, where our perceptions, thoughts, beliefs, affects, actions and emotions, are all partly composed and constituted by structured fields of meanings, though the latter are themselves historical, contingent and incomplete (Howarth, 2000; Laclau, 1993). On this basis, I then want to introduce a conception of logics, which can furnish the means to explain, criticize and evaluate the problematic phenomena which we are called upon to investigate. But I begin with the ontological supports of these moves.

Once again, I start by strongly endorsing Connolly's affirmation of the radical contingency of identities and social relations, as well as his stress on the 'incorrigible character of contingency and resistances in human affairs', which gives rise to a social ontology of 'discordant concordances' as a 'contestable projection' among others (Connolly, 1991: 225, n. 8). But my 'contestable projection' draws sustenance mainly from Heidegger, Lacan and Laclau, where the notion of radical contingency is a fundamental ontological category stemming from an unbridgeable gap between essence and existence between *what* an object is in any given set of social relations and *that* and *how* it is an object    in which 'the contingent' can always 'subvert the necessary'. In Laclau's words, 'contingency is not the negative other side of necessity, but the element of impurity which deforms and hinders its full constitution' (Laclau, 1990: 27). In turn, this conception leads to an affirmation of human finitude, in which each human subject is thrown into a world it does not choose, where it and the world are incomplete and lacking.

I take these presuppositions to imply that any structure of social relations is constitutively incomplete or lacking for a subject. From this perspective, as I have suggested in my reworked game of immanence and transcendence, practices are governed by a dialectical interplay between incomplete structures, on the one hand, and the collective acts of subjective identification that change or sustain those incomplete structures on the other. Moreover, the condition and experience of radical contingency    our negotiation of what Connolly calls the 'tragic gap' in existence, as it is revealed in dislocatory events (Connolly, 1991: 14)    can be developed into an ontology comprising four basic dimensions of social relations: the social, political, ideological and ethical.

Figure 1.1 is a simple matrix designed to represent these four dimensions by capturing two intersecting relationships: the *structuring and contesting* of social relations, on the one hand, and the different *ways* social actors respond to radical contingency in their identifications and practices, on the other (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 110 113). On this matrix, the horizontal axis is
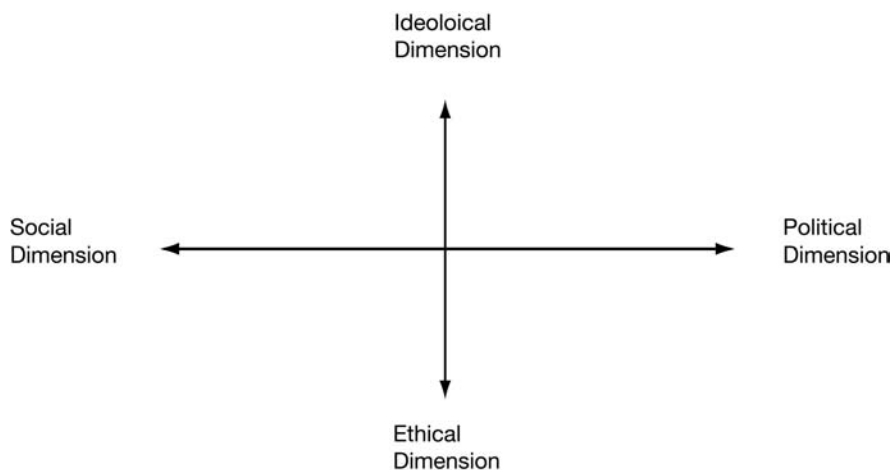
*Figure 1.1* Four dimensions of social relations

bounded (ideally at its limits) by the categories of the social and the political. The *social* captures those situations in which radical contingency does not affect subjects, as they are absorbed in the ongoing practices of social life, and do not challenge the basic norms that govern them, while the *political* refers to situations in which subjects respond to dislocatory events by reactivating the contingent foundations of a practice and contesting its basic norms. The vertical axis is composed of the ideological and ethical poles. The *ideological* captures the way subjects are blind to, or complicit in concealing, the radical contingency of social relations, while the *ethical* speaks to the way subjects are attentive to its constitutive character and open to the possibilities it discloses.

   Of course, these basic categories are expressed in ideal terms, so that any actual activity or social order is understood in terms of *degrees* rather than kinds, and as such can then be plotted along the different axes. For example, any concrete inquiry must focus on the degree to which an identification or practice is ideological or ethical, or the degree to which a social relation is sedimented or reactivated/challenged in any particular context. Indeed, as I shall argue below, any particular object of investigation can be characterized by articulating these different elements into a concrete practice or regime.

## Logics of critical explanation

It is against this ontological background that I introduce the category of logics as a means to problematize and account for the phenomena that provoke thinking and critique.[8] In general, the discernment of logics is designed to render practices or regimes more intelligible by helping us to discover their purposes and conditions: what makes them work or 'tick' in the ways they do. In Wittgenstein's terms, logics enable one to distill the 'essence' of a practice,

though not by penetrating below the surface of phenomena to discover some underlying and unchanging properties. Instead, the aim is to display the possibilities of phenomena in a range of spatio-temporal contexts, perhaps by delineating the rules or grammar governing them, though with the important proviso that the latter are always open-textured summations of practice   or yardsticks with which to understand and evaluate   rather than subsumptive conditions or determinants of action (Wittgenstein, 1967: §§ 90, 92).

In more formal terms, logics enable us to distill the rules, purposes, and ontological presuppositions that render a practice or regime possible, but also impossible and vulnerable. And the more these presuppositions are discerned and illuminated, the greater the intelligibility of the practices and regimes investigated. In accordance with Connolly's critique of mainstream political science, logics stand opposed to lawlike explanations, deep interpretations, or causal mechanisms conceived in terms of efficient causality. As against causal laws, logics are not external to the practices or regimes investigated, which they subsume in the name of a universal determination, but nor are they reducible to self-interpretations that are immersed in particular contexts. Logics are *in* the practices examined, yet they are not subsumable by the latter; instead, they provide a bridge between a subject's own self-interpretation and the investigator's interpretations of those self-interpretations, and these sets of interpretations may or may not match up. Logics bring something to the explanation that is not simply given by the practices or interpretations of agents, but they are always anchored in some way in the latter.[9]

Three sorts of logic are crucial in this regard   social, political and fantasmatic logics   and I shall say a little more about each, as well as their linking together in any putative critical explanation. *Social* logics enable a theorist to start addressing a problematic phenomenon by *characterizing* a practice or regime in a certain way. For example, Connolly's discussion of 'the second problem of evil' in *Identity/Difference* is rooted in what he calls 'the social logic of identity/difference relations' (Connolly, 2002b: xv), where the problem is 'the proclivity to marginalize or demonize difference to sanctify the identity you confess' (ibid.: xv). Aspects of this social logic are fleshed out more concretely in his characterization of the politics of immigration in the Mexico/California borderlands. In this context, he discerns a double logic of 'differential economic discipline and political separation', whereby 'illegal immigrants'or 'aliens' from Mexico are caught in an intensifying system of exploitation. In this contingent, yet 'durable pattern of disequilibrium', the provision of cheap labour for capitalist businesses is maintained, and even exacerbated, by the illegal political status of migrant workers, which renders the latter voiceless and isolated (Connolly, 2002a: 150 151). One important effect of this contingent constellation is a deepening of divisions within 'the citizen class of low-skill workers as a whole', which in turn benefits the employers of labour. Indeed, the consequent 'racialization of economic and cultural issues' divides low-skilled workers as a whole, thus militating against joint political action, as different ethnic and cultural groups are often

demonized as threatening others, rather than potential allies in a common struggle.

By their very nature, and as Connolly's illustration demonstrates, social logics are multiple, historical, and contextual. While they do not correspond perfectly with contextualized self-interpretations, and while they may be detached from a situation and generalized across different contexts for explanatory purposes, they are heavily marked by the particular forms of life in which they are embedded. There are, in short, as many social logics as there are concrete social practices or regimes of practices. But while social logics go some way to ascertain *what* rules govern a practice or regime in a particular context, the task of explanation must also inquire into *why* and *how* they came about and are sustained.

Let's return to the discussion of immigration politics in Mexico/California. One question one might ask about Connolly's account is how and why 'the powerful contrivance of economic discipline and political separation' was brought about in the first place, and how has it been sustained? Connolly is surely right to say that this 'contrivance' is 'a layered, contingent contraption jerry-rigged from multiple materials', and he is correct not to invest some underlying 'logic of history' or 'deep structure' into it. At the same time, it is highly unlikely that this constellation was intended by a 'central power', even though it is connected by 'the diverse intentions of agents at multiple sites with differential power' (ibid.: 151). And, finally, as Connolly also insists, this does not mean that such assemblages are purely cultural or ideological, as they constitute a relatively *sedimented* and *material* complex of forces.

Yet the emergence, formation and sustenance of these contingent apparatuses do presuppose certain conditions of possibility which can at the same time render such 'resonance machines' impossible. For one thing, they surely presuppose the availability of various discursive elements    signifiers such as 'the American way of life', certain derogatory beliefs about 'illegal immigrants', rhetorical demands to preserve traditional ways of life from alien intrusions, etc.    that can be welded together into particular ideological ensembles. At the same time, one can assume that these various elements are contingently linked together in various strategies and practices by particular actors and agencies (though there would be no one 'strategist' or power centre). In short, without any concrete knowledge of this particular case, I am still inclined to investigate the various political and ideological practices through which this contingent and incomplete contraption was constructed, stabilized and reproduced; and I would seek to elaborate theoretical tools with which this task can be achieved.

In other words, the study of micro-politics needs also to explore the strategic linking together of various demands and identities by multiple agents, whether politicians, media representatives, or 'organic intellectuals' of many types, who seek to forge an affective common sense among different forces, while actively targeting and excluding others. And I take it that Connolly

agrees in this respect when he stresses the need for 'political action at multiple sites' to disrupt and reorganize the dominant apparatus, and calls for the creation of 'critical assemblages' composed of multiple actors (ibid.: 152 153). Equally, I concur with Connolly in stressing the importance of linking heterogeneous demands for a different political economy within and across existing territorial boundaries. But is there any more by way of theoretical reflection and work that can help us to analyze such configurations and how they may be countered? The answer for me resides in the role of political and fantasmatic logics.

## Political and fantasmatic logics

Political logics help to explain those processes of collective action and struggle that sometimes arise in the wake of dislocatory events, and which may in turn lead to the construction of new frontiers. But they also include practices that endeavour to disrupt or negate the construction of social divisions by deferring or absorbing the claims and demands that emerge. Drawing on Laclau and Mouffe, political logics comprise logics of equivalence and difference (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). The former involves the construction of antagonisms that divide the social field into opposed camps, whereby various identities and differences are rendered equivalent to one another in the face of a common threat or adversary. The result is a weakening of the differences on each side of the antagonistic divide, whether these differences are understood in terms of political demands or social identities, and their overdetermination by signifiers that fuse meanings together.

By contrast, the logic of difference involves the loosening-up or decomposition of equivalential chains of demands/identities via various practices of challenge, institutionalization, deflection or negation. This logic is accompanied either by the pluralizing or opening-up of a regime to new demands and claims, where those in a social field acknowledge and accommodate difference, or it is marked by the differential incorporation or even co-optation of difference, where the cutting edge of claims and demands may be blunted. In other words, if equivalence is the logic of condensing together different demands and identities into a common discourse that divides and simplifies social space, then difference is the logic of pluralization and displacement, where there is a multiplication and complication of social spaces.

Consider, for example, a national liberation struggle against an occupying colonial power. The movement will typically attempt to cancel out the particular differences of class, ethnicity, region, or religion that mark or divide the oppressed 'people' in the name of a more universal nationalism, which can serve as a common reference point for all the oppressed. Indeed, it is often the case that its political identity may be virtually exhausted in its opposition to the oppressive regime. On the other hand, the age-old practice of 'divide and rule', whereby an occupying power seeks to exacerbate

difference by separating ethnic or national groups into particular communities or indirect systems of rule, is invariably designed to prevent the articulation of demands and identities into a generalized challenge to the dominant regime.

However, it is important to stress that there is no *a priori* privileging of equivalence or difference on critical or evaluative grounds. The two logics are no more than regulative ideals, where equivalence involves the logic of combination and difference, a logic of substitution in which there is little or no equivalence between demands. Thus there is no way of saying that equivalence is normatively preferred over difference, as the critical and normative implications of these logics are strictly contextual and perspectival. As I shall argue below, our normative evaluation of a particular strategy or movement depends on the particular circumstances and conditions under consideration, where it is quite possible that a pluralizing form of political engagement or even an incorporating strategy is preferable to a more equivalential form. Indeed, it is quite possible for political projects to engage in both logics at the same time, or to combine these different logics in a single campaign, though this requires great political skill and ingenuity.[10]

But any assemblage or contraption has to be installed and reproduced. In other words, it needs to secure the active or passive consent of subjects, or at least the complicity of a range of social actors to its practices and dispositions. This means that it must offer points of attachment and identification that can grip subjects in particular ways, thus providing benefits and enjoyments that affectively bond them to a certain set of actors, causing them to shun and demonize others. It is here that I turn to fantasmatic logics in order to add a further explanatory and critical layer to the approach: if political logics enable a theorist to show *how* social practices come into being or are transformed, then fantasmatic logics provide the means to understand *why* and *how* subjects are gripped by practices and regimes. They concern the *force* of our identifications (Laclau, 2005: 101). Fantasmatic logics also contribute to an understanding of the resistance to change of social practices their 'inertia,' so to speak but also the speed and direction of change when it does occur: what might be termed the 'vector' of political practices (Glynos and Howarth, 2008).

Take first the relationship between fantasmatic logics and social practices. Though social practices are often punctuated by the disruptions and tragedies of everyday life, social relations are experienced in this mode as an accepted and smooth way of 'going on'. The role of fantasy in this context is not to set up an illusion that provides a subject with a false picture of the world, but to ensure that the radical contingency of social reality remains in the background. But also consider the function of fantasy in relation to the political dimension of social relations. In this context, one can say that the role of fantasy is actively to suppress or contain the dimension of challenge and contestation. For example, certain social practices may seek to maintain existing social structures by pre-emptively absorbing dislocations, thus

preventing them from becoming the source of a political practice. In fact, the logic of many management and governance techniques could be seen in this light: they seek to displace and deflect potential difficulties or 'troubleshoot' before problems become the source of antagonistic constructions.[11]

In the immigration case we have been discussing, the role of ideological discourse is important in explaining the way in which American workers with citizenship rights are attached to certain values and practices by identifying with key signifiers. It focuses attention on those 'Things'    particular objects and discourses    that turn us into the subjects we are and hold us fast (e.g. Žižek, 1997: 214).[12] The fantasmatic dimension of such discourses draws attention to the contradictions in these identifications and the way these discourses cover over the radical contingency of social relations in the name of the normal, the natural, and so on. For example, the logic of fantasmatic narratives or signifiers often obey a 'having your cake and eat it' form. In many racist discourses, immigrant workers are often presented as lazy scroungers who 'steal the enjoyment' of hard-working citizens and families with formal rights by draining their taxes, committing crime, and swallowing up state resources that could be used for their benefit. But at the same time immigrants may also be depicted as working too hard or for low wages, which threaten to undercut local workforces.

More often than not, these discourses operate below the level of official public disclosure, manifesting themselves in jokes, off-the-record remarks, multifarious informal practices, slips of the tongue, tabloid stories, and so forth. For example, many debates on social policy in the USA, which typically assume the welfare system is inefficient, are often underpinned by a fantasmatic narrative in which single African-American mothers are alleged to sponge off hard-working, tax-paying citizens (Hancock, 2004). Importantly, this aspect of the narrative typically resists public official disclosure, thereby hinting at its possible *enjoyed* and thus fantasmatic status (Žižek, 1997; Glynos, 2001).

The logic of fantasy thus operates to conceal or 'close off' the radical contingency of social relations. It does this through a fantasmatic narrative or discourse that promises a fullness-to-come once a named or implied obstacle is overcome    the beatific dimension of fantasy    or which foretells of disaster if the obstacle proves insurmountable, which might be termed the horrific dimension of fantasy, though in any particular instance the two work hand-in-hand (Stavrakakis, 1999: 108 109; 2007). The beatific side, as Žižek puts it, has 'a *stabilizing* dimension, which is governed by the dream of a state without disturbances, out of reach of human depravity', while the horrific aspect possesses 'a *destabilizing* dimension', where the Other    a 'Jewish plot' or the lazy/overzealous immigrant    is presented as a threatening or irritating force that must be rooted out or destroyed (Žižek, 1998: 192). On the whole, then, fantasmatic logics capture the various way subjects organize their enjoyment by binding themselves to particular objects and representations so as 'to resolve some fundamental antagonism' (Žižek, 1997: 11).

But having outlined its basic contours, I want to add three final remarks about the overall logic of the approach proposed here. First, it is important to stress that political and fantasmatic logics in this approach have a *quasi-transcendental* status. Unlike social logics, this means that although they are only instantiated and manifested in specific spatio-temporal contexts, they can be detached from any particular situation and given a certain degree of independent theoretical content. Political and fantasmatic logics thus formalize an understanding of the ways in which radical contingency and dislocation are discursively articulated or symbolized. But when harnessed together in particular circumstances, they can help us to redescribe the ontic level in terms that emerge out of our post-structuralist ontology of social relations.

Second, this process of 'harnessing together' involves an articulation of social, political and fantasmatic logics in order to problematize and account for a singular object of critical explanation. As the name implies, this logic of articulation involves a modification and transformation of the different elements at play in each singularity. Articulation is here conceived as both an ontological category that speaks to the way in which social practices always involve the linking together of different elements in the ongoing process of social reproduction, but also as a more methodological notion that captures the theoretical process of connecting together a plurality of factors, forces and explanatory logics so as to constitute a more complex and concrete account of a problematized phenomenon.

Finally, these remarks resonate nicely with Connolly's notion of emergent causality. At the ontological level, as I have suggested with respect to my reworked game of immanence and transcendence, social change presupposes the dislocation of a practice or regime    a moment of temporality in the strong sense   and the availability of new objects and practices, which provide the raw materials for engaging in the complicated task of instituting a new regime/practice. But it is clear in this regard that any such change cannot be predicted and that no single line of causality can be traced from one regime or practice to the next. This is because their construction involves, first, the disruption of an existing practice or regime and, second, the production of equivalential chains of demands or identities   a fusion of elements   which moves us directly to the terrain of overdetermination, rather than a simple relation or co-relation between given and fully-constituted elements. The move to this terrain highlights the irreducibly symbolic dimension of social relations, and foregrounds the interacting logics of condensation and displacement. Instead of a model of linear or multi-causality, the alternative proposed here has strong affinities with the notion of structural causality, in which social change is the product of a relational constellation of forces, where each element has the capacity to modify the others as they mutually interact in a particular context. A key difference with the latter, however, is that the approach proposed here eschews the idea of a fully-constituted structure, which is sometimes associated with the latter conception.[13]

## Ethico-political critique and normative evaluation

I have touched upon the way my approach presumes and discloses the radical contingency of social relations, while providing a grammar of concepts to interpret the various ontopolitical responses to it. But what are the implications for ethics and normativity? Where is the *critical* dimension of critical explanation? To begin, I hope to have indicated how political logics show other possibilities of social constitution and organization at each moment of reactivation/decision, while fantasmatic logics focus on the *ways* in which subjects identify and are gripped, though only contingently so. However, I most certainly concur with Connolly's urgent injunction that we need to go beyond the strategy of simply inverting existing hierarchies and binary oppositions to project more 'positive ontopolitical presumptions'. But how can this be achieved and under what conditions?

I shall briefly address these questions by first focusing on those practices in which the social dimension predominates. Here I assume that the constitution of every identity, practice or regime involves a moment of political exclusion and thus power and that every relatively settled set of social relations involves some form of hierarchy. Borrowing from Laclau and Mouffe, there are at least three related ways of complexifying this picture of a social practice: the relations of subordination, domination, and oppression (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 153 154). Relations of subordination indicate those *practices that do not appear to invite or require public contestation of social norms,* either by the subjects engaged in the practice, or by the theorist who is interpreting the practice. Existing social relations are here reproduced without public contestation, as dislocations are covered over or displaced. Here we might include everyday activities such as working, going on holiday, playing sport, and so forth. All these activities may in fact involve and rely upon relations of subordination, but they are not *experienced* as dominating or oppressive, nor are they regarded as unjust by the analyst.

Relations of domination point to the way subjects are judged, by the theorist, to be dominated, though the norms so judged are not explicitly challenged by those absorbed in the practice. Here interpretation may focus on those *practices which actively appear to prevent the public contestation of social norms from arising in the first place.* This is because social relations are reproduced without public contestation, either because dislocatory experiences are processed privately or informally, or because they don't arise at all. They may take the form of 'off the record' complaints instances of 'lateral voice', for example made by employees among themselves, or even toward their managers, who then elicit, deflect, or satisfy requests. On the other hand, the concealing of dislocation will be accomplished most completely and effectively if subjects are rendered ideologically complicit in the practices they undertake. By contrast, relations of oppression point to those features of a practice or regime that *are* challenged by subjects in the name of a principle or ideal allegedly denied or violated by the social practice itself.

Here the experiences of dislocation are symbolized in terms of a questioning of norms, which may be accompanied by political challenges to the practices or regime of practice examined. But equally they may be met with renewed efforts to offset challenges and maintain the existing social relations.

Characterizing practices as fostering or reinforcing relations of domination immediately highlights the sociological and normative character of the approach advocated in this chapter. After all, the very identification of a social norm as *worthy* of public contestation, as well as the claim that a norm is actively prevented from being contested, presupposes some view of social domination. It implies that we already have some grasp of the practice, both sociologically and normatively. And this is where *social logics* are particularly relevant, as they are crucial in making explicit the sociological and normative aspects of this process of characterization. In this context, to highlight the *political* dimension of a practice is to be attentive to those *aspects of a practice which seek to generate, maintain, contain, or resolve the public contestation of social norms.* Put differently, the political aspects of a practice involve attempts to challenge and replace existing social structures, as well as attempts to neutralize such challenges in a transformist way (Gramsci, 1971: 58 59).

But what, then, can we say about ethical critique and normative evaluation? It is clear that the focus on radical contingency is connected to the practice of critique, as this focus can disclose points of social contestation and moments of possible reversal. Yet it is also important to distinguish between ethics and our grounds for normative evaluation. Ethics involves an acknowledgment of the radical contingency of social existence   the lack inherent in any order of being   and a particular way of responding to 'its' demands. In other words, it involves the cultivation of an *ethos* that faces up to the fact that each of us is necessarily marked by our identifications with an object that fills the lack, and which defines *who* we are and *what* we stand for. For example, a subject might identify with a particular faith, or with the constitutional principles of a modern democratic state   or both   but identify she does. Yet *how* we relate to 'our Thing' will be vital for *how* we relate to others, and their identifications. Indeed, in this conception, our relation to others presupposes an acknowledgement and complex *negotiation* with 'the Thing' that makes us the subjects we are: a heady mix of attentiveness, investment *and* releasement   in other words, an ethics of 'failed transcendence' that adds a further twist to an ethics of abundance and radical immanence (see Howarth, 2006).

This means that ethical critique is directly connected to the fundamental commitments of one's social ontology, where it demands detailed analyses of the kinds of fantasies that underpin a given set of social and political practices, as well as explorations of the ways in which fantasmatic objects can be destabilized or modulated. Questions of normativity, by contrast, are directed at the concrete relations of domination in which subjects are positioned.

Normative questions thus require the analyst to characterize those relations that are perceived to be oppressive or unfair in the name of alternative values or principles. Two elements come into play here: first, there are the values that are brought to any interpretation by the theorist   in my case the values associated with the project of radical democracy   as well as the accompanying tasks of continually clarifying and modifying them (e.g. Howarth, 2008). Second, there is the task of pinpointing and remaining attentive to those new values and identities encountered in those practices interpreted: what might be deemed the counter-logics of social domination and oppression. Or to put it in Connolly's terms, it requires a commitment to the 'politics of becoming' and an attention to 'the eruption of the unexpected into the routinized' (Connolly, 2004a: 345; 2004b).

Finally, it is important to stress that this approach concedes a lexical priority to the ethical vis-à-vis the normative. This arises because of the primacy accorded to the presence of radical contingency in its social ontology, but also because normative stances are themselves ultimately contingent. In other words, the norms and ideals that are presupposed and then projected into our various objects of study are intrinsically contestable and revisable. Contingency thus penetrates the realm of normative inquiry, as well as our practices of political engagement. But it should also inform our academic activity by inspiring a suitable ethos for conducting research, that is, an ethos that endorses plurality and a 'presumptive generosity' to other perspectives and traditions (Connolly, 1999b).

## Conclusion

The practice of what might be called *ethico-political interpretation* shares a strong family resemblance with Connolly's *ontopolitical* method. Its task is to reactivate those options that were foreclosed during the emergence of a practice or regime   the clashes and forces which are repressed or defeated in moments of becoming   in order to show how present practices rely upon exclusions (which in turn reveal the non-necessary character of existing social formations), and to explore the consequences and potential effects of such repressions. On the other hand, the practice of *onto-ethical* critique is to interrogate the conditions under which a subject is gripped by a particular social practice *despite* its non-necessary character. This mode of critique furnishes the means of critically interrogating the will to ideological closure (the logic of fantasy). Both modes of critique are informed by an ethos of exercising fidelity to radical contingency itself, and their role is to display other possibilities for political decision and identification, as well as different types of identification. But as I have also argued, these critical modes themselves do not preclude normative evaluation of existing practices and regimes. Together they contribute to a practice of *ethico-political interpretation*, which strives to articulate explanation, criticism and normative evaluation.

## Acknowledgements

## Notes

1  In his first book *Political Science and Ideology*, Connolly remains wedded to a 'scientific ideal of political inquiry', which should 'aim at the prediction and con trol of behaviour'; however, even at this early stage of his development, he acknowledges that this ideal 'has many variants and is subject to competing inter pretations' (Connolly, 1967: 6). Indeed, his exploration of the 'problem of ideology' problematizes mainstream conceptions of conducting political science by showing that supposedly scientific theories (such as those propounded by pluralists and eli tists in the 1950s and 1960s) presuppose 'an ideological interpretation of American politics' (ibid.: 48). By rendering explicit 'the ideological dimension' that resides in most interpretations of political life, Connolly counters the tendency to expunge and conceal contestable perspectives that underpin scientific research (ibid.: 155).

   In *The Terms of Political Discourse* (in 1974) and *Appearance and Reality in Politics* (in 1981), Connolly's approach turns full circle, as he now explicitly con tests the very ideal of complete explanation and prediction in political science, and shows the radical contestability of all concepts, claims and explanations (Connolly, 1981; 1993). More fully, three interconnected phases of thinking can be discerned. At first, Connolly draws on the post analytical tradition of thinking (inspired by thinkers like Wittgenstein, Hampshire and Strawson) to highlight the *essential contestability* of basic theoretical constructs such as power, interest, freedom and responsibility, thus demonstrating the impossibility of a value free clarification and usage of concepts (Connolly, 1981; 1993). Yet this initial endeavour to pro blematize the ideal of a neutral logic of operationalizing basic concepts for empirical research and normative evaluation is deepened by Connolly's *genealogi cal* accounts of the modern self, with its complicated array of desires, differences and identifications, which further historicize and destabilize many of the theoretical certainties presupposed by the search for universal 'if/then' regularities between phenomena, or the desire to uncover underlying human propensities and purposes (Connolly, 1987; 1991). But more recently, in what some perceive as a surprising swerve in his thinking, Connolly elaborates an *immanent naturalism*, which finds sustenance in the coupling of Gilles Deleuze and William James with recent

developments in chemistry, evolutionary theory, and neuroscience (Connolly, 2002a; 2004a).

On the one hand, these dispersed elements are held together by a common opposition to scientism and culturalism. More positively, as Connolly insists, these different tarryings with method and social explanation always presuppose a layered set of ontological commitments, affects and investments, which he latterly labels a 'distinctive existential faith' (Connolly, 2004a: 333). Connolly's particular faith which in his later writings is mainly sustained by Nietzsche's philosophy of abun dance challenges those outlooks that are closed, self subsistent, reductionist, essentialist, or totalizing. Instead, he endorses an ontology that is marked by dis cord, multiplicity, and possibility: a view of the world permeated with deep and radical contingency.

2 While the genealogical model illuminates the discord that is lodged in every iden tity, Connolly explicitly rejects the pull of a purely negative dialectic. As he has long insisted, a purely genealogical or deconstructive operation is not sufficient to constitute a fully fledged method of political theory. For example, in his reading of various trends in post structuralist theories of international relations, he gently chastizes Richard Ashley for eschewing the task of developing a more positive theoretical alternative to the flawed models proposed by neo realists and liberal idealists, and he questions his refusal to move beyond the inversion of problematic hierarchies (Connolly, 1991). Genealogy 'is necessary but inadequate to a mode of reflection that seeks critical detachment from the contemporary ontopolitical matrix', both because Foucault has a tendency to proceed as if genealogy could simply bracket ontological assumptions in dominant frameworks, and because in his early writings Foucault said the practice of genealogy 'did constitute a refusal to affirm any positive directions or reforms of its own' (Connolly, 1995: 35).

3 Connolly thus counters the nihilism of a purely negative critique by articulating the *ontopolitical* dimension of socio political analysis. The 'onto' in ontopolitical is important for him because it 'invokes a set of fundaments about necessities and possibilities of human beings', including what they are composed of, how they relate to nature, to each other, and so on (Connolly, 1995: 1). By emphasizing the ontological dimension of experience Connolly questions those social science prac tices which deny their contestable ontological presuppositions by presuming one or another version of the 'primacy of epistemology' (ibid.: 6 9). And to concede pri macy to epistemology he explains 'is to think either that you have access to criteria of knowledge that leave the realm of ontology behind or that your epistemology provides neutral test procedures through which to pose and resolve every ontolo gical question' (ibid.: 5). Thus, in his terms, '*every* interpretation of political events, no matter how deeply it is sunk in a specific historical context or how high the pile of data upon which it sits, contains an ontopolitical dimension' (ibid.: 1; emphasis added).

This master ontological postulate is explicitly related to what Foucault has identified as the 'transcendental empirical' doublet, which arises from the 'doubling of man' in the modern episteme, where the figure of 'man' appears in the 'ambig uous position' of being both 'an object of knowledge and … a subject that knows' (Foucault, 1970: 312). Here the need to emphasize the ontopolitical aspects of socio political analysis is intimately linked to the role played by contingency in human affairs, and how we endeavour to cope with it: do we deny, register, or confront it? Taking this as his *ontological* starting point, Connolly argues that naturalists and positivists are prone to deny or repress contingency in the name of lawlike explanations. And while hermeneuticists like Charles Taylor and Michael Walzer are happy to acknowledge an ontological turn, and do not deny contingency, they tend to domesticate the experience of contingency with their gentle though potentially exclusionary rhetoric of attunement, integration and

articulation. Instead, Connolly advances an argument in favour of 'an ethicopolitical orientation that both asserts that the fundaments of being are mobile and that, in the ordinary course of events, social pressures accumulate to present particular formations of life as if they were intrinsic, solid, or complete' (Connolly, 1995: 34).

Critical reflexivity of this sort, he argues, may promote agonistic respect and critical responsiveness (ibid.: 39 40), or what he and others elsewhere term 'presumptive generosity'. Here he advocates the loosening up of 'sedimented forms' in order 'to cultivate further a care for life (hopefully) *already there in protean form* to incite energies on behalf of extending diversity where it is possible to do so' (ibid.: 34; emphasis added). In Connolly's terms, 'Differences, resistances, and protean energies flow through the "perpetual gaps" within and between social formations, opening up possibilities for the politics of pluralization' (ibid.: 39).

4  Naturalism is clearly a complex term of art. Alongside Connolly's employment, it can also refer to a unity of method in science, while in moral and ethical discourse it is often used to capture the idea that ideals and principles are in some way derived from non moral facts or grounds, such as the nature of human beings.

5  These would include positivists such as Jon Elster, evolutionary theorists such as Stephen Jay Gould, as well as certain interpretations of Althusser.

6  The notion of transcendence is of course slippery, and it is impossible to provide a proper grammar of its various usages in different theoretical and philosophical contexts. But without going into detail here, my conception leans heavily on the work of the early Heidegger, who in turn seeks to radicalize Kant's transcendental philosophy. Heidegger's radicalization of Kant problematizes the sharp separation between a subject and object, in which a 'sphere of immanence' confronts or is directed towards an external, transcendent world of objects. On the contrary, the self   or *Dasein* as Heidegger rephrases the notion of subjectivity   is itself transcendent, in that one of its essential characteristics is to move beyond itself, that is, to 'step over' as Heidegger puts it, by being its 'own' or 'choosing itself' from various possibilities; or indeed by not choosing itself. Thus transcendence has a 'genuine ontological sense' for Heidegger, which speaks directly to *Dasein*'s 'thrown projection': the fact that it always finds itself in a particular situation not of its choosing, but then has the potential of projecting itself towards other possibilities that 'go beyond' its particular horizon or frame. As Heidegger puts it, then,

> Transcendence is not instituted by an object coming together with a subject, or a thou with an I, but the Dasein itself, as 'being a subject,' transcends. The Dasein as such is being towards itself, being with others, and being among entities handy and extant. In the structural moments of *toward itself*, *with others*, and *among the extant* there is implicit throughout *the character of overstepping*, of transcendence.
>
> (Heidegger, 1982: 301)

And just as transcendence is internally connected to Dasein   its 'familiarity in a world', as well as its various projections into the future   so the concept is rooted in temporality: 'The *transcendence of being in the world is founded* in its specific wholeness *on the original ecstatic unity of temporality*' (ibid.: 302).

7  This dialectic is also evident in certain variants of psychoanalysis: for example, in Lacan's return to Freud, the *objet petit a*   the object cause of desire for a subject   is characterized by a surplus of meaning and a surplus enjoyment, but it is intimately tied to the lack in the subject.

8  A much fuller discussion of some of the themes developed in the rest of this essay is discussed in *Logics of Critical Explanation in Social and Political Theory*, which I co authored with Jason Glynos. See Glynos and Howarth (2007).

9 In articulating this basic ontological standpoint, the principal objects of investiga tion are *practices* or *regimes of practices* in particular contexts. Here the chief aim of investigation is to explain their emergence and transformation, as well as their stabilization and maintenance. More precisely, inquiry focuses on those moments of dislocation    particular sites of flux and becoming    in which new trajectories and flights are made possible, and new norms and institutions are installed and defended/contested. As I shall argue, the focus on dislocation carries significant critical and ethical consequences.

10 The empirical implications of these remarks are explored in Griggs and Howarth (2008). The normative aspects are highlighted in Norval (2007).

11 But how do fantasmatic logics relate to actual *political practices*? Is it not the case that political practices represent a *rupture* with the logic of fantasy, which has a concealing function? The answer is affirmative: even though antagonisms often indicate the limits of a social order by disclosing the points at which 'the impossi bility of society' is manifest, they are still forms of social construction, as they furnish the subject with a way of positivizing the lack in the structure. This means that while the construction of frontiers presupposes contingency and public con testation, it does not necessarily entail 'attentiveness' to radical contingency. In other words, radical contingency can be concealed in political practices just as much as it is in social practices. If the function of fantasy in social practices implicitly reinforces the 'natural' character of their elements, or actively prevents the emergence of the political dimension, then we could say that the function of fantasy in political practices is to give them *direction* and *energy*, that is, their vector (see Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 145 152).

12 I draw inspiration here from Rudi Visker's seminal readings of Heidegger, Foucault and Levinas. See Visker (1999).

13 The notion of 'structural causality' is often associated with the writings of the structural Marxist Louis Althusser, who in turn contrasts his conception with various forms of 'expressive causality'.

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# 2    Ethos and late-modern democracy

*Stephen K. White*

## Introduction

The 'rich North Atlantic democracies' face novel challenges today, and the role of citizens must be at least partially re-imagined if we are to face those challenges in an admirable fashion; that is, in a way that neither denies, in the name of tradition, the force of what is new, nor imagines that we can adequately confront it by rejecting wholesale the traditions of modern Western political thought.[1] In what follows, I want to offer an interpretation of the current condition of democracy and elucidate how a late-modern 'ethos' of citizenship might constitute part of an exemplary response to democracy's challenges.

I want to suggest that Western democracies face a serious predicament, the nature of which I will lay out in a moment. I choose the word 'predicament' because it can indicate deep and complex troubles, without implying an unmitigable bleakness of prospects. In recent years, a variety of political theorists have suggested that democracy is in a condition that is clearly disastrous and whose prospects are dismal. I want to resist this deeply negative judgment, at least to a degree.

'Ethos' is very old concept that we get from classical Greek political thought (Aristotle, 2007).[2] But it has come increasingly into vogue over the past twenty-five years or so. Why has this occurred? My sense is that it results from commentators finding that their repertoire of standard concepts fails to capture adequately a certain dimension of experience to which greater attention needs to be paid in political theory. Foucault was perhaps the first, and certainly the most famous, philosopher to use 'ethos' in this distinctively late-modern way in the 1980s (Foucault, 1984: 373 377; 2003a: 28 30). His work continues to provide an initial orientation toward the terrain of experience that is at issue. Another influential figure is William Connolly. He has developed a well-elaborated perspective in political theory in which ethos plays a crucial role. My reflections below draw heavily upon his insights, although I sometimes augment them in ways he would resist.

In the first section, I will elaborate further upon why 'ethos' has emerged as an important topic in the last quarter century, how it is entangled with our

ontological imagination, and what a contemporary ethos should look like, if we want to respond in an exemplary fashion to the challenges of democracy today. In the second section, I identify three phenomena that constitute a specifically late-modern challenge to democracy. Democracy's current predicament results from: (1) the new growth in economic inequality; (2) the changing social bases of the democratic polity; and (3) the unavailability now of the classical ideal of an autonomous Demos. As a way of better locating the character and significance of my own response to this democratic predicament, I start in the third section with a consideration of two others. The responses of Sheldon Wolin and Jacques Derrida will be shown to have significant flaws. On the basis of this critique, I then argue for the comparative superiority of a third response in which the idea of a late-modern ethos and the weak ontology that animates it play a central role. In the final section, I take up criticisms that this response is not really convincing. The claim is that an approach through weak ontology and a late-modern ethos ends up too focused on ethics and not enough on politics. I will argue that the distinctive focus provided by an ethos creates no such avoidance of politics.

## Ethos in vogue

When Foucault began speaking of ethos, he was thematizing the capacity each of us has to cultivate a distinctive 'way of being' or of disposing ourselves in the sense of cognitive attitudes, normative judgments and aesthetic-affective sensibility. This is what he was referring to when he talked of 'care of the self' and the self as a work of art (Foucault, 1988b). It is important to emphasize here that this turn to ethos did not imply any retreat from politics for Foucault. On the contrary, the importance of self-fashioning in the sense of cultivating an ethos becomes ever greater in late-modern social and political life, where our lives are increasingly threatened with induction into those networks of power that Foucault identified as working by means of 'normalization' (Foucault, 1979). This form of power operates through the policing of boundaries of identity and difference such as rational/irrational, responsible/irresponsible, and sane/mad and so on. One of the primary aims of an ethos would be to fashion oneself so as to resist more effectively these operations of power.

Foucault was mainly concerned to get us to see the significance of using the category of ethos in our ethical-political reflection. He had little to say, however, by way of speculation about the specific substance of a distinctively late-modern ethos. He also did not elaborate much on the ontological assumptions that were implied by a perspective within which identity/difference dynamics are in the foreground. My intention in this chapter is to take on these two tasks in a preliminary way with the goal of providing a more coherent sense of what a late-modern ethos might be all about, and how it would relate to democratic politics.

In order to elucidate the ontological dimension implicated in talk of identity and ethos, I want to adopt at least partially the framework Charles Taylor

develops in *Sources of the Self* (Taylor, 1989). According to Taylor, when we attempt to make sense of ourselves or fashion ourselves and render judgments about ethical-political phenomena, we do so against a background of our most fundamental commitments; in other words, the 'sources' of ourselves. The idea that we act against some ontological background is, in itself, not especially novel. What distinguishes Taylor's argument is the particular character he accords that background, as well as the peculiar nature of our relationship to it.

When we react to, and make ethical judgments about, phenomena we encounter, we are drawing upon or 'articulating' the most basic sources of ourselves. This process progressively reveals the character of those sources and thus our identity. But of course much hangs upon how exactly we imagine this process of revelation. A traditional 'strong ontology' imagines this process as one of uncovering foundations (e.g., God or nature) that exist in their fullness prior to the activity of articulation. Taylor, however, suggests that this activity is better seen as one of both discovery and creation (ibid.: 18, 22). The sense of creation here is not one of radically sovereign invention; rather it arises from our character as creatures who reproduce our cultural life through language. We only reveal our sources insofar as we progressively bring them into language. We sense that our sources pre-exist any given articulation, but this intuition always remains vague and is always given further shape when we express ourselves. Hence the condition of human being is one in which meaning-seeking and meaning-making are always constitutively entangled. Language never captures the full meaning of our sources, but rather always raises new questions for us, given the fact that our sources are always given at least slightly new shapes through the specific expressions we use in a given articulation of them. Taylor's understanding of sources and their articulation constitute what I call a 'weak ontology' (White, 2000). He gives us a portrait of how our most basic commitments have a distinctive, orienting role in our life, but this distinctiveness is not understood in a traditional, foundationalist fashion, within which we imagine ourselves uncovering truth that has the firmness of bedrock and leaves us absolutely convinced. On Taylor's interpretation, our condition is such that some degree of *in*articulacy always remains. Thus we are continually 'on the way' to fuller articulation; we never arrive at a place of absolute footing, absolute conviction.[3] Within a weak ontology such as Taylor's, the familiar notion of human dignity arising from our capacity for freedom and reason has to be seen as a radically one-sided characterization. Our elevated status as the most capacious creatures on earth must be thought together with that constitutive *in*capacity that takes the form of inarticulacy.

I find Taylor's understanding of sources to be the best model for understanding how we negotiate cognition, sensibility and judgment in relation to our most basic commitments. But his perspective is valuable in two additional ways. First, his notion of irremediable inarticulacy is an admirable way of interpreting the cause of what is generally taken to be a hallmark of our

late-modern condition: namely, the fact of 'reasonable pluralism' as Rawls famously calls it (Rawls, 1993: xv–xix). The other valuable aspect of Taylor's work emerges from the way he aligns his understanding of sources with his Christianity. He shows us that theism, usually thought of as the most prominent type of strong ontology, can assume a weak ontological form. This is important, because it shows that weak ontology is not to be equated with a bland or irreverent form of post-foundationalism. It is rather a different way of construing how we carry our most basic commitments. Yes, they are contestable, but contestability at this fundamental, ontological level is different from the normal contestability we associate with garden-variety beliefs. We can adhere to our most *fundamental commitments* tenaciously and in a way that is aware of how our identity depends on them; and yet we can also admit their contestability. Thus, we do not carry these commitments with *absolute conviction*.[4] At this most basic level, commitments are primarily tied to identity, whereas convictions are primarily tied to knowledge claims.

The core figures of an ontology animate and sustain one's perceptions, sensibility and judgments; in short, they give life to one's orientation toward, and engagement, with, the world. For Taylor, these figures are a creator-God and its love – in the sense of *agape* – for human being. This core of Taylor's late-modern, Christian ethos takes the form of a vivified sense of the dignity of the other human as a divine creation and of the aim of extending *agape* from myself to the other (Taylor, 1989: 93–95, 515–521).

Although I want to borrow Taylor's framework of articulation and sources, I want to elucidate a non-theistic ethos. That means, of course, that I must appeal to different ontological figures and identify a different substance for my ethos. Let me turn first to the figures. The most familiar of these has taken shape in the work of Continental philosophers from Nietzsche to Judith Butler, including, especially, Heidegger. Being, within this current of thought, is rendered primarily not in terms of fixed entities, say, God and humans, but rather as the process of presencing or becoming: an emerging into being of entities and a passing out again. Moreover, this becoming is not usually understood as an effortless or tranquil process, but rather an 'agonistic' one. Individually or collectively, particular human identity emerges only through a struggle. The clarity and solidity I may appear to achieve for myself always remain constitutively related to the qualities of those others against whom I stand out.

As we see with Foucault, this ontology of identity/difference has often been linked to some conception of society and power. But this connection has sometimes been envisioned in a fashion that is infelicitous for political theory. Butler's early work, *Gender Trouble*, displays this problem. There, the only way to resist being implicated in the power relations reproduced in the dynamics of gender identity is to keep one's identity constantly in flux. But that is just not psychologically possible. Indeed, Butler no longer speaks this way, but that early infelicity reveals the need for further conceptual distinctions within the general framework that surrounds the ontological ideas of becoming and identity/difference (Butler, 1990; 2004b).[5]

Here is where Connolly has made a signal contribution. What is so valuable in his work is the way that he distinguishes between the ontological relation of identity/difference that is constitutive for human being, on the one hand, and the psychological-political relations between them, on the other (Connolly, 1995: 16 12; 2002b: 8 9, 16 20, 29 32, 64). Our identity must be understood as having a real solidity, weightiness and temporal persistence, toward which we cannot really relate as if it were open to continual radical transformation. At the same time, there is this necessary, constitutive dependence of identity on difference. What is not necessary, and what can assume varied forms, is the particular way I will dispose myself to the different others that surround me at any given time.

The relation of dependence in which I am always already implicated is often experienced as a threat to my sovereignty and thus something I resent. I face a continual psychological and political 'temptation' to denigrate, dominate and marginalize that other (Connolly, 2002b: 8). At this point, one can begin to see how the topic of ethos makes its entrance into this mode of thought. To speak of an ethos of late-modern life, as Connolly does, is to thematize this question of fashioning and disposing myself in ways that resist the propensity to project hostility on the other. The direction in which Connolly and various other philosophers point us is toward the cultivation of a kind of *presumptive generosity*, within a repertoire of dispositions that collectively comprise a bearing of 'agonistic respect'. Presumptive generosity has a special visibility within this repertoire, because it is the initial disposition I am to show the other in the name of resisting my temptation to quickly categorize it in ways that do not allow it to surprise, challenge, or intrigue me in any basic sense. This kind of generosity involves something like a wilful suspension of my full critical armament and an offer of receptiveness. Examples would include 'critical responsiveness' (Connolly, 1995: 178 188); 'fundamentally more capacious, generous and "unthreatened" bearings of the self' (Butler, 1995: 140); 'hospitality' (Derrida and Dufourmantelle, 2000); 'receptive generosity' (Coles, 1997: 23); and 'opening ourselves to the surprises' of engagement with the other (Markell, 2003: 14 15, 32 36). Crucial in all of these perspectives is a sense of the cognitive and affective need to dampen the initial wariness and certainty that we are likely to carry into our engagement with those whom we all too easily size up as radically other to us.

Summing up, I have now provided some general sense of the character of a late-modern ethos and an introduction into why the cultivation of a presumptive generosity has such significance today. I now turn to the challenges late-modern democracy faces and the possible role an ethos of this sort could play in an admirable assemblage of virtues that citizens might embrace.

## Democracy's predicament

Sheldon Wolin has been one of the most perceptive and influential political theorists of the last half-century. I want to use his perspective on the ideals of

modern democracy and the challenges of late-modernity as a way of initially orienting my discussion (Wolin, 1960; 2004). In this section, I use him to get a purchase on the ontology of modern democracy and the challenges it faces; and, in the next, I start with a consideration of his response to those challenges.

From his earliest work on, Wolin has deployed a sense of 'the political' that is quite useful for getting at the ontological infrastructure of modern democratic life (Wolin, 1960: Chap. 1; Hauptmann, 2004: 34 60). The central figure of democratic politics for Wolin is that of a continual enactment and expansion of a structure of commonality. Importantly, that structure or logic simultaneously divides the resulting political world into demos, on the one hand, and elites, on the other. The force of 'the political' can emerge whenever common people experience, directly or indirectly, material suffering or some form of humiliation at the hands of elites (Wolin, 1994: 19, 23 24). Democratic politics is ignited when one such constituency or another begins to build upon commonly shared anger and indignation in a fashion that generates solidarity.

Let me take this Wolinian picture to represent a familiar modern conception of the ontology and ethos of a robust democratic life. And let me use that as a background for laying out the different dimensions of the democratic predicament pressing upon us today. In this background picture, a healthy democracy is imagined as a kind of self-augmenting force that is continually enhancing the well-being, inclusion, and status of constituencies at the lower reaches of society. Implicit in such a comprehension of democracy is the expectation that the overall distribution of wealth ought to tend to become more equal over time; or, if not actually becoming more equal in absolute terms, the distribution should nevertheless allow for the continued enhancement of the well-being of the most disadvantaged citizens. In the case of the USA, for example, an argument can be made that at least the latter expectation was met to some degree from the early to the mid-twentieth century. Since the 1970s, however, there has been a massive explosion in economic inequality (American Political Science Association Task Force Report, 2004: 651 666). And yet, until relatively recently, this radical assault on the logic of democratic life passed almost unnoticed or was seen as relatively acceptable by large categories of the US population.[6] In short, an unsettling asymmetry seems to have emerged between the clear erosion of democracy and any effective response to that erosion arising from a re-ignition of a strong democratic opposition to it. Here is the first dimension of democracy's late-modern predicament. The democratic spirit seems to be withering, with relatively little outcry being raised.

The second dimension is at least partially related to the first. It concerns what one might call the changing social bases for the trajectory of democratic commonality. Two phenomena are relevant here. First, there is the way in which a multitude of group identities have come to blur the lines of class identity which, in turn, blurs the basis of democratic solidarity. Groups whose identities cohere around such shared features as language, religion, and

ethnicity constitute impediments to progress along a trajectory that demands the continual foregrounding of commonality, not difference. When these forms of identity are strong, it becomes all the more difficult to picture a unified entity we could call the 'Demos'.

An additional change in the social basis of democracy that problematizes the familiar modern portrait of democratic solidarity is growth in the percentage of the population in the 'middle class'. I would roughly define this category of the population by its relative distance from real material misery.[7] People in this relatively amorphous category could not be called fully secure economically; they sometimes face dislocations such as layoffs that come with their jobs being shifted to less economically developed countries. And the replacement jobs they find are often ones that pay less. The problem that this segment of society poses for enhancing democracy is that its members see themselves as enjoying some economic success, even if that success always remains somewhat uncertain. And, especially in the USA, they often prove to be relatively deaf to strong democratic appeals, on the one hand, and quite receptive to appeals that play on sentiments of resentment toward those who are 'different' and/or below them economically, on the other. Such a population category is deeply problematic for any political program that envisions the future in terms of a simple re-ignition of the logic of modern democratic solidarity.

The third challenge to contemporary democracy renders the traditional, normative core of the modern ideal of robust democracy questionable. The issue here is that the simple, powerful image of a self-governing Demos appears to be no longer appropriate as the primary telos of democratic solidarity. I mean here that we can no longer legitimately appeal to a figure of collective autonomy; that is, to a macro-subject governing itself sovereignly. Rousseau was perhaps the greatest proponent of this grand figure of democratic normativity in Western political thought. Such a subject is increasingly seen today as too prone to mask coercion with soothing democratic imagery. Of course, there were always many liberals who were deeply skeptical of any talk of the self-governing Demos, but this figure has continued to engage the imagination of radical democrats and democratic socialists since the eighteenth century. Now, however, the number of thinkers who would explicitly defend it is declining, even if some of them continue to allow it to operate implicitly in their reflections.[8] Whether explicit or implicit, continued attachment to the notion of a latent, collective subject that can emerge finally as the ruling force of society   the sovereign Demos, feeds illusory hopes. Prominent political theorists who have relinquished this idea of a collective embodiment of all democratic ideals include Jürgen Habermas (1996: 135 136, 289 299) and Ernesto Laclau.[9]

Wolin shares this growing scepticism about collective autonomy. Over his career, he has become increasingly worried about attributing any emphatically positive characteristics to the governing will of large, national states. Such a will is simply too likely to use its claim to embody a universally valid form of

democratic autonomy to disguise imperialism abroad and repression at home (Wolin, 2004: Preface, Chap. 17). But Wolin also provides an example of the tendency I noted above among some democratic theorists to combine an explicit distrust of collective autonomy with an implicit appeal to the aesthetic-affective force of the ideal of a potentially emergent Demos. This combination makes it all the more difficult, as I will show in the next section, to think anew about how we should imagine the normative core of late-modern democracy.

## Late-modern responses

I turn now to consider some attempts to respond to the democratic predicament. More particularly, I am interested in efforts that seek to rethink or re-vivify the onto-logic and ethos of democracy, and thereby contribute to a reconceptualization of the normative heart of democratic life.

Again, it is useful initially to turn to Wolin, because he gives us a general sense of not only what modern democracy has meant, but also what its current prospects are. Our 'postmodern' condition, he asserts, is such that the future looks extremely bleak. The structures of the national state in the USA and of global capitalism stifle any real hope for renewing democracy (Wolin, 2004: Preface, Chap. 17). Accordingly, in regard to the first challenge of late-modern democracy    growing inequality and disempowerment of citizens   Wolin seems to find no really effective way forward, at least not at the national level. Also, the oppressiveness of large political and economic structures is further enhanced by one aspect of the second challenge; namely, the one posed by the growing prominence of all kinds of identity claims. Wolin sees these pretty much as a curse on democratic life, arguing that their emphasis on differences in identity is deeply harmful to any attempt to move along the trajectory of democratic commonality (ibid.: 582 586).

If Wolin persistently worries about how contemporary politics has been too engaged with issues of identity recognition, he totally ignores the other changed social basis of democratic life, namely the existence of a large middle segment that has something more to lose than its 'chains'. Wolin writes as if rich, North Atlantic democracies had a distribution of wealth and income that could be adequately represented by the figure of a pyramid. On this view, the Demos is imagined as constituting itself from the economically lowest and most numerous segment. Here we begin to see Wolin aligning an empirical view of the social bases of contemporary society with tacit ontological and normative commitments. The resulting, almost mythical, image of the Demos emerges only occasionally into full view, as when he asserts that democracy is 'an elemental politics about the needs and aspirations of the Many' (ibid.: 603).[10] This image, I would suggest, is a central, if usually implicit, animating figure for Wolin's democratic theory.

What the figure offers us is, however, problematic in both an empirical and normative sense. Empirically, the notion of a potential, radical majority

formed from the great base of the social pyramid    all those who must 'scratch out a decent existence', as Wolin puts it    simply does not correspond to reality in societies like the USA. The actual distribution of income and wealth has more the shape of a diamond (ibid. 603).[11] Wolin's failure to acknowledge this reality allows him to make some strong claims about contemporary democracy that appear to be far more questionable when one thinks in terms of the diamond shape. Most importantly, he contends that the *absence* of a powerful, radical democratic movement today can only be attributed to one thing: the overwhelmingly repressive effects of the structures of state and capitalist power (ibid.: 561  562, 568, 578, 586  589). If his picture is wrong, however, that would make the condition of democracy less dire and its predicament more complex than he thinks.

In regard to my third challenge to late-modern democracy, namely, the illegitimacy of appeals to the ideal of a self-governing Demos, we already have a good sense of where Wolin comes down. The apparently explicit rejection of that ideal is undermined by his tacit appeal to the absent presence of 'the Many'. One sees this in the fact that his increasingly pessimistic judgments about the prospects for democracy are deeply colored by a sense of mourning that arises from a feeling of our having squandered the possibility of achieving authentic rule by the Demos. Today, he concludes, we are left with only minimal and occasional relief from this regrettable fate. All that we can see on the immediate horizon are specific opportunities for 'combining traditional localism with postmodern centrifugalism'. Wolin speaks here of 'fugitive democracy', a term meant to emphasize evasive and episodic qualities that keep opposition mobile enough to escape temporarily from the crushing oppression of the state and capitalism (ibid.: 601  602).

Now the idea of taking democracy to be, at least partially, an evasive, local, and mobile    fugitive    assemblage of political movements rather than 'a possible constitutional form for an entire society', is a good one (ibid.: 602). But the air of pessimism that pervades its introduction implicitly trades on an imagined loss of some grander possibility, namely one in which the 'Many' exert their will. Such an image and mood seem to me to imbue democratic thought and action with an unnecessary gloom as to their real value and prospects. The imagined loss of a grander possibility has two strong    and to my mind unfortunate and avoidable    effects on the way we view the political. First, it burns into our reflections an almost overwhelming sense of the oppressiveness of the structures of capitalism and liberal democratic institutions. Against this, it seems to me that we do better to look for palpable criteria of greater or lesser oppressiveness that might guide the development of a graduated repertoire of democratic practices. The second effect of the imagined loss of a grander possibility is that potential allies in democratic movements may be encouraged to view one another more easily with resentment. I mean here that a democratic actor whose anger and indignation might draw continual fuel from the Wolinian sense of a vision betrayed is likely to jump to quick conclusions regarding a potential ally's failure to see

its way quickly onto the proffered democratic trajectory. That group, in short, is likely to be sized up as either ill-willed or thickheaded, or both.

If one turns from Wolin to another well-known response to the late-modern predicament, one also finds an emphasis on something like his notion of 'fugitive' democracy. This is apparent in Jacques Derrida's later thinking about the prospects for robust democratic life. Writing in the wake of the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, Derrida sees our political order as always 'haunted' by the tragedies, missed radical opportunities, horrible injustices of the past, as well as by the possible demands of future others. This haunting holds open the possibility of 'another concept of the political' and animates the idea of a 'democracy-to-come' (Derrida, 1994: 59, 75).

Like Wolin, Derrida's judgment of western democracy's current state is deeply negative. Our prospects for things like decreasing the degree of inequality and disempowerment, he writes, are 'bleak, … almost black' (Derrida, 1994: 59; 2002: 23). Against that sort of background, glimpses of democratic hope are indeed fugitive. Despite this initial similarity between the two thinkers, Derrida's sense of the fugitive possesses a distinctive difference from Wolin's; and this difference gives Derrida's response to the late modern challenges to democracy a significant advantage.

In Wolin, the concept of fugitivity is given life primarily on the basis of his judgment regarding the dismal fate of politics today. This makes his ethos of the fugitive cohere around the quality of escape or flight from domination by the existing economic and political structures. But what would happen to fugitivity if Wolin were wrong in this thoroughly bleak assessment of our political fate? If prospects now are indeed better than he thinks, or if they come to be so in the future, then our emphasis on the value of comprehending social relations through the category of the fugitive would, accordingly, lose its rationale. The issue here is simply that the source of the positive valuation of fugitivity for Wolin is primarily an empirical judgment about political circumstances.

Derrida's valuation of the fugitive as a response to the late-modern democratic predicament is partially based on such a judgment, but it is deeply dependent on something else as well. Fugitivity has an ontological source becoming or presencing along with a political one. The difference this makes is that it allows for moderating the bleakness of one's political judgment without that having the effect of abandoning the value of fugitivity. This is no small advantage.

Like Wolin and Derrida, many others on the political left today have developed a propensity for issuing pretty sweeping judgments about the bleakness or darkness of our times.[12] There are no doubt some real grounds for such worries. But it might be advisable to keep a somewhat stronger sense of historical comparison in mind, so that we have a basis for progressively shading our determinations of light and darkness. For example, when I think of truly dark times, I think of how Walter Benjamin must have felt in September 1940 as he fled the Nazi war machine, attempting to escape across the

border from France to Spain. The horrendous fate of Jews was becoming clearer every day; fascism's grip on Europe seemed to tighten more each month; and the world was mired in the worst economic depression the twentieth century had witnessed. That was darkness. In comparison to that, I have to see the first decade of the twenty-first century as markedly better in terms of the prospects of democracy. Not good, perhaps, but better.

My point here is that Derrida might have been persuaded to see the political world as less bleak, but, if he had, that would not have crucially impaired his affirmation of fugitivity as an essential motif in a late-modern ethos of democratic life. As I said, the emphasis on this value emerges from his ontology of difference, his sense that the world is a continual play of presencing and absencing (Derrida, 1994: 25 27). For someone like this, any attempt to see being as a kind of fixed presence of some sort is misguided and only fuels our conception of ourselves as grandly capacious in all matters conceptual and practical. It is against the background of this modern propensity that the main significance of fugitivity becomes apparent for Derrida (and Connolly and me). The particular connotations of fugitivity that one now emphasizes shift slightly but importantly from those Wolin highlights. Less emphasis now falls on being in 'flight from' and more on the episodic, the decentred, the singular in character, and the difficult-to-get-hold-of. One is attentive to such features of the world, because to highlight them is to reaffirm continually an ontology of presencing or becoming, a being that exceeds our categories and structures (ibid.: 22 23, 28). And to be attentive in this way is to begin to prefigure the virtue of presumptive generosity as central to a democratic ethos.

The theme of generosity to, or hospitality for, the radically 'other' is a consistent theme in Derrida. But he tended to be more interested in the ethical core of this theme (following Levinas) than its political implications. In *Spectres* and other later works, he did begin to attend more to the latter, referring to the need to allow ourselves to be haunted by, and obligated to, the idea of a 'democracy-to-come' (ibid.: 59, 75). But this idea remains quite abstract, in the sense that although I, as a democratic citizen, may feel some intense obligation, what exactly it might mean to engage political life in the here-and-now remains more fugitive than one might wish.[13]

Let me use this issue as the point of entry into a final response to democracy's predicament. This is one that puts an emphasis on an ethos of presumptive generosity. As was shown earlier, this idea has emerged within the work of several philosophers and political theorists. I find Connolly's notion of 'critical responsiveness' to be the best rendering of this kind of generosity. He speaks of the importance of such responsiveness to the phenomenon of natality in political life; that is, to the continual emergence of new identities as well as the way in which they tend to provoke discomfort, resentment, and hostility from established constituencies. The cultivation of critical responsiveness involves attempting to dampen the propensity to react negatively to the 'politics of enactment' and to give novel political movements space

in which to bring to public life their particular identity and its concerns (Connolly, 1995: 180 188).

What is distinctive about critical responsiveness, as opposed, say, to Derrida's hospitality, is that the former is clearly conceived of as being at one end of a range of dispositions constituting 'agonistic respect' that Connolly finds appropriate in late-modern politics at different times and with different movements. In short, critical responsiveness is an *initial* disposition that may be legitimately de-emphasized as a given movement gains ground in political space. In its place, other dispositions, both positive and negative, become more appropriate. The most negative would be outright violent conflict, if the movement really threatened, for example, the fundamental values of democracy. Another possible disposition would be political opposition, if the movement proved to be in favour of political goals that you ultimately found to be unjust. Alternatively, if the movement were to remain mildly but persistently offensive in some way, you might cultivate an attitude of 'studied indifference' whereby you would attempt to avoid festering resentment toward the group in question, while having as little as possible to do with it (Connolly, 1995: xviii, 21, 92, 234; 1999: 151).

More positively, you might find dimensions of commonality existing between this group and your own, and thus that a 'selective collaboration' with it in political action makes sense (Connolly, 1995: xviii, 92). Connolly does not say a great deal about what is involved here, but he makes it clear that this orientation is best thought of with Gilles Deleuze's metaphor of a 'rhizome' (ibid.: 93 97). This is to be contrasted with the more traditional tree metaphor, according to which there must be a central, common trunk (of values and identity) that nourishes and supports all the many branches (groups). Rhizomes are types of plants that have no trunk, but rather throw out roots and shoots in multiple directions. This late-modern image illustrates a radically different way of thinking about the commonality that is displayed in political relationships as compared to the modern image of a single broad trajectory of commonality that brings the Demos to life.

It is clear that in referring to 'selective collaboration' Connolly is thematizing a politics of coalition-building among constituencies that may share some interests, but not others. As one tries to imagine this trajectory of the political, one can also see how the initial disposition of critical responsiveness becomes relevant in an additional way. Going beyond Connolly in a significant direction, Rom Coles usefully suggests how valuable such presumptive generosity can be in the *internal* workings of coalition building, as opposed to its value as one initially reacts to the appearance of some novel political movement. The building of coalitions under the challenges of late modernity means that democratic political ties are harder to weave together and maintain than, for example, when a fifth-century Athenian politician was trying to draw the demos together on, say, the issue of going to war. The harder it is to craft commonality, the more crucial it is to cultivate a disposition that *both* confronts frustration, irritation, and disappointment (with

those with whom one would coalesce) *and yet* 'keeps one coming back for more' (Coles, 1997: 191 194).

It should be abundantly clear that a rhizome-like image of democratic coalition can only gain traction if all dreams of a sovereign Demos espe- cially ones whose attraction continues even after explicit disavowal of their content are relinquished. Wolin, as I indicated before, seems to have boxed himself into a corner, where his sketch of repressive economic and political structures is so totalized that one almost cannot help generating simulta- neously an implicit political vision that holds emancipation to be achievable only in a collective *transcendence of such structures*. But social structures are not like hard-walled boxes that contain soft subjects; rather they must con- stantly be reproduced by the actions of subjects. My whole effort in articu- lating an ethos of democratic citizenship takes shape around the idea that it makes a difference *how we 'live the structures' over time* (Taylor, 1995: xi xii). Here the rhizome image is again helpful. As gardeners know only too well, rhizomes like bamboo do not knock structures (fences, borders) down; rather they grow around, into, and under them, thereby changing slowly, but markedly, the character of the landscape.

Let me turn now to how the present response comes to terms with that aspect of the second late-modern challenge that I called the phenomenon of the large middle segment of the population in rich, North Atlantic democ- racies. This is the category that is not suffering real material deprivation (food, shelter, basic health), although it periodically faces substantial threats to its sense of economic security. That note of insecurity is important to the way I want to identify this segment. Such a threat of uncertainty and anxiety engenders citizens who are subtly primed to react to political phenomena with resentment and low-grade hostility. In a world characterized at both the intra-state and global level by rapid changes associated with globalization (like outsourcing), by the dialectic of what Connolly calls 'pluralization and fundamentalization' and by the continual chorus of claims associated with identity politics, it is of real significance to democratic political life to have citizens in the middle manifest an ethos of agonistic respect whose first ges- ture to the oncoming phenomena of public life is presumptive generosity (Connolly, 1995).

In an important sense then, a late-modern ethos of citizenship is most immediately relevant to the middle segment of the population, in the sense that such an ethos seeks to dampen and restrain the propensity to resentment and hostility that characterizes this category. In saying this, I don't mean to imply that those who are the most disadvantaged in a society like the USA are not subject to this propensity; rather I would say that their propensity is proportionately more rooted in a sense-of-injustice-driven syndrome of response to real material deprivation.

I want to shift my focus now to the problem of growing inequality and how a late-modern ethos would have us respond to it. This response does not take the form of a systematic argument demonstrating the illegitimacy of high

levels of inequality; rather it emphasizes something about the figure of human being that slightly, but significantly, shifts the background assumptions we carry with us as we perceive and dispute matters in morals and politics.[14] The most important of these assumptions involves moral equality and dignity. As I noted earlier, the most familiar claim (it goes all the way back to Cicero) is that humans all have the capacity for reason and freedom; and these remarkable capacities raise us above other animals. Hence humans share an equal claim to dignity.

But there is a problem with this argument. When we stake our claim to fundamental moral equality on a capacity like reason, it is unclear why actual differences we acknowledge in the possession of this capacity should not translate into a basis for affirming human *in*equality. If I am smarter than you, why does that not justify my claim to unequal treatment? The problem here lies, as Jeremy Waldron has persuasively shown, with the fact that capacities like reason vary widely. What we need to ground equal human dignity is some quality that both distinguishes humans and yet does not allow for scaleable distinctions between them (Waldron, 2002: Chap. 3). In the present context, I can only touch upon how a non-theistic, weak-ontological account might engage this problem. It would tie the claim of equal dignity to meaning-seeking and meaning-making. Now in one sense this highlights human capacity; and that would seem to throw us back into the problem of unequal capacities. But if we attend in the first instance to our meaning-seeking, then we can begin to see a possible way of handling this problem. Meaning-seeking has its deepest roots in our consciousness of mortality. We are conscious that we exist in subjection to mortality; all of our capacities pale in comparison with the incapacity of finitude. For present purposes, what is crucial is that this brute incapacity is shared equally. No one can outsmart it. Here we have the kind of basis for thinking about equality for which we were looking. We each have a claim to dignity based on the common subjection to mortality which, in turn, gives a brute equality to the narratives of our lives.

It is clearly a great leap from the argument I have just made to arguments contesting the explosion of economic inequality that has emerged in recent years. But, for the moment, all I am looking for is a subtle shift in initial perception and sensibility in these matters. The sort of shift I have in mind might be illustrated by an analogy from the field of law. Lawyers speak of a certain category of cases where one party bears 'the burden of proof' in relation to the other. My suggestion is that a democratic ethos animated by a sense of human dignity such as I have laid out would be one in which the burden of proof for a citizen would fall more 'naturally' and heavily on proponents of inequality than is the case at present.

This shifting of the burden would be elicited by the following sorts of considerations. In my reconfigured portrait of dignity, the deepest sentiment of equality now comes from a common vulnerability, the shared knowledge of our mortality. Now in one sense, this kind of vulnerability might be seen to

imply that high levels of economic inequality would be perfectly acceptable: Since we all will die, why should having more or less wealth matter at all? But ever since the ancient Greeks thought about the free shaping of public meaning, people have realized that the good life is negatively impacted by material deprivation. The seeking and making of meaning flourish to a greater degree when my life is not dominated by the activity of staving off serious deprivation. A life so consumed is an affront to human dignity. Thus, the massive growth in economic inequality in a society like the USA, with some being left seriously disadvantaged and others living a life filled with an incredible surplus of goods, seems deeply at odds with the sort of ethos that is congruent with the orientation I have been sketching. If so, then our sense of justice would be drawn toward distributions of wealth that would eliminate serious deprivation.[15]

## Objections

I want to turn now to objections that have been directed at the idea of a late-modern ethos of democracy. The most significant ones argue that such an ethos fails adequately to confront undemocratic movements and arrangements of power or to inspire democratic renewal. It gives us what is, in effect, a 'politics of avoidance' that is deleterious to the future of democracy (Dean, 2005; Vázquez-Arroyo, 2004: 10; Wolin 2004: 581 584).[16] This criticism can be divided into two related lines of argument. First, there is concern that the central ideas of weak ontology and the ethos it animates lead us finally to nothing more than a paralyzing tentativeness and uncertainty in political engagement, mixed with a simple and inappropriate generosity toward the enemies of democracy (cf. Dean 2005: 57; Flathman, 2005: 106). What we need as radical democrats today is more decisiveness and less generosity (A). Further, this specific blunting of the critical edge of democratic theory is really part of a second and larger conceptual operation that domesticates and imprisons democratic impulses. The gist of this fatal maneuver is captured by my use of Taylor's phrase 'living the structures' of the liberal, capitalist state. The acceptance of this sort of constrained form of life depletes a democratic imagination that should be animated rather by images of bursting through such structures (B).

   **A.** What sort of orientation to politics are we really given by the idea of a late-modern ethos animated by a contestable, weak ontology and sustaining a presumptive generosity? It is, critics argue, one largely eaten up by uncertainty and tentativeness, and when it does finally issue in some engagement with politics, that orientation is the decidedly inappropriate one of being generous. Both of these orientations are deeply inappropriate for democratic citizens today whose primary stance should be one of 'conviction, condemnation, and denunciation' (Dean, 2005: 56; 2007). I have responded elsewhere to the charge of tentativeness, so here I will focus on the question of whether the cultivation of the virtue of presumptive generosity is deleterious to a robust

democratic practice (see White, 2009: Chap. 5). In short, is it really as hope-lessly naïve and idealistic as critics such as Jodi Dean make it out to be; and does its cultivation also draw attention away from real dangers that threaten democracy? (Dean, 2005: 55 56; cf. Vázquez-Arroyo, 2004: 11 ff.).

One can begin to get some purchase on this question by comparing her charge against presumptive generosity with the kind of charge often made of those who   typically on religious grounds   advocate non-violence in all dangerous political or military situations. Critics will perhaps admire such a person's pacifist motivations and even the effects of his actions in some situations, but they will find him woefully naïve in his beliefs about the ade-quacy of his one-track strategy as a response to the full horrors that politics and war bring our way. For example, how would Gandhi and his movement have fared if they had faced the Nazis rather than the British? Dean lambasts the idea of presumptive generosity as similarly guileless.

If Dean's portrayal of a late-modern ethos were accurate, her criticism might also be apt. But, as we saw earlier, presumptive generosity is not a one-size-fits-all political response. It is intended as an initial response designed to restrain the resentment and hostility we otherwise tend to bring into public engagement, especially when our opponents are part of a marginal group or novel movement that disturbs our settled sense of identity. Although neither Connolly nor I have elaborated at great length on succeeding, alternative responses, it is eminently clear that presumptive generosity is not intended as an exclusive mode of political engagement. Dean's thorough condemnation of it thus simply misfires from the start.

**B.** But if Dean's specific criticism is off-target, perhaps it contains a more legitimate concern that can be stated as a strong claim about the regrettable effects of what some have called the recent 'ethical turn' in cultural studies and political theory (see Anderson, 2006: 8 ff.; Davis and Womack, 2001; Garber *et al.*, 2005). This new emphasis can be described in different ways, but however it is characterized, the critics find its manifestations to be merely variants of the same dangerous disease of apoliticalness. When theorists on the left embrace a late-modern ethos, they, in effect, trade in their classical 'immanent critique' of society for a politically pusillanimous one absorbed with the 'immanent affirmation' of all political movements and values, regardless of how heinous they may be. When this undiscriminating affirma-tion is joined with a stress on the cultivation of the actor's dispositions, we end up with something like a twenty-first-century version of Hegel's 'beautiful soul', the difference being that the new version preserves itself from ugliness in the external world not by remaining within the inner citadel of a pure con-science, but rather by pantheistically presuming that all otherness in the world is infused with beauty. Thus Dean's final judgment: 'What a beautiful notion. What a nice, nice approach' (Dean, 2005: 57, 65).

And it is precisely the wrong approach for the dark times in which we live. According to Dean, we do not need to hear homilies about 'living the struc-tures' of the liberal, constitutional state and capitalism, but rather directions

for smashing and transcending those structures. Our enemies are self-evident: 'the religious, nationalist and market fundamentalisms dominating contemporary social and political life' (Dean, 2007, 2005: 55). Our response should be just as self-evident.[17]

Clear choices in very dark times. But weren't we exhorted in an uncomfortably similar way by President Bush in 2001, when he intoned: 'You are either with us or against us' in the war against terrorism?[18] Are you friend or enemy? My reaction to such loaded choices in both the case of terrorism and the democratic predicament is to refuse to be volunteered for either option. The recourse to such rhetorical strategies is an invitation to distort and over-simplify the hard work of political reflection and action.[19]

For Dean, the idea of 'living the structures' of capitalism or the constitutional state in a critical way constitutes a 'deadly assumption'. We need to think instead in terms of radically new social structures. But what exactly that means remains at the level of the vaguest possible suggestion. All we are really left with is the imputation that 'living the structures' amounts to living as a domesticated animal without any 'critical … oppositional edge' that can be used to bust through the walls of our cages (Dean, 2005: 56, 58).

The notion of a critical edge or standpoint is a crucial one. But the idea that the promise of such a standpoint can only be brought to life by a sweeping vision of the Demos, animating radically new and different political and economic structures, has not always fared well in the past. Insofar as Dean's claims about structures tacitly depend on holding out such a promise, we have reason to be skeptical.

But perhaps we can construe the force of her claims   well   more generously; that is, in a way that is harder for my late-modern ethos to deflect. What if Dean were to forgo the implication of transcending structures and simply argue instead that a late-modern ethos is incapable of prefiguring at all a normative difference between compliant and contestatory reactions to the structures one is living? The arguments I have made so far might be seen as flawed in that they do not distinguish an ontological figure that thematizes democratic contestation in a way that draws attention to a critical standpoint, from whose perspective we can pick out clearly illegitimate assaults on the dignity of common people. My perspective seems only to recognize failures to be presumptively generous, a virtue that gets its ultimate sense from the idea of witnessing being, understood as becoming, or of manifesting a mimetic relation to it. But what gives sense to the decision to contest something as illegitimate in politics? Those who have affirmed an ontology of presencing or becoming, drawing from Nietzsche and Heidegger, have typically defined such becoming as agonistic. Might that agonistic dimension not prefigure the ubiquity of political contestation? It could indeed. There is a problem, however. The simple figure of agonism seems to underwrite an affirmation of any and all political contestation. But that means we don't yet have a basis on which to distinguish more legitimate agonism from less legitimate, more violent, oppressive forms.

The figure needed would be one that draws our attention toward some sense of the legitimate normative bonds of intersubjectivity. Think, for example, of Levinas' ontological scene of the self confronted by the face of the other and the unlimited obligation it posits for the self.[20] This figuration has certainly been immensely influential for the way Derrida thinks about ethics and politics. It gives him the basis for thinking of the ethical-political as involved with a working back and forth between an unconditional demand for hospitality or justice and its relation of tension with the concrete, limited rights and obligations associated with specific laws that apply, for example, to refugees or asylum seekers (see Derrida and Dufourmantelle, 1990; Derrida, 2000: 25 27; 2002: 3 23). Is there anything in the weak ontology I have outlined that plays a structurally similar role in a late-modern ethos?

So far, there is not; and there should be. What is needed can best be figured by elaborating further the sense of ordinary language communication and the articulation of sources. So far, I have thematized this process largely in terms of the self and its meaning-making and meaning seeking in relation to sources. I have not yet really focused upon the self's reproduction of prevailing social norms in this process; that is, the way in which ongoing communicative interaction sustains and yet, at times, contests existing normative structures.

Here I want to have recourse to a core ontological scene that animates Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative action. It is not, however, the scene that typically comes to mind when one thinks of his work. The expected scene is, of course, the famous (or infamous) 'ideal speech situation', in which actors, motivated only by reason, are arrayed in front of one another and exchange arguments until consensus is reached (Habermas, 1973: 211 263). Less familiar is a scene that is, however, just as basic conceptually as this one. The neglected scene is part of the ontological support structure of perhaps the most fundamental concept in his theory: 'communicative action'. Social life involves ongoing communicative action that is defined as the continual bondedness of actors to one another through an implicit set of always operative validity claims. Action is ongoing and unproblematic when actors at least tacitly accept the particular claims (to truth, rightness and sincerity) that are presupposed in a given sequence of their linguistic interaction (Habermas, 1981: Part I, Chap. 1, and Part III). Sociologists have traditionally pointed out that normal, ongoing social life is reproduced, at least partially, by the binding force of shared norms. What distinguishes Habermas's account of conventional social action is that it does not   as many earlier accounts did yield a picture of the self as a 'social dope' who simply conforms to the roles and rules that are operative in the social context. Crucial to Habermas's concept of social action is the scene of *the self turning upon the other* who has spoken to her *and contesting* some aspect of the underlying claims on the other's part that his speech is sincere, true and normatively legitimate. If the more familiar scene of the ideal speech situation is characterized by the 'yeses' that are elicited from me as I am drawn toward consensus, then this other scene is characterized by the 'noes' that I hurl back at the other and, by

so doing, thereby contest in some way the ongoing normative reproduction of social, economic and political structures (ibid.: 306 308).

   This scene thus displays the self's speech-mediated contestation of the other's attempts to keep that self smoothly enfolded in a given set of normative expectations. With this 'no' I both enact and cite my status as a being with a dignity that demands to be recognized and accorded equal respect. Here we have an ontological scene that can begin to prefigure a normative perspective, on the basis of which we can get some rough distinction between more legitimate and less legitimate modes of political contestation.

## Conclusion

I have argued that late-modern democracy is facing novel and complex challenges that require us to rethink some of our modern ideas about political life. To a theorist like Wolin, such talk of complexity and rethinking is going to be seen as Burkean in the sense of dousing the smouldering tinder of collective democratic will-formation just when we should be trying harder to ignite it. I don't want to peremptorily dismiss such suspicions, but I do want to raise the counter-suspicion that a renewed appeal to the Demos or 'Many' may betray more than a hint of the rhetorical and romantic. If so, then the texture of democratic life today may be better conceived in relation to an ontology of becoming, an ethos of presumptive generosity and agonistic respect, and a determination to persist in the hard work of coalition-building across differences that do not dissolve into the intense commonality for which Wolin longs.

## Notes

1 I borrow this term from Richard Rorty (1983: 583 584). I use it to highlight the fact that reflection upon the issue of a late modern ethos is, in the first instance, a task initiated within a given tradition of political thought; and that the societies in which that tradition unfolds are wealthy and powerful.
2 I would like to thank Jim Lesher and Eleanor Rutledge for their help in clarifying the notion of 'ethos' in classical Greek thought.
3 Heidegger seems to have had something similar in mind when he entitled one of his books, 'Unterwegs zur Sprache' (Heidegger, 1971).
4 I discuss this contrast further in *The Ethos of a Late Modern Citizen*.
5 Identity is cast in quite a different light in Butler's *Precarious Life* (Butler, 2004).
6 As of late 2006, the issue of inequality began to be taken more seriously in national politics. Even President Bush felt the need to criticize the pay level of some CEOs, although he said it should be corrected by corporations themselves rather than, for example, changes in the US tax code.
7 Obviously, what you take as a criterion of real material misery is a matter of debate. One measure might be the number of people in the USA who actually report literally not having enough to eat. That turns out to be about 1 million people out of a population of some 300 million (see Jencks, 2005: 79). Or you might use the percentage of people who fall below the official poverty line in the USA, or who don't have health insurance; the figure for both of these is about 15 percent of the population. My intention is certainly not to argue that the number

of people in these categories is acceptable; rather it is simply to suggest that the idea of a demos composed of the materially disadvantaged    Wolin refers to those who are 'preoccupied with economic survival'    does not constitute a majority of the citizens in a country like the USA today (see Wolin, 2004: 602).

8 I would like to thank Andrew Norris and Nick Kompridis for pushing me to confront this question of collective autonomy. I doubt, however, that either would agree with me that this concept has no legitimate role to play today in democratic theory.

9 Laclau's first survey of these concerns appeared in Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). Laclau not only de legitimizes any ideal of a collective autonomy, he also has the same opinion of any normative concept; that is, it is simply a cover for some group's hegemony. For example, justice is nothing more than a vacant ideal into which the demands of various groups can be projected (see Laclau, 2005: 98 99).

10 Wolin's capitalization.

11 On the representation of the shape of economic inequality as more like a diamond than a pyramid, see Perrucci and Wysong (2003: Chap. 1). Actually, they contend that the appropriate shape is more like a large diamond with a small one perched on top of it. For my purposes, I am only interested in the shape of the bottom of the figure.

12 Besides Derrida and Wolin, others who appeal to the idea of extreme danger or darkness are: Wendy Brown (2005: 1 16; 2006); Romand Coles speaks of 'the dark ages that threaten us all' (2005: xxxvi); Jodi Dean uses the extremity of our situation as basis for saying our political options and enemies are crystal clear (2005; 2007).

13 I don't want to overplay this point about Derrida. Personally, he engaged many political issues, and sometimes let his philosophical insights recommend certain political policies. See, for example, his advocacy of 'cities of refuge' (Derrida, 2001: 3 24).

14 The fact that I am not trying to make a systematic set of arguments against inequality in this context does not preclude such arguments. My intention is to provide some of the basic components from which such arguments could be made.

15 It should be noticed here that the preceding orientation of judgment remains 'passive' in a significant sense. It is essentially a judgment about distributions or outcomes, not about 'active' participation toward the achievement of such effects. Is there anything in my late modern ethos that might dispose a citizen to value more rather than less participation in public life? I would say yes, but the disposition involved is fairly minimal. If dignity is understood in terms of meaning seeking and making, as I have defined them, and we realize that such processes are always incomplete, because of the limits of articulacy, then we have sketched ourselves as creatures on a journey whose goal is always being discovered/created. And this goal will always be partially shared and partially contested by others; agonism and plurality are part of our world. If I understand myself in these terms, there will be a subtle, but perhaps not insignificant, gravitational pull toward more rather than less partici pation in public life. If we think here of a spectrum of types of lives distinguished in terms of the degree to which activity is more or less bound up in the definition of the actor, we might put the Aristotelian individual on one end, and the indivi dual imagined by economists and their allies in political science on the other. Flourishing for the former is dependent upon taking action in public life; flourish ing for the latter can be achieved when an individual is not taking any action at all, because action counts as a 'cost' to be avoided. Human being, as I have sketched it, sits far closer to the Aristotelian figure than to the economically rational one.

16 Wendy Brown both articulates her own idea of an ethos of 'civic love' and expres ses the worry that the recourse to an ethos may be just a manifestation of despair by the political left (2005: 22 23, 35 36; 2007: paragraph 18).

17  We need to renounce the distractions of 'vulgar culturalism', as Antonio Vázquez Arroyo (2004) calls it, and place ourselves firmly on the path of democratic solidarity.
18  The quotation comes from a news conference on November 6, 2001.
19  Dean's rhetorical call to arms, contrasting clear democratic conviction and action in dark times versus indecision and presumptive generosity is borrowed from an editorial in the *The Nation* (June 26, 2006), in which Democrats in Congress were challenged to stop taking the easy road of cheap and safe sniping about the Iraq War, and instead initiate clear actions to end it. I agree with the opinion in this piece, but don't see it as having much relevance for the issue to which Dean wants to apply it (Dean, 2007).
20  Levinas would probably not like my description of his scene of the self and other as an ontological one. For him, it is the original *ethical* scene that we face before any ontological speculation. I see the ethical and ontological as equi primordial; one cannot feel or perceive the other self without both ethical and ontological figures and concepts.

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# 3 Connolly, embodiment, conversion, and mysticism
## Learning to be present in the present

*Thomas L. Dumm*

## Introduction

What does it mean to have a body? This is what might be called an intellectualist question. It is the sort of question critically scrutinized by William Connolly when he investigates the complex interrelationships of sensation, affect, thought, and the movement of our bodies through time and in space. Each of the thinkers who accompany Connolly on this investigation has a distinctive grounding tone that contributes to their varying emphases on psychology, religion, economy, and politics. But they are similar to each other in that they offer complementary ways of configuring embodiment that are attuned to the complexity of our presence in the world; they understand our receptivity, to use Emerson's term, as prior to, and an impetus for, the more abstract claims we make concerning an essence of our existence. They refigure the question of embodiment from asking what it means to 'have' a body to asking how it is that we are embodied, how that embodiment expresses itself in our lives and the lives of others.

Reflection upon our states of embodiment in a way that allows us to evade the trap of Cartesianism   it is through the Cartesian thought experiment that we have become ghostly to ourselves, with our disembodied minds and doubt of our existence    is identified with a tradition of thought that begins with Spinoza, leads to Deleuze, and becomes an explicit task for political theory in the recent work of Connolly. Overcoming ghostliness, learning how to be present in the present    engaged with others while aware of oneself    all of these seemingly minimal instructions for living with each other, require much more of us than many of us seem able to imagine. All of these ethical sanctions have been associated as well with an idea of moral perfectionism developed in the philosophy of Stanley Cavell, most explicitly in his recent book of pedagogical letters, *Cities of Words* (2004). Relying on Emerson, Cavell suggests that moral perfectionism entails the ongoing quest for each of us to overcome our lack of presence in order to advance forward, to attend to our 'unattained but attainable self'. The ethical sanctions urged upon us by Cavell seem to me to inform profoundly Connolly's ethical task as well, for the politics of becoming involves the same need to engage, to be present, to converse with others.

How we are to connect with each other through our embodied selves is among the most urgent tasks for political theory. Tracing the territorializations and deterritorializations of our bodies, recognizing within ourselves the powerful urges to rest, to fuse our desires with the powers that be, resisting the micro-fascism that lies, sometimes dormant, sometimes active, within each one of us, are all parts of that task. But to recognize as well our desires to open ourselves to each other, to blend with others, to engage in the metempsychosis that would allow us to acknowledge our presence in the presence of each other without succumbing to the denial of our selves, these are every bit as important elements of the same task. Both sides of this work involve thinking through the body. So appropriately, Connolly has focused on embodiment as the site of political struggle in his work on political ethics as well as on globalization. It is why he has developed an ethos of pluralization and investigated the power of the Christian-capitalist resonance machine in frustrating democratic exercises of that ethos. The links between our bodies are essential to what he does. In an earlier essay, 'Connolly's Voice' (Dumm, 2008), I explored one element of that linkage. This chapter has more to do with seeing things than listening to voices, but it may be that what I will be trying to do here is see with my eyes shut. This chapter is also about writing, but it seems as though writing involves seeing as well.

## Mystical insight

Connolly has explicitly struggled with the problem of incommensurability throughout his career. It was a puzzle for him in his earliest work on essentially contested concepts, and one might trace all of his contemporary concerns back to his original thoughts concerning the terms of political discourse. But especially, I think, since his work in the mid-1980s, when he began to think with the range of thinkers who continue to accompany his thought today   Foucault, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Deleuze, Spinoza, Bergson, James, and also, and almost as persistently, Kant, Augustine, Taylor, Hegel, Marx   he has opened pathways toward a deepening understanding of the paradoxes and problems associated with the sort of democratic politics he has advocated, through a particular care to know better the linkages of mind/body to its environments. He explores the path, not of a political psychologist, but of what I would call, provisionally, a phenomenologist of the plurality of existence. So these interlocutors are not grist for his mill, but companion minds in the fullest sense, the sense Connolly gives to mind when he describes it as a complex network of relays through bodies and their multifarious sensations, the giving and receiving of affective feelings, the shaping of tonalities of emotion and experience, the re-shifting of thought-feelings as our minds make adjustments and reassessments of the condition of the ethos it helps to enunciate. (Yes, Connolly even appreciates Kant in this regard, noting that Kantian respect is a feeling of imbued thought, and allowing us to realize that its affective power is something that those of us who have

embraced Nietzsche's comment concerning it, as expressed in the second essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals*   'The categorical imperative smells of cruelty' (Nietzsche, [1887] 1994: 45)   need not be totally repulsed by).

I want to focus on a specific bodily experience that Connolly discusses in his book *Pluralism*   namely the experience of what might be called mystical insight   in order to highlight an element of the politics of embodiment that James calls 'conversion'. I want to do this in part because I have been reading more of James of late, and have been struck by the choices of example he seems to make, especially in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, which stretch to the plausible limit the possibilities of thinking religious impulses through the method of radical empiricism, yet at the same time, seem to make his case all the more powerful. I am also interested in thinking about conversion because it seems to me to be an experience that is deeply politicized in our day, and could be understood better than it is. Finally, I find an interesting linkage in the political possibilities of conversion that may shore up an element of the political ethos of pluralism, participating in Connolly's pluralist project by thinking about a way that conversion itself may be thought about in less absolutist terms than it currently is, by focusing on a few passages in Thoreau.[1]

More specifically, I am attracted to a particular passage in *Pluralism* where Connolly addresses the second element of Henri Bergson's ethics. Connolly suggests that Bergson understands obligation to be one source of morality, but that his sense of obligation is different from that developed by Kant. Kantian universal obligation flows from the apodictic recognition of a universal law that we are obligated to obey. That form of morality eventually runs into the problem of straddling the gap between the perfection of the moral law we are obligated to obey and the impossibility of its practical realization. In James's discussion of this problem, posited in his reflections on Bergson in *A Pluralistic Universe*, he invokes the latter's discussion of the problem of Zeno's paradox to illuminate how a particular linear conception of time is at the heart of this tension in Kant's thought. If one challenges the 'must' that underlies Kantian obligation   a powerful 'must' that is actually, in Kant's thought, the objective realization of the universal law   then, from the Kantian perspective, one sinks into a sea of relativism. But what one actually is doing is recognizing the radical empirical reality that, in Connolly's words, 'The affirmation of obligation … is a secondary effect of an ethic of cultivation rather than the primary expression of apodictic recognition' (Connolly, 2005: 116). Bergson, says Connolly, reverses Kant: 'He recognizes a place for obligation but anchors it in social convention, parochial bluntness, and residual instinct rather than in apodictic recognition, universality, and the unconditional' (ibid.: 117).

There are several consequences that flow from Bergson's alternative to Kantianism. First, the ethics of cultivation entails a recognition of the powerful force of the everyday, of habit, of the self-conscious work on the self that needs to be done by all of us in order to root ourselves in constancy, to allow

us simply to be in the realm of ordinary life, without needing finally to resort to the iron rigidity of command morality, that cruel-smelling imperative. The alternative does not abandon us in a sea of relativism, but only appreciates the concretizing power of cultivation in its fullest sense. But there is more than that.

   The second element of Bergsonian morality involves a fresh appreciation of the vagaries of time. Connolly's characterization of the second dimension of Bergsonian ethics is worth quoting at length:

> The second dimension of Bergsonian morality    or ethics, as I will put it    is not wrapped in the experience of command or transcendental obligation. It is, rather, inspirational in character and sensitive to changes of context. *It is thereby capable of becoming responsive to unexpected shifts and turns in the flow of time.* It is inspired above all by prophets, saints, and heroes who take the lead here, inspiring by their energy, care and devotion to others to modify some aspect of the code in force. Buddha, Jesus, Socrates, Epicurus, Thoreau, Nietzsche, Gandhi, and the Dalai Lama, among others, have manifested such energies; often they transmit them by contagion to others. They proceed primarily by attraction and example applied to new circumstances, not by commands attached to eternal laws. 'True mystics simply open their souls to the oncoming wave … That which they have allowed to flow into them is a stream flowing down and seeking through them to reach their fellow-men; the necessity to spread around them what they have received affects them like the onslaught of love. A love which each one of them stamps with his own personality. A love which is in each of them an entirely new emotion, capable of transposing human life into another tone. A love which thus causes each of them to be loved for himself, so that through him, and for him, other men will open their souls to the love of humanity.'
>
> (Connolly, 2005: 118 119; quotation from Bergson, 1977: 99)

Connolly immediately admits the danger that Bergson's words here could be transposed to support exactly the sort of authoritarian and even fascist tendencies that abound in the modern era. But he also sees in this openness of the soul to a transposition in tone, the necessary precondition for any ethical philosophy. He writes:

> Every convincing ethical philosophy makes room *somewhere* for the impetus of what Bergson calls mystical experience, Kant calls the non-sensuous feeling of respect, and Nietzsche calls earthy gratitude for the abundance of being. The differences are very important, but the impetus to ethical action would disappear if you dropped out this aspect, as contemporary neo-Kantians sometimes do out of fear of succumbing to authoritarian drives, or lapsing into an ethic without the guidance

of universal criteria, or caving in to the authority of a religion of the Book.

<div align="right">(Connolly, 2005: 119)</div>

This is a critical moment in Connolly's discourse, for it is on such an appreciation of the sources of the ethical impetus that his version of pluralism ultimately rests. Agonistic respect and critical responsiveness, key elements of Connolly's politics of becoming, are both tied to the formation of this experience. Both 'involve tactical work on that affective register of being which flows into the higher intellect but is not highly amenable to direct regulation by it' (ibid.: 126). In a summary statement concerning the importance of experience that he makes in his interlude in *Pluralism*, Connolly cites James as he pronounces, 'Past and present are to some extent coexisting throughout experience. The only "present" of experience is the "passing moment" in which the dying rearward of time and its dawning future forever mix their lights' (ibid.: 94). When we are attentive to being present in our present, new thought possibilities open up to us. Connolly describes the creative thought involved in his realization of the role of Bergson's appreciation of mystical experience for his own creative thinking concerning the relationship of progressive time to creative evolution. He understands it to be a way through the impasses to which a sole reliance upon the concept of progressive time would bind us.

Put another way, even if we wanted to do so, we could not eliminate the dimension of affective thinking that leads to mystical experience because it expresses an irreducibly essential element of our empirical reality   the ways in which we are able to respond to our varying relationships to time. Out of the expressiveness enabled by mystical experience comes the impetus that is crucial to our ethical existence, for better or worse. Yes, this element of thinking and acting is dangerous, but no more so than an exclusive reliance upon the idea of the objectivity of the categorical imperative, which is, alone, a dead letter. Instead of repudiating this experience we must learn how to express and modulate it: 'It is in the dissonant conjunction between new swerves in time and the ethical uncertainty they engender that it becomes imperative to 'transpose human life into another tone' (ibid.: 120).

The swerve in time that removes us from the secular clockwork of modernity and plunges us more deeply into being present in our present   into the exploration of our deep inner selves as they come to express their becoming in the outer world   is what may encourage mystical experience. Such experience does not depend upon a belief or a faith   it is only an intensification of awareness of one dimension of time, that which is called the eternal by religious thinkers, but which is the duration of the present, a lingering moment of constancy. Such experience is often associated with trauma, or other serious disappointments in life, that may come about from external or internal crises. They are often associated with conversion. Indeed, what might be termed the secularization of the conversion narrative is what is involved in

Emersonian perfectionism. What must be emphasized is that this experience is variously available to all of us, call it what we will.

## The secular mystic

Connolly convinces me. No surprise there. And it should not be a surprise either, for those who are acquainted with anything I have written, that I find his writing to be in a deep companionship with some of the thinkers I admire most, among them, Emerson and Thoreau. Because Connolly lists Thoreau as a prophet, saint, hero the only American on his list, interestingly enough I want to describe how Thoreau engages in a mysticism that contributes in its own way to a politics of becoming. To do so I enlist Cavell's reading of Thoreau's mysticism of the present as he calls it, from *The Senses of Walden* (Cavell, 1992).

Cavell draws us to this famous passage in the first chapter of *Walden*:

> In any weather, at any hour of the day or night, I have been anxious to improve the nick of time, and notch it on my stick too; to stand on the meeting of two eternities, the past and the future, which is precisely the present moment; to toe that line.
>
> (I, 23, 9)[2]

The affinities here with the understanding of the mystical experience in Connolly, Bergson, and James become clear once one realizes that the experience that Thoreau is discussing involves both the blending of past and future into the present and, paradoxically, the recording of it: the conscious intensification of the experience of time as flow ('Time is but the stream I go a fishin' in' (II, 24)); the idea of being absolutely present in the present as a way of improving on time as close to the idea of being truly awake ('Morning is when I am awake and there is dawn in me' (II, 14)); and understanding his time at Walden as an experiment in being present in his present ('The present was my next experiment of this kind, which I propose to describe at more length' (II, 7)). All of these passages contribute to the attention we are to pay to the writing that is the bulk of the pages written. The stick he is referring to is his stylus.

For Cavell, this is Thoreau's honest admission of his mysticism of the present, and expresses a mood that combines absolute hope with absolute defeat. But it is also Thoreau's *expression* of that mysticism, or what we might call his adding to it by the very writing of it, the improvement of the nick of time by notching it on his stick. That writing is what moves him forward in his experiment. How is this? Cavell emphasizes the fact that Thoreau is a writer that he understands that his mysticism is that of someone who deeply understands the ontological condition of words. In his chapter on 'Sounds', Thoreau writes, 'Much is published, but little printed' (IV, 1). Cavell suggests that:

> [This remark] describes the ontological condition of words; the occurrence of a word is the occurrence of an object whose placement always has a point, and whose point always lies before and beyond it: 'The volatile truth of our words should continually betray the inadequacy of the residual statement. Their truth is instantly translated; its literal monument alone remains.'
>
> (XVIII, 6; Cavell, 1992: 27)

The placement of a word in a sentence is the representation of the presence of the present in writing. It is itself the compression of time. It is no accident that Thoreau compresses two years into one in his writing, or that he astonishingly says at the conclusion of his penultimate chapter, 'Spring', 'Thus was my first year's life in the woods completed; and the second was similar to it'. But it is more than that   Thoreau's politics of becoming is engendered in his very commitment to his writing. How is that?

Cavell suggests the following:

> In *Walden*, reading is not merely the other side of writing, its eventual fate; it is another metaphor of writing itself. The writer cannot invent words as 'perpetual suggestions and provocations'; the written word is already 'the choicest of relics' (III, 3, 5). His calling depends upon his acceptance of this fact about words, his letting them come to him from their own region, and then taking that occasion for inflecting them one way instead of another then and there; as one may inflect the earth toward beans instead of grass, or let it alone, as it is before you are there.
>
> (ibid.: 28)

In other words, the work of the writer when he or she is raised to the appropriate level of awareness of what he or she is doing with words is the work of the pluralist advocate of a politics of becoming. There is a receptivity, an awareness of the linkage of words to sentences, of the multiple registers with which we may receive and transmit meaning through the vehicle of our writing. For it is also the case that writing is a labor of the hands: 'Writing, at its best, will come to a finish in each mark of meaning, in each portion and sentence and word. That is why in reading it 'we must laboriously seek the meaning of every word and line; conjecturing in a larger sense (III, 3)' (ibid.: 27 28). Cavell, among several others, asks us to recall that the labor of writing is a handicraft, and connects that idea to the idea of Heidegger's that thinking is a handicraft.

In 'Connolly's Voice', I draw upon the work of Jane Bennett and Gilles Deleuze to emphasize the de-territorializing and re-territorializing elements at play in this labor of the hand and its relationship to speaking and singing (Dumm, 2008). Connolly's work lends itself to such an interpretation because of its substantive focus on the reading of a film through its affective impact on his insight. In *Pluralism*, he shows the recapitulating effects of repeated

viewings of *Five Easy Pieces* some twenty years apart in time. He describes in poetic detail a time bend, a fold of one experience into another, conveyed by a recall of the earlier viewing of the film, its social context, and its embedded character in personal remembrance. This is a labor of writing through which his voice emerges.

If the labor of writing is to be the other side of reading, then it behooves us to think further about our reading as a conjecture, to imagine what it means to be present as a reader as well as a writer in this larger sense. To conjecture is to reach a judgment on the basis of inconclusive or incomplete information. This would seem in keeping with James's suggestions about 'litter', about our always being in the middle of what we are doing. Such a radical empiricist claim concerning the shaping of our moments may help us to understand why our conjecturing is inevitable. In a larger sense it may open us up to the paradox of judgment in a more general and hopefully productive and active way, as we come to realize that in the realm of words, as we communicate them to each other, we are rendering judgments inconclusively.

This is what Connolly's prose accomplishes, in its juxtaposition of theoretical point, detailed description of scene and time, and confession of personal affect. By keeping these various streams of thought in communication with each other, he allows his readers to emerge with their own insights into the meaning of his experiences for them. This is what I believe a conjectural writing allows: a conjectural reading, one open to the possibilities of shifting sensibilities, background moving to foreground, discoveries of hidden desires and aversions that would otherwise remain buried.

With this idea of conjectural reading in mind, let us return to Connolly's observations concerning creative thinking. For it is there that conjecture becomes more than an activity for him, but instead becomes a deeply self-conscious technique for reaching to that state of mind I have been calling mysticism. He writes:

> Suppose that the experience of ethics you have imbibed to this point is tied to a progressive image of time that both enables and fetters it … You sense diffusely that something is amiss, but you do not have a well-defined sense of the issue. Nonetheless, vague, affectively imbued thoughts somehow associated with it well up from time to time. Until one day, as if from nowhere, you are flooded with a protean feeling that an under-noted dimension of your own experience of time holds a key to help you rethink ethical life. Such a thought, bubbling to the surface with intense energy, resonates with the Bergsonian idea of mystical experience, while not necessarily being fettered to the idea of a limited divinity in which Bergson invests it. After that experience, there is a lot of work to do.
> (Connolly, 2005: 119 120)

A lot of work to do indeed. Of course, one thing Connolly must do is write out those thoughts into words and sentences, engage in the laborious process

of representing those thoughts, projecting them for the conjecture of the readers, conjecturing himself as he translates his thought/feelings into words, that is reading what he writes, and then rewriting. All writing, in this sense, is rewriting, in both an immediate and much larger sense. Emerson once wrote that we live in the lap of a vast intelligence. Some have interpreted this passage to be his religiosity at work, but it is every bit as plausible to understand this as his invocation of language itself. Every mark we make on paper calls us back to the words that have already formed our writing before it began. Eventually, every serious writer comes to realize that the storehouse of language is both finite and infinite, that our infinite writing entail the finitude of the final rewrite. To keep open the possibility that the final rewrite will lead back to its other side, the first reading, and the re-reading, which will in turn lead us back to writing anew   this is our brush with immortality, or better, the suspension of time that allows us to see with ancient eyes what lies before us in the indefinite future.

The idea of the labor of writing is fully consistent with the deliberateness of the conjectural leap Thoreau insists upon. And in the writing of this passage, Connolly is choosing his words as carefully as he can, knowing that they will exceed his grasp as soon as they are launched into the world. But there is yet another work that he is doing in this particular passage. Here he is actually writing the conditions of possibility of his own ethos of pluralization. That is, in this passage Connolly is writing about the experience of going through the affective thought of creative, mystical, past-present time, and re-enacting that experience as a passage of writing. The proof of the validity of Connolly's understanding of the ethical experience that he describes here thus becomes the very description of it that he makes at this point in his chapter on pluralism and time. It is this description that lays claim to our understanding, to the powers of the words he uses. This is no sleight of hand, but then again, it is because the labor of the hand has to do with a slip of the lip, and the terms of political discourse, one of his oldest concerns, once again shift before our eyes. (Jane Bennett might call this an example of enchantment.)

Think of this for a while, notice how the choice of words matters, how the vocabulary   not a jargon, but an *introjection* of conjecture through carefully chosen words, sentences and portions, has framed the body of his writing. Let me throw out a few of his terms of political discourse: essentially contested concepts, ambiguity, identity/difference, critical responsiveness, agonistic respect, Christian-capitalist resonance machine, non-theistic reverence for being, a politics of becoming. All of these terms of political discourse can make many who have been trained in the discipline of political theory uneasy, which is precisely the point of his use of them. Their unease is understandable. To admit no resolution of the grounding of their claims for justice in timeless principles, to throw them into duration and finitude, to suggest that no matter how many times they repeat the Kantian injunction, that a wind is blowing that will move them ever further away from the practical realization of their highest aspirations, is bound to create unease.

If we read Connolly as carefully as, for instance, he reads Leo Strauss, perhaps we can better appreciate the uneasiness he inspires, how, like one of his predecessors, Emerson, he writes to unsettle things, an experimenter (though he would not say, with no past at his back). Sharing this uneasiness, making it a condition for the pursuit of the deep pluralism he so vividly writes, is one of Connolly's most important lessons to us. He parallels the lessons of Emerson in yet one other way. Cavell, in the essay 'Finding as Founding: Taking Steps in Emerson's "Experience"' (Cavell, 1987) is at pains to show how Emerson is always reaching toward new openings replacing the clenched hand with the open hand, looking to new horizons that will never be reached his new yet unapproachable America he has found in the West realizing that the role of the thinker is to encourage us in our becoming, always aware of the grief that informs our joy. Connolly is an inheritor of this legacy, aware of both the pains and the pleasures of writing our experience, concerned that the powers that operate in our world not constrict the imagination but be reshaped to encourage it, polemically saying, 'Why not appreciate our existence?'

Yet at the same time, Connolly is acutely aware of the political costs of the way of life we have chosen as denizens of the modern world. We are embodied beings, but we had better never get too comfortable with that. Nor should we be too comfortable either to embrace or repulse the idea that such an experience of being present in our present will sometimes take the form of a mysticism. I once borrowed a question from Connolly for a work of my own that introduces the problems I tried to address in *A Politics of the Ordinary*: 'Is there an unknown that may remain unknown?' (Dumm, 1999: 2). There I was interested in the possibility of a turn to the ordinary as a way of overcoming the two forces of normalization and epic history, or what I then termed 'the eventful'. It is this inexhaustibility that we may refer to when thinking about Connolly's list of saints and heroes. They are the ones who return from their travels into the inner oceans of self and rescue us, or at least give us the courage to continue. To the extent that he engages in the same task, Connolly becomes a hero of another sort, enabling us to push things forward a little bit, with modesty concerning the possibilities of our forward movement, to be sure, but nonetheless. It is a different register of heroism, not that of the epic theorist, but of the patient pluralist, urging us on.

## Notes

1 I want to acknowledge that to suggest that an insight may be 'mystical' is contro versial. Part of the controversy concerns the relationship of elements of the experi ence that constitutes a mystical revelation with the idea of religious belief or faith. Connolly himself is uneasy with the term, and has suggested that the experience of the seer or prophet, as opposed to that of the mystic, may be more appropriate. Some would say, in fact, that any labeling of experience as mystical by definition makes it religious. Here I wish to let the term hang in the air, so to speak, at least until it is more possible to ascertain the sort of experience I am thinking of when I use the term.

2 I follow Cavell's notation of *Walden* here. He cites chapter and paragraph of the text in order to allow readers of all editions to find the relevant quotations.

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# 4   Bill Connolly's others
## Erotics and cinematics

### *Michael J. Shapiro*

### Prelude: the demands and complexities of identity

The cartoonist Berkeley Breathed agrees with Bill Connolly's observations on the pressures and ambiguities afflicting identity politics, especially Connolly's recognition of the struggles between officially certified identities and the individual's attempts at self-fashioning. In one of his strips, Breathed's penguin, Opus, reports to the 'U.S. Dept. of Groups' to respond to a summons requiring him to change his 'official hue'. When asked about his preferred new color he tries 'mostly black … plus white and peach trim', to which the clerk responds, 'I need a govt-sanctioned pigment.' After several trials and errors, during which Opus is informed that 'it's all about color now', he and the clerk agree that his new designation will be 'Dude of Color', which the clerk affirms is 'both officially and socially legitimate'.

The ironic stance in Breathed's strip is echoed in much of Connolly's corpus, where he strives to oppose a micropolitics to state-engendered political forms, to undo, as Jacques Rancière (2006: 65) puts it 'the formatting of reality produced by state controlled media'. In what follows, I draw inspiration from Connolly's many excursions into the vagaries and political struggles involving identity\difference in general and in particular his appreciation of the contribution of Milan Kundera's fiction to think those vagaries and struggles. And ultimately, I treat mobile philosophical and ethical frames    a mobility that for Connolly is cinematically and erotically animated    to engage the implications he derives from his analyses.

### Erotics and cinematics

The erotics of Connolly's work becomes evident if we appreciate, along with Roland Barthes, that 'eroticism in its broadest sense' refers not simply to pleasure but to 'sociality', to 'encounter[s] with the other … where social activities … erotic activities in the broadest sense … are experienced' (Barthes, 1993: 417). In keeping with Connolly's focus on the exchanges between identities and territories (see especially his analysis of boundaries in Connolly, 1995), Barthes deploys his approach to erotics on spaces, which in

his case are urban sites of encounter   railway stations, department stores, and so on. Similarly, erotics, for Connolly, whose focus is on states and sovereignty problematics rather than cities, self-other engagements are inflected by the spaces of encounter. For example, he challenges the homogeneous model of nineteenth-century social space with attention to a reported encounter between Thoreau and his Indian guide, Joe Polis on a canoeing trip. The encounter, he notes, takes place 'on the edges of "American" cultural space' (ibid.: 175). Connolly then imagines 'the contingencies of chance and timing [that] had spawned an encounter between Thoreau and a Mashpee' and proceeds to stage an encounter on another part of that edge, one between Thoreau and one of his contemporaries, the Mashpee, Pequot political philosopher William Apess (ibid.: 177). Given his reflections on time and contingency, influenced in part by Deleuzian philosophy, it is not surprising that in his later work, Connolly turned frequently to cinema as an object of analysis, while his writing became increasingly cinematic.

What does it mean for an approach to be cinematic? In a gloss on the film-philosophy writings of Deleuze, Rancière has noted that cinema achieves what vision obscures by undoing the 'ordinary work of the human brain'. It 'puts perception back in things because its operation is one of restitution' of the reality that the brain has 'confiscated', in part because cinema disrupts the human tendency to place oneself at 'the center of the universe of images' (Rancière, 2006a: 111). Space and positionality are crucial aspects of Deleuze's contribution to the analysis of cinema's critical capacity because cinema de-privileges the directionality of centered commanding perception; it allows the disorganized multiplicity that is the world to emerge: 'Instead of going from the acentered state of things to centered perception, [we] could go back up towards the acentered state of things and get closer to it' (Deleuze, 1992: 58, 86). The movement that characterizes cinema, from one 'state of things' to another constitutes its use of time images, which wrests control from the perspectives of a film's characters to show the ways in which they inhabit a world of becoming. Connolly endorses such a notion of the world, which he sees as also affirmed in the thinking of Friedrich Nietzsche and William James, and goes on to articulate that notion with a commitment to 'deep pluralism'. Such a pluralism, he suggests, presents itself in moments when one appreciates a belonging to a radically contingent mode of time (Connolly, 2005: 168). I engage the democratic ethos that Connolly derives from such commitments in my conclusion. However, to set a stage for that (affirming) engagement, I want to pursue the epistemic and political significance of recovering Deleuze's reference to the 'acentered state of things' by turning to Thomas Mann, who provides a similar insight in his epic tetralogy, *Joseph and His Brothers*, a set of novels whose style is strikingly cinematic while, at the same time, according well with Connolly's emphasis on the proto-democratic importance of attenuating 'the self-certainty of your own judgment' (Connolly, 2005).

Mann's third book, *Joseph in Egypt*, begins with Joseph's remark, 'Where are you taking me?' to a group of nomadic Ma'onites, who have pulled him

from the pit, where his brothers had left him to die. After deflecting this and subsequent queries with which Joseph expresses the presumption that the Ma'onites are part of *his* story, Kedema, whose father is the group's patriarch, says, 'You have a way of putting yourself in the middle of things,' and goes on to disabuse him of his privileged location: 'Do you suppose … that we are a journeying simply so that you may arrive somewhere your god wants you to be?' (Mann, 2005: 541). Like Kedema, who contests Joseph's centered perspective on his spatio-temporal location, cinema is a decentering mode of creation and reception.

Those who have recognized cinema's decentering effects are in debt to Henri Bergson's philosophy of embodiment. Bergson saw the body as a center of perception, but crucially, the Bergsonian centered body is a 'center of indetermination' in that its perceptions are always partial. To perceive is to subtract in order to come up with a sense of the world, selected from all possible senses (Bergson, 1954). Inasmuch as each body, as a center of indetermination, selects an aggregate of images from the totality of the world's images, the question for Bergson becomes:

> How is it that the same images can belong at the same time to two different systems [for example Joseph's and Kedema's]: one in which each image varies for itself and in a well defined measure that it is patient of the real action of surrounding images; and another in which all images change for a single image [for Bergson each *body* is a single image] and in varying measure that they reflect the eventual action of this privileged image?
>
> (Bergson, 1988: 25)

As is well known, Bergson's answer is that each single image or body subtracts in its own interest-based way, its way of isolating some aspects of the aggregate of images rather than others. Hence the Joseph Kedema interchange is quintessentially Bergsonian.

The brain, for Bergson, is a particularizing and evacuating mechanism. Edified by Bergson's insights on perception, Deleuze offers a *cinematic* body as a center of indetermination by noting how a film's cuts and juxtapositions generate perspectives that depart from the control exercised by individual embodiment. Subjective perception is not cinema's primary model for Deleuze, who insists that 'cinema does *not* have natural subjective perception as its model … because the mobility of its centers and the variability of its framings always lead it to restore vast acentered and deframed zones' (Deleuze, 1992: 64). For Deleuze, as for Bergson, perception is a moment of arrest; it is an interval that sits suspended between a sensation and an action. That the interval is a matter of 'indetermination' reflects the multiple possibilities for response as the subject oscillates, 'going backwards between the plane of action and that of pure memory' (Bergson, 1988: 161). And cinema, inasmuch as it lacks a stable center (contrary to mind-based models of

meaning production such as phenomenology, which privileges 'natural perception') has an 'advantage' according to Deleuze, 'just because it lacks a center of anchorage and of horizon, the sections which it makes would not prevent it from going back up the path that natural perception comes down' (Deleuze, 1992: 58). It is a superior screen to the brain-as-screen because it allows for a recovery of what perception evacuates. Like Deleuze, Connolly favors a Bergson-inspired approach to cinema because it is a technology that helps one to think the kind of multiplicity that eludes the partialities of individual perception.

## Connolly's Bergsonian turn

*Neuropolitics* is one among several of Connolly's texts in which he turns to cinema, specifically at the outset to Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* in order to reflect on Bergson's insights about the partialities of perception. Showing the ways in which the film enacts Bergsonian perspectivalism, Connolly concludes that Welles is Bergsonian inasmuch as his film provides a model for 'a layered conception of memory, perception, thinking and culture'. Moreover, the Bergsonian Welles provides an initiating inspiration to inter-articulate such a layered conception with the issue of what it means to think the version of political pluralism that has been Connolly's ongoing intellectual signature. Connolly engages a wealth of examples from the discourses of political theory and religion and from a wide variety of cultural texts throughout his corpus. It is not surprising therefore that he turns increasingly to film because as his work developed, he was always already cinematically attuned; there has been a remarkable comportment between his style — a 'literary montage' of cuts and juxtapositions — and cinema. For example, in the space of two pages of his *Pluralism*, Connolly cuts (or perhaps stages cinematic fades) from religious discourse, to Nietzschean philosophy, to a treatment of the form of Mike Figgis' film *Time Code* (Connolly, 2005: 106 107). Cinema also articulates well with Connolly's mode of theorizing because, as I noted already, as one who embraces contingency, he has recognized the ways in which cinematic circumspection promotes it. As Mary Ann Doane notes in her excellent treatment of the emergence of cinematic time, 'montage functions' in both the literary form that occurs in Benjamin's prose and in cinema (whose effects Benjamin saw as politically ambivalent) to foreground contingency (Doane, 2002: 15). And, as she goes on to point out, the conditions of possibility for the cinema(-)contingency relationship emerge from 'epistemologies of indeterminism [and] contingency', which are of course central to Connolly's approach.

However, to appreciate what is perhaps best characterized as Connolly's ethos of form, which combines an embrace of contingency, an erotics of self other (respectful and agonistic) engagement, and a cinematic style of cuts and juxtapositions to enact his thinking, we need to appreciate as well the initial impetus to the political imaginary he has been honing for some time,

especially since his 1991 examination of the ambiguous achievement of identity in his *Identity/Difference*. This text provides a prelude to many of the themes developed in his recent treatise on pluralism. There Connolly explores a radical alternative to traditional identity politics, an alternative in which 'people strive to interrogate exclusions built into their own entrenched identities' (Connolly, 1991: 15). Appreciating Connolly's radical treatment of the ambiguous political implications and achievements of identity and his appreciation of Milan Kundera's compatible (Nietzschean) sensibilities in his novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, from which Connolly draws implications for his meditations on the 'paradox of freedom in a condition marked by structural binds and personal contingency' (ibid.: 26), I turn to another Kundera novel, *Ignorance*, to work through a way of appreciating and engaging Connolly's ethico-political sensibilities.

## Kundera's *Ignorance*

In his *Atlas of the European Novel*, Franco Moretti analyzes the participation of the literary geography of the nineteenth-century novel in the dynamic of nation-state consolidation. Sir Walter Scott's historical novels are exemplary in this respect because their mobile geography, inscribed by the movements and interactions of characters, effaces anthropological, ontological, and axiological borders. The role of film in the twentieth century was similar. Although feature films occasionally challenged the myths that sustain the coherence of the modern nation-state throughout that century, for the most part their role was not unlike much of nineteenth-century literature; they aided and abetted the cultural articulation of the nation building and sustaining projects of states. However, increasingly, as the twenty-first century progresses, literature and film are playing a more critical role. Resisting the codes of national affiliation, they have been registering and affirming postnational forms of both malaise and commitment.

   Moretti's analysis of the nineteenth-century novel features two aspects of literary geography. The first is a matter of mere size. He notes how Jane Austen's sentimental novels reflect a 'small England', which is smaller than what is now known as the United Kingdom. The space of Austen's story coincides with a 'national marriage market'. Featuring 'scandals, slanders, seducers, elopements    disgrace', the novels' actions are spatially induced because, as Moretti writes, 'the marriage market (like every other market) has produced its own brand of swindlers: shady relatives, social climbers, speculators, seducers, declasse aristocrats … ' (Moretti, 1988: 18). 'Reflect' is the appropriate textual imagery to treat the space-narrative relationship, because as Moretti rightly insists, 'Space is not "outside" of narrative … but an internal force that shapes it from within … in modern European novels, *what* happens depends a lot on *where* it happens' (ibid.: 70). The second spatial concept that Moretti employs is 'distance', which derives its sense from the rationales for the movements of characters. But distance is not a mere

geographical issue. It has emotional depth and therefore takes on its meaning from the sensibilities projected on it. Thus, for example, Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* provokes a smile in Elizabeth when he shows up at Longbourn because he has come fairly far to see her.

When Moretti turns to the historical novel, 'the most successful form of the century', he discerns forces pulling in the opposite direction of those operating on the sentimental novel. The historical novel features a story that is 'running away from the national capital' (ibid.: 33). Offering what Moretti refers to as 'a veritable phenomenology of the border' (ibid.: 35) the European historical novel, is one in which the narrative is generated by 'external frontiers' (ibid.: 37). However, there are also internal borders, which in the case of Sir Walter Scott's novels, are anthropological. Moretti refers to those internal, anthropological borders as the 'on/off switch of the historical novel' (ibid.: 38). They are needed to 'represent internal unevenness' in a narrative whose main impetus is to erase those internal borders on behalf of a dynamic of national consolidation' (ibid.: 40). We can thus appreciate the difference in literary tropes as a difference summoned by the alternative geographies of the sentimental versus historical novel. Austen's core and Scott's borders represent different dynamics    the emotional and financial fortunes of aristocratic families in the former, nation building in the latter. As Moretti concludes, 'The novel didn't simply find the nation as an obvious, pre-formed fictional space. It had to wrest it from other geographical matrices that were just as capable of generating narrative' (ibid.: 53), for example, supra-national spaces such as those treated in *contes philosophiques* (ibid.: 55).

Since the period treated in Moretti's analysis, in which the novel played into the centripetal forces involved in national consolidation, novels have begun to reflect diverse centrifugal forces that pull against the earlier, centralizing dynamic. Certainly, as Bakhtin demonstrates, the novel has always privileged centrifugal forces. If one heeds voices rather than borders, we witness, in Bakhtin's terms, many contending voices that pull against the verbal-ideological center of the nation (Bakhtin, 1981). Moreover, in the case of the United Kingdom, the erasure of internal borders has been subject to continuous contention. Thus, for example, in Roddy Doyle's contemporary novel *A Star Called Henry* (Doyle, 1999), the main character, Henry, a member of the Irish Citizen Army and involved in the revolution that led to Ireland's independence, expresses profound ambivalence toward the national independence and consolidation that he is helping to effect. One of his co-revolutionaries, Jack, is an architect (both actual and symbolic), who is very much committed to consolidating the identity/difference that will distinguish the new Ireland. He states that he will only be able to design houses 'fit for people … when the last Englishman was on the boat or in a box' and adds that 'we'll have no use for granite … It's the stone of the empire builder'. In response, Henry reminds him that the granite comes from Irish soil, Wicklow. Jack then exclaims that Wicklow is an area of 'traitors and Protestants who've made our country's history such a misery'. On reflection, Henry, who keeps an

ironic distance from the war and who, accordingly, maps Ireland differently from those committed to singular national allegiances, thinks:

> It struck me even then, although I didn't think much about it at the time, that his Ireland was a very small place. Vast chunks of it didn't fit his bill; he had grudges stored up against the inhabitants of most of the counties. His republic was going to be a few blameless pockets, connected to the capital by vast bridges of his own design.
>
> (Doyle, 1999: 191)

Doyle's novel is one among many that complicate the political geography to which they are addressed by exposing centrifugal and contending emotional and ideational forces. However centralizing the literary geography of the nineteenth-century historical novel might have been, the literary geographies of novels since then have been inter-articulated with a variety of geopolitical dynamics that challenge simple 'nation-building' scenarios. They often articulate geographies that map the disintegrating forces    political, cultural and economic    that afflict national societies. Not surprisingly, given the fraught post-revolution dynamics in Ireland, Doyle's Henry character becomes an exile in a sequel and goes on to help map aspects of a complicated U.S. political geography in the early twentieth century that involves relationships among political, artistic and criminal sub-cultures, all pulling in different directions (Doyle, 2005).

   Nevertheless, despite its over-emphasis on the dynamics of consolidation, Moretti's approach to the novel, which focuses on the spaces that are created by following the action of characters throughout the narrative, is adaptable to many aspects of the geopolitical present. In what follows, I treat one of Milan Kundera's global mappings of the spaces that extend from the former Czechoslovakia to various European countries where Czech exiles reside. The novel provides a perspective on the fate of the geopolitical allegiances and structures of intimacy that followed the breakup of the Eastern bloc and the consequent advent of Czech independence. While Sir Walter Scott, among others, was writing/thinking during a period of European national consolidation, many contemporary novelists are dealing with characters whose interactions map the geographies of national deconstruction in a post-cold war world. In this respect, Milan Kundera's (2002) novel *Ignorance* is exemplary.

   *Ignorance* begins with an alienating remark delivered to Irena, a Czech expatriot living in Paris, by her friend Sylvie: 'What are you still doing here?' When Irena asks in response, 'Where should I be?' Sylvie's rejoinder is 'home.' It is 1991, and Sylvie has the expectation that Irena, despite having lived in Paris for twenty years, still thinks of Czechoslovakia as home and will want to return to participate as a citizen in the new independence, after the dissolution of the Soviet bloc (Kundera, 2002: 3). The intermittently contentious dialogue continues briefly until Irena breaks off into a book- and film-influenced fantasy about emotional returns. Irena's silent meditation

about emotional returns triggers Kundera's break from his characters to a richly annotated philosophical discussion of nostalgia, with references to a range of fictional and actual émigrés who either returned or resisted returning (for example, Odysseus who returned to Ithaca and Schoenberg who did not return to Austria). Apart from the specifics of the particular fictional and historical characters he treats, is the kind of global cartography Kundera constructs. The novel provides a mapping not only of the post-Soviet geo-political world but also of the inter-articulation of geopolitics and passion. To assess the thinking that the mapping enacts, we are in need of a philosophical perspective that can address the overlay of passion on political territoriality that frames Kundera's narrative.

Many of Kundera's philosophico-literary excursions in his novels are Nietzsche-inspired, most famously his *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, which shares Nietzsche's sentiment that the possibility of an eternal return renders Being heavy. The thought of an eternal return gives 'to acts and events the moral import they would lack in a godless universe wherein every act or event occurred only once' (White, 1990: 6). Ever since that novel, Kundera has pondered the problem of moral and emotional weight as he has connected Nietzsche's version of a mythological return with the problem of the émigré's actual or potential return. Because, for Kundera, emotional and moral registers are intimately connected, it is not surprising that toward the end of his meditation on nostalgia in *Ignorance*, he refers to the way Homer sets out a 'moral hierarchy of emotions', which provides the basis for Odysseus's abandonment of Calypso, whose 'tears' are represented as less worthy than 'Penelope's pain' (Kundera, 2002: 9).

From Kundera's Nietzschean perspective, moral hierarchies are oppressive. Hence we are able to understand the demoralized Odysseus, who suffers from the terrible bargain he has made by giving up an intense passion for the weaker emotion of nostalgia and the self-applied pressure from his expected responsibilities as a husband and patriarch. He has become the forlorn Odysseus (the Ulysses) so well described in Tennyson's famous poem (1842), the Ulysses who laments: 'Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole Unequal laws unto a savage race, That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.' Most significantly, for what Kundera sees Odysseus's travail lending to his story of contemporary émigrés and returnees, Odysseus discovers that while 'for twenty years he thought about nothing but his return … the very essence of his life, its center, its treasure, lay outside Ithaca', and further, while he had enjoyed a receptive audience while in exile (for example, 'the dazzled Phaeacians' who listened to his adventures 'for four long books'), in Ithaca, 'he was one of their own, so it never occurred to anyone to say, "tell us"' (Kundera, 2002: 34 35). Similarly, when Irena returns to Prague, her old acquaintances evince little interest in her twenty years of life outside Prague. It was one thing for her former friends to ignore the French wine she brought and instead persist in drinking beer but quite another to ignore her words: 'They can drink beer if they insist, that doesn't faze her; what matters to her

is choosing the topic of conversation herself and being heard' (ibid.: 37). Inasmuch as the identity of an individual, like the collective identity of a nation, requires recognition, the inattentiveness of her Prague acquaintances to Irena's Paris life deprives her of confidence in the identity narrative, the mode of becoming, she has adopted.

On the other side of the self(-)other relationship to identity, what the women's disinterest in Irena's other life reflects is their unwillingness to extend sympathy across national boundaries. When we consider the identity issue at stake in Irena's encounter with her former acquaintances, we have to appreciate the politics of the history(-)memory disjuncture that Kundera is addressing through the fates of his characters. 'History', as Pierre Nora points out, is produced by the way 'our hopelessly forgetful modern societies, pro-pelled by change, organize their past' (Nora, 1989: 8). In the process of that organizing, memory tends to be eradicated: 'Memory and history, far from being synonymous appear now to be in fundamental opposition.' While memory is 'a perpetually active phenomenon' reflective of the sense-making of people coping with their life worlds, 'history is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer' (ibid.: 8). Nora's distinction is effectively enacted in Kundera's narrative of the experience of *Ignorance*'s émigrés. While others try to impose a geopolitical allegiance on them, pre-dicated on the way the former compatriots want to organize history, the émigrés try to maintain an intimacy with their memories, their lived tempor-alities. To the extent that the novel lends its characters an ethico-political outcome, it is the achievement of a refusal to give in to the identities resident in an imposed history, which are thrown at them by their non-listening families, friends and acquaintances. Hence, applying Nora's distinction to the historical moment of Kundera's novel, 'history' imposes allegiance, while memory, the 'perpetually active phenomenon' that ties people to an 'eternal present' is the condition of possibility for intimacy (ibid.). To put it another way (in the language of Deleuze and Guattari), 'history' involves the imposi-tion of officially inscribed molar codes, the collective identity spaces tied to the macropolitical world of states, while memory is what contains the mole-cular level, the multiple layers of individual micropolitical potential for becoming, experiencing and associating (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987).

To be allied to the codes associated with 'history', which are the geopoliti-cally-oriented temporalities that Irena's friends and husband impose on her, Irena must ignore her 'life'. As Deleuze puts it, 'the sensuous signs of memory are signs of life' (Deleuze, 2000: 65). In accord with such a sentiment, Con-nolly asserts that a democratic pluralism requires a commitment to life's 'vitality' (Connolly, 2005: 169). Thus when Irena sees Josef in Prague, whom she recalls from a brief romantic liaison, her memory of a sensuous past is activated, and, crucially, she is encouraged to think. As Deleuze notes, for Proust, 'truth depends on an encounter with something that forces us to think'. And here, that thinking helps Irena to distance herself from the expectations of others and allow intimacy (with herself as well as with an

other) to trump geopolitical allegiance. Intimacy challenges what Berlant refers to as 'the normative practices, fantasies, institutions and ideologies that organize people's worlds' (Berlant, 2000: 2).

Irena's experience of a return is similar to that of the man she encounters romantically in Prague. Josef is an émigré living in Denmark, whose wife, subsequently deceased, had urged him to visit his old homeland, once the Soviets had departed: 'Not going would be unnatural of you, unjustifiable, even foul,' she said (Kundera, 2002: 139). When Josef visits his former friend N in Prague, whom he had not seen for 20 years, N and his wife ask nothing about his Danish life:

> There was a long silence and Josef expected questions: If Denmark really is your home, what's your life like there? And with whom? Tell about it! Tell us! Describe your house! Who's your wife? Are you happy? Tell us! Tell us! But neither N nor his wife asked any such question.
>
> (ibid.: 159)

Before following Irena and Josef, who meet and have an affair during their brief return, we need to appreciate Kundera's approach to the politics of the identity struggle they undergo. Kundera's attachment to Nietzschean philosophy notwithstanding, I want to pursue the position that his *Ignorance* is best given philosophical and political weight with reference to David Hume's rather than Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical inquiries into the passions. While his *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* thinks in a Nietzschean way, Kundera's *Ignorance* thinks in a Humean way. The overlay of passions on the novel's literary geography complicates mappings that focus exclusively on national allegiances and summons the Humean argument that passions direct ideas. To capture the kind of network that Kundera's novel proposes, we can extrapolate from an insight that Deleuze derives from his reading of Hume on human nature. In contrast with much of the political theory canon (often drawn, for example, from the writings of John Locke) in which the social bond within the socio-political order is ascribed to a contract between ruler and the ruled, Hume's philosophy offers 'a radical change in the practical way the problem of society is posed' (Deleuze, 2005: 46). Given the Humean insistence that it is 'affective circumstances' that guide people's ideas (because the 'principles of passion' control ideational inclinations), association within the social domain becomes a matter of modes of partiality (ibid.: 45). Accordingly, the problem of the social is to be understood not through the concept of the contract, which implies that the main political problem is one of translating egotism into sociality, but in terms of partialities, which makes the problem one of how to stretch the passions into commitments that extend beyond them, how, as Deleuze puts it, 'to pass from a "limited sympathy" to an "extended generosity"' (ibid.: 46) for as Hume insists, 'the qualities of the mind are *selfishness* and *limited generosity*' (Hume, 1978: 494). To the extent that the extended generosity that justice represents is to develop, 'it takes its

rise from human conventions,' that are necessitated by the '*confin'd generosity of men, along with the scanty provision nature has made for his wants*' (ibid.: 494 495).

The extrapolation I want to apply to Kundera's narrative locates the problem in a global rather than merely social space. In this expanded spatial context, the issue becomes not one of a person moderating her/his partialities in relationships with the consociates of a national society but with potential consociates within alternative national spaces. Hume did contemplate the problem of extending sympathy across national boundaries, noting that 'we sympathize more with persons contiguous to us, than with persons remote from us … With our countrymen, than with strangers' (Hume, 2002: 581). However, to appreciate Kundera's overlay of sensibilities on the dynamic mapping that exiles have created, we have to recognize a complication that Hume's notion of 'selfishness' fails adequately to register. The self-consciousness required to be selfish   to be in touch with one's passions   is difficult to achieve in a world in which others impose regulative ideals with respect to what those passions are supposed to be. The disruption to Irena's hard-won sense of self as a French citizen with a French 'structure of feeling' is a result not of the newly won Czech independence, which would not by itself have summoned an ambivalence, but of having to deal not only with a French friend who pressures her to reassume a former feeling and its attendant national commitment, but also of pressure from a husband of Swedish origin who, ironically, has no such feeling for his 'native' country. Her husband, Gustaf, a committed cosmopolitan, argues that although he has no nostalgia for *his* country of birth, she should have some for hers. Similarly, Josef must deal with his wife's expectation about how he should feel and behave and, subsequently, the censorious feelings of his brother and sister-in-law, who had remained during the Soviet occupation. Certainly there are those who possess what Pico Ayer (2000) calls 'a global soul' or, who, like Salman Rushdie, detest the 'narrowly defined cultural frontiers' implied in the very idea of a 'homeland' (Rushdie, 1991: 19). But however passionate cosmopolitans may be about their attachments to multi-cultural urban settings and their commitment to resist narrow geopolitical allegiance, the emotionally charged cartography they define looms less large, in terms of both space and affective intensity, than the one defined by exiles.

Kundera ascribes that intensity, as it impinges on the kind of émigrés who are dramatized in his novel, to particular historic episodes that 'have taken … a voracious grip on every single person's life' (Kundera, 2002: 11). Specifically, in the case of the persons like his characters, Irena and Josef, the events of the 1950s and 1960s created the pressures they experience. Irena's situation is described more elaborately than Josef's. On the one hand, a Czech émigré in France is made to feel unwelcome because a refugee from Communism is not treated as an object of sympathy by a people for whom the great evils came from Fascism. And the Irenas of the world have immediately worn out their welcome from the places they left, for as Kundera puts it, 'Loyal to the

tradition of the French Revolution, the Communist countries hurled anathema at emigration, deemed it to be the most odious treason' (ibid.: 17). As even Mercator, who is best remembered for the technical and mathematical aspects of modern cartography, recognized, it is 'a small step from locative sentimentality to territorial bigotry' (Crane, 2002). Accordingly, Irena, who is in the process of trying to get her emotional bearings, finds herself caught between two censorious political cultures. At the same time, she is pushed toward trying to renew her Czech existence by her husband Gustaf, who has his firm open up a Prague office. Gustaf experiences none of the pressures experienced by his Czech émigré wife. He hurls anathema rather than receiving it. He 'wholeheartedly detests' his Swedish town. Moreover, it is accepted that he 'refuses to set foot' in his place of origin: 'in his case it's taken for granted. Because everyone applauds him as *a nice, very cosmopolitan Scandinavian who's already forgotten all about the place he comes from*' (ibid.: 24).

In one of the novel's most politically pregnant moments, Irena responds to Gustaf's offer to be her 'link to your lost country', with the remark, 'please do understand that I don't need you to be my link with anything at all' (ibid.: 24 25). She is here trying to construct a coherent identity in time in a way that she can call her own, and like all such moments, the effort takes on its implications within the spatio-temporal imaginary that dominates her historical moment. At the most abstract temporal level, her problem at this juncture is much like the one Augustine pondered when he sought an answer to the ontological challenge to selfhood, or one's presence to oneself through the passage of time. Augustine's response to the problem of the unity of one's existence in time is well known. After asking about how to reconcile the non-presence of the past and the future, 'how can these two kinds of time, the past and the future, be, when the past is no longer and the future as yet does not be?' (Augustine, 1960: 288) he conceptually enlarges the soul. Life, he says, is 'distended into memory' in order to incorporate one's past, and the future is drawn into the self as well, in this case through expectation, such that the future 'which does not yet be … will have become present' (ibid.: 290).

To complicate Irena's identity-in-time problem and carry it beyond its Augustinian problematic we must consider more fully the spatio-temporal aspects of Irena's moment of identity crisis. If, inspired by J.G.A. Pocock's (1975) treatment of Machiavelli's 'moment', we recognize that a moment is a crisis in the forces shaping territorial allegiance, Irena's struggle to extract herself while 'hounded by their vociferations' (mother's, husband's, friends and acquaintances') become intelligible. To back up briefly: Kundera's novel begins in a dramatic political moment, the liberation of Czech society from Soviet hegemony. Thereafter, this larger, macropolitical moment is articulated through the micropolitical crises of allegiance it engenders, which are mapped, first by following Irena through her visit to and return from her old 'homeland' and then to the round trip from Denmark to Prague of the other exile, Josef.

To capture the conceptual contributions that the novel lends to Irena and Josef's shared historical moment, we can contrast it with the one central to Pocock's monumental study of the birth of civic republicanism in his treatment of Machiavelli's moment. While Pocock's focus is on the development of a mode of civic allegiance, Kundera's is about the disintegration of allegiance. Painstakingly, Pocock shows how 'early modern thought', which is concerned with the requirements of civic allegiance and the activism it produces, became possible only after people were able to displace or at least complement the entrenched religious model of eternal time with a sense of historical time and therefore could think of themselves as citizens of a republic. As Pocock puts it:

> The republic was not timeless, because it did not reflect by simple correspondence the eternal order of nature; it was differently organized, and a mind which accepted republic and citizenship as prime realities might be committed to implicitly separating the political from the natural order.
>
> (Pocock, 1975: 53)

'To affirm the republic,' he adds, 'was to break up the timeless continuity of the hierarchic universe into particular moments' (ibid.: 54). In short, the historical becoming of republican subjects required that they first become specific historical subjects, existing in a spatial finitude rather than an eternal cosmos.

The post-Machiavellian world to which Pocock's analysis is addressed has been one in which, first the city-state, and subsequently the nation-state, had become consolidated as the imaginaries attracting allegiance. First the one, and then the other had operated as the territorial boundaries and horizons of political activity and engagement. By contrast, Kundera's fictional characters reflect a dynamic of disintegration, one in which former nation-state allegiances are being attenuated and a new ethos of engagement must be thought to array against the norms governing citizen political engagement. Inasmuch as the grip of state capture on political thinking has been tenacious, both as a mode of active state-directed cultural governance and as a feature of the codes insinuated in the discourses of the political, resistance and self-possession require a becoming-conscious along what Deleuze and Guattari famously call 'lines of flight' from the capturing mechanisms of state-directed consciousness.

If we heed the Humean frame within which Kundera's novel is operating, the escape mechanism must involve a form of sympathy or partiality that ultimately becomes an extended generosity. For this to happen, the subject, which in Hume's treatment is an achievement following a process of the growth of the mind, must be able to escape its 'homegrown habitual circuits' (Massumi, 1992: 76). In Deleuze's terms, 'the [Humean] subject is constituted with the help of principles inside the given, but it is constituted as an entity that goes beyond the given' (Deleuze, 1991: 126). In Kundera's *Ignorance*, in

which 'the given' is constituted as the geopolitically-driven expectations hounding the main characters, their ability to go beyond that given results from an interlude of passionate romance. To access the effect of that interlude, we need to become more acquainted with the novel's other main exile, Josef, whose return to Prague coincides with Irena's. Josef's exile has been in Denmark, which, in terms of the kind of patriotism it has historically encouraged, makes it similar to Czechoslovakia. Kundera contrasts the patriotism in such small countries to the kind that operates in large nations: 'Their patriotism is different: they are buoyed by their glory, their importance, their universal mission.' In contrast:

> The Czechs loved their country not because it was glorious but because it was unknown; not because it was big but because it was small and in constant danger. Their patriotism was an enormous compassion for their country. The Danes are like that too. Not by chance did Josef choose a small country for his emigration.
>
> (Kundera, 2002: 140 141)

As it turns out, love of country for both characters pales in comparison with their drives toward self-possession. To the extent that the love of country is at all enabling, it is because it arouses the kind of passion that can be deployed on persons. Kundera points out that Czech patriotism is articulated not as a feeling of reflected glory but as a mode of compassion whose articulation we can follow in the mental dynamics of his characters. In Irena's case, having her passions liberated in her relationship with Josef helps her recognize that her past intimacies were detoured through dependencies and were reflected in the self-denying emotion of gratitude: 'What she wants now is love without gratitude' (ibid.: 138). In Josef's case, the affair turns his attention back toward what has always loomed larger in his emotional imaginary than any attachment to his homeland, his years of intimacy with his wife. At one point, on the road to Prague, as 'the landscape slips away around him, the landscape of his small country whose people are willing to die for it', he knows that there exists something even smaller, with an even stronger appeal to his compassionate love:

> he sees two easy chairs turned to face each other, the lamp and the flower bowl on the window ledge, and the slender fir tree that looks like an arm she'd [his deceased wife] raised from afar to show him the way back home.
>
> (ibid.: 143)

Josef's epiphany while in Prague, in which he affirms what had been most important about his past life    a shared intimacy that transcended the givens of geopolitical attachments    is paralleled by one experienced by Irena, who recognizes, also while visiting Prague, that she had for the most part lived a life 'run by other people' and that, on reflection, her happiest years had been

lived while single, when, as she puts it, 'I was master of my own life' (ibid.: 162). In both cases, the émigrés rely on their imaginations to invent norms that are part of a self-possession rather than continuing to be guided by norms that are imposed. The importance of imaginative invention, which for Hume is constitutive of one becoming a subject, is also articulated in Kundera's account of Irena and Josef's love-making. Specifically, Irena, who had hitherto catered to her two husbands and mother rather than favor her passions, provokes a shared passion for herself and Josef with 'dirty talk' in Czech. She wants, in that brief affair 'to experience everything she ever imagined and never experienced, voyeurism, exhibitionism, the indecent presence of other people, verbal enormities' (ibid.: 179). While her dirty talk becomes a powerful sign of self-possession for Irena, for Josef, who had lived in a language for twenty years that had made him feel clumsy, inarticulate, and not quite himself, the words are arousing because of the way they resonate with his long-suppressed memories. Irena and Josef's liaison does not awaken a nostalgia for their former homeland. Rather, it liberates them by allowing them to recognize what is most important to each. The outcome of their 'diasporic intimacy' is well captured by Svetlana Boym, who characterizes it as an intimacy that 'does not promise a comforting recovery of identity through shared nostalgia for the lost home and homeland'. 'In fact,' she adds, 'it is the opposite. It might be seen as the mutual enchantment of two immigrants from different parts of the world or as the sense of the fragile coziness of a foreign home' (Boym, 2000: 229). At a minimum, it was an intimacy that was out of place. As a result, it encouraged a reflection on spaces of attachment by both parties.

What is the general import of Kundera's staging of the affair between two émigrés? As his narrative discharges passions that challenge the geopolitical matrix of national allegiances, a rarely heeded global cartography emerges. Kundera's map is vertical as well as horizontal; in addition to a set of geopolitical boundaries, which are the setting of the drama of movement, the map has emotional depth. To the extent that an ethos emerges from the kind of verticality that Kundera's adds to the traditional nation-state cartography, it is connected to the self-possession his characters achieve as they struggle to discover the passions that have been buried under imposed codes. To evoke once again the Humean insights that help to frame Kundera's plot, the sympathy or partialities that provoke the Irena Josef liaison fulfill the model of sociality that Hume constructs. The partiality becomes an extended generosity. In this case, it is a generosity toward oneself, as the characters learn to resist normative pressures and accept the lives they have been living    to recognize in effect that their becoming had not ceased with their inscriptions as national subjects. Given that, as Kundera notes, 'everyone is wrong about the future', and there is thus no stable basis for attachment, one must in the last analysis trust one's own passions. At the same time, however, by dint of the juxtapositions Kundera creates    for example, the *ressentiment* expressed by Josef's brother and sister-in-law toward those who have not accepted the

constraints under which those who remained have lived    Kundera gestures toward an ethos of generosity toward otherness as well. Thus although Kundera's story may suggest that generosity begins at home, it also implies that an effective interpersonal and trans-territorial generosity requires that one transcend the givens of geopolitical allegiance and become generous to oneself. It is an ethos that becomes especially apparent when the struggle to attain it is enacted by exiles.

## Conclusion: identity/difference, intimacy/estrangement

Kundera's implied ethos comports well with Connolly's erotic and cinematic styles. The generosity toward otherness, toward which Kundera's novel gestures, effectively evokes two different forms of partiality, while at the same time evoking, as I have emphasized, an added dimension to the territorialization of identity (an emotional cartography overlaid on the geopolitical map). All of these evocations constitute the frame for the becoming generous of Kundera's 'characters' (perhaps best understood as Deleuzian conceptual personae). The struggles of Irena and Josef to embrace their becomings provide them with an allegiance to time    to trajectories of their pasts, presents and possible futures, effectively, to an intimacy with memory and anticipation rather than to geopolitical allegiance. Kundera's presentation of their durations articulates well with Connolly's suggestion that commitment to a democratic pluralism requires commitments to both 'the vitality of life' and to a 'regard for the thickness of time,' which 'becomes narrow and stingy if confined to the pursuit of the nation' (Connolly, 2005: 169). And Kundera's treatment of Irena and Josef's Czech friends and relatives, who begrudge their becomings-other comports well with the many places where Connolly theorizes resentment and the desire to punish those who would, for example, 'disturb the naturalization of settled conventions' (Connolly, 1991: 192).

   My theoretical suggestion is that an inter-articulation of Bergsonian and Humean models of partiality provides a frame within which the conditions of possibility for a Connolly-type democratic ethos can be thought. With a Bergson-inspired approach to cinema, we have a technology with which, as I have suggested, we can think the kind of multiplicity that eludes the partialities of individual perception. The cinematic style of Connolly's writing, his cuts and juxtapositions between canonical modes of political philosophy and illustrations from popular culture, and the moments of referential montage, where one segment recalls an earlier one, help the reader transcend the perspectives of the individual thinkers referenced. With a Humean understanding of the partialities of sympathy, where the problem of the social is one of making limited sympathy become extended generosity, we are able to appreciate Connolly's erotics    his insistence that a democratic commitment to a pluralism, which transcends the fixing of self and other identities, requires an appreciation of the fragility and contingency of one's location in space and time.

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# 5 Interpretation, political theory, and the hegemony of normative theorizing

## Sophia Jane Mihic

### Introduction

In North American political science, the movements and recent debates grouped around the term 'Perestroika' have included a renewed interest in interpretation and the linguistic turn of the late 1960s and 1970s. After earlier interventions reached their apogee in the 1970s, an interpretive political science developed across the subfields and even flourished in comparative politics, accounts of American political development, and in critical policy studies. Members of the subfield of political theory, however, were the harbingers and initial defenders of that interpretive approach. Among this cohort, William Connolly and Charles Taylor, Richard Flathman, Hanna Pitkin and Alistair MacIntyre were influenced by and themselves developed cross-pollinations between Continental and Anglo-Analytic philosophies of inquiry. These theorists insisted upon the mutual constitution of fact and value and, relatedly, of language, thought and world. Thus, interpretation, as the linguistic turn theorists presented it, supported a perspective on the study of politics that was attentive to the epistemic complications of language and critical of the goal of value-neutrality.

The recent renewal of interest in interpretation, as found within the 'Perestroika' movement, has for the most part merely been a return: a reprise and re-application of the earlier arguments against behavioral approaches to the study of politics. Stephen White has lamented the inferiority of these current debates and initiatives in political science when contrasted with the field's self-questioning in the 1970s, a disciplinary critique 'characterized by a rich discussion' about what the study of politics could be and should do (White, 2002: 179).[1] The takers of the linguistic turn have been congratulated, rightly, for insisting that evaluation is constitutive of the 'what' that is politics. Debate over what a more engaged practice of political theory might be has been advanced by theorists working on new approaches to relationships between abstraction and concrete analysis.[2] But the linguistic turn itself has been neglected as an object of theoretical solicitude. What interpretive limitations, or even traps, were produced in that initial encounter between political theory and behavioral inquiry? And how do the effects of these limitations persist?

This chapter returns to the linguistic turn of the 1970s and explores the effects of arguments against the fact/value dichotomy in political science, not with respect to the behavioral approaches against which they were posed, but within the work of political theorists who posed the criticisms.[3] Focusing on the work of William Connolly and Charles Taylor, I argue that in the after-math of debates over the fact/value dichotomy they shrink from constituting the seeable   from the theoretical tasks of pursuing the descriptive and evi-dentiary implications of their own arguments   because they are caught up in what I identify as the hegemony of normative theorizing.[4] I am not suggesting that this shrinking   from what less generically we might refer to as the empirical, the concrete, or the material   is reducible to the intent of either author. Likewise in the subfield of political theory the hegemony of normative theorizing, which compels and allows this retreat, is not the conscious pro-gram of an author or of any group of theorists. It is better understood as a language game, or discursive formation, within which political theorists in North America work and of which they are for the most part unquestioning.

The hegemony of normative theorizing is a force in language and practice that compels the political theorist to present his or her work in a particular form: the disciplinary demand of their subfield is that theorists clearly articulate and affirm the evaluative implications of their own findings.[5] I will demonstrate how this requisite normative declaration produces a nonchalance and disregard toward facticity   toward, that is, the constitution and hence the quality of fact. Further, I will argue that this discursive compulsion, or move in the language game, effects a second move: the exaggerated emphasis on evaluation creates an undue emphasis on the evaluator as political actor and/or position-taking political theorist. I cannot argue that either of these moves is wrong. To engage the constitutive force of just one of language, thought or world is to engage the others also   to engage normativity is to engage facticity. But what does consistently entering into interpretation with the goal of evaluative declaration conceal? What is foreclosed when we ask the political theorist to explicate and affirm his or her position in every interpretation?

The hegemony of normative theorizing is supported by the widely held view that political theory is concerned with justice   with articulating alter-native conceptions of the 'good' political life. But my concern is not solely with such expressly normative theories as Rawls' monumental reduction of the social theories of welfare liberalism to a moral choice, or political theory concerned with evaluative perspicuity or expertise in ethics. We find the hegemony of normative theorizing, the entreaty to endorse and a compulsive subject-centeredness, in the work of diagnostic political theorists like Con-nolly and Taylor in whose work the emphasis on evaluation characteristic of the hegemony of normative theorizing emerges as a reactive response to the goal of value-neutrality in behavioralism. I will argue that the concomitant glorification of the perspective of the agentic human subject is a reactive response to the presumptive blank space that is the behavioral subject. These

responses are reactive in a theoretical sense: we will see that the hegemony of normative theorizing in Connolly's and Taylor's work is evidenced, first, in their conversations with their opponent (behavioralism) and in arguments with each other. The chapter seeks to trouble our familiarity with such debates so as to identify paths not taken.

A presumption of my argument is that the linguistic turn, as taught to us by Connolly and Taylor, suggested interpretive possibilities that are greater than those realized by either theorist.[6] The early lessons of 'Perestroika' seem to have been that political theorists should learn some facts   rendered by our empirically-trained sister political scientists   and theorize about them. But we will see that the prepositional remove of this 'about' suggests a sanguine empiricism in contrast to the possibilities of an interpretive political science sketched during the 1970s. As evidence of this under-realization, the chapter will examine the lingering effects of the struggle with behavioralism in exchanges between Connolly and Taylor over the work of Michel Foucault. Here, we will see their shrinking from the constitution of the seeable as an aversion to interpretation in the third person   an aversion, that is, to non-agent-centered argumentation. They each struggle with and cannot accommodate arguments with structural valences and/or dimensions. For both, any theorizing in the third person is the voice of science and of the foe to be avoided.[7] Thus, I am reading Connolly and Taylor canonically, as enunciative modalities, situated within disciplinary conditions that contain the epistemic insights of the radical theory that inheres within the continental philosophies on which writers such as they draw; the subject-centered focus permeating their thinking is not simply a matter of authorial choice.[8]

## After the critique of behaviorism: normativity and knowledge in political theory

Targeting the descriptive tasks of inquiry, Taylor and Connolly dealt a serious blow to those who advocated behavioral analysis in the study of politics. As their criticisms showed, understanding in the human sciences cannot be reduced to either an objective and hence merely descriptive view on reality nor to a subjective and merely appraisive view. In order to understand politics, one must investigate that which is manifest in language and practice and one must be alert to changing manifestations. The search for hidden laws of political behavior must be discarded, and simply seeing becomes not at all simple. The implications of their work accord with Arendt's approving citation of Wittgenstein in *The Life of the Mind*: 'It often happens that we only become aware of the important *facts*, if we suppress the question "why?" and then in the course of our investigations these facts lead us to an answer' (Arendt, 1978: 125; Wittgenstein, 1953: 34, italics in original). Interpretive interventions in the study of politics elevated description as a mode of knowing; in place of the celebration of explanation in contrast to mere description, the latter itself emerged as a difficult theoretical endeavor. Taylor

and Connolly effectively suggest that seeing is no longer the given that precedes thought: it requires, and in an important sense, *is* thinking. But, as we will see, behavioral explanation is not the only frame an investigator may have to suppress in order to see.

The ambitions of behavioral inquiry are those of a natural science model: experimental, and hence value-free, verification; replicability as evidence of this objectivity; the discovery of latent rather than manifest laws governing human activities; and thus predictability.[9] The phenomenon to be studied is reduced to components of human behavior by definition of terms that purport to capture these behaviors, and manipulation of these then enables the generation and testing of hypotheses. Unmodified behavioralism thus assumes a purely instrumental    and, hence, neutral and designative    theory of language. In *The Terms of Political Discourse*, Connolly focused his criticisms on this assumption. 'The language of politics', he counters,

> is not a neutral medium that conveys ideas independently formed; it is an institutionalized structure of meanings that channels political thought and action in certain directions. Those who simply use established concepts to get to the facts of political life, those who act unreflectively within the confines of established concepts, actually have the perceptions and modes of conduct available to them limited in subtle ways.
>
> (Connolly, 1983: 1 2)

To 'adopt' prevailing concepts 'without revision', he concludes, 'is to accept terms of discourse loaded in favour of established practices' (ibid.: 1 2). Connolly argues that the dichotomy between fact and value is unsustainable and demonstrates the appraisive dimensions to terms of political discourse that purport merely to describe. Noting the fundamental presumption of a designative theory of language    that there is a direct correspondence between names and the things they name    he counters that 'we are not describing when we say "Empire State Building", or "Jim"'. We are describing, however, 'when we say that the building is very tall and made of grey concrete or that Jim is a quiet, intense person who is quite industrious'. To describe, he argues, is 'to characterize', to view 'from the vantage point of certain interests, purposes, or standards' (ibid.: 22 23, italics removed). The appraisive dimension is thus not distinct from, but part of, description. The terms of political discourse are not instruments of political inquiry: the choice and selection of these terms is itself political (ibid.: 3).

Borrowing and extending Gallie's (1962: 121 146) term 'essentially contested concepts' Connolly shows how the meanings of terms of political discourse are to be found in contests over their use:

> When the concept involved is appraisive in that the state of affairs it describes is a valued achievement, when the practice described is internally complex in that its characterization involves reference to several

dimensions, and when the agreed upon contested rules of application are relatively open, enabling parties to interpret even those shared rules differently as new and unforeseen situations arise, then the concept in question is an 'essentially contested concept'.

(Connolly, 1983: 10)

Note that meaning is dependent upon situation and references to multiple dimensions. For Gallie, Connolly notes, 'democracy' is an example of an essentially contested concept. Such terms must be analyzed as 'cluster concepts', because their understanding involves inspection of the array of sometimes contending and sometimes shared meanings attributed to them (ibid.: 13 15). An analysis of 'democracy' must note that 'for some',

the central criterion of a democracy is the power of citizens to choose their government through competitive elections; for others this factor is less important than the equality of opportunity for all citizens in attaining positions of political leadership; for still others both of these criteria pale in significance if the continuous participation of citizens at various levels of political life is not attained.

(ibid.: 10 11)

The investigator must then look for agreement and disagreement among the affirmations of these views. 'These disagreements proliferate further', Connolly teaches us, 'when we see that concepts used to express them, such as "power", "political", "equality", and "participation", require elucidation also, a process likely to expose further disagreements among those contesting the concept of democracy' (ibid.: 10 11). This mode of conceptual analysis moves back and forth between and among established concepts and their multiple meanings in use. 'It may be justifiable', he writes, 'for the investigator to introduce some technical concepts into the established conceptual world; but these will be useful only to the extent that they build upon and are understood in relation to the prevailing system' (ibid.: 39).

In 'Neutrality in Political Science', Taylor argues against the presumptions and goals of a value-free political science and takes issue with what he sees as a facile accommodation of arguments against the fact/value dichotomy. He examines David Easton's recognition and then reduction of values to emotional responses distinct from what Easton insists is 'a state of real or presumed facts' (Taylor 1985a: 60; Easton, 1953: 223 237). Taylor speaks, as well, to the background chorus of an apprenticeship in political science. The descriptive as well as evaluative implications of the interpretive critique are often dismissed with the claim that 'no one still really thinks we can distinguish what we value and what we study' or that 'no one ever thought' such things and the field remains punctuated by the earnest claim 'as a good social scientist, I have to admit my biases'. But these formulations, and Easton's, misapprehend and evade the interpretive claim that fact and value are

mutually constitutive. Taylor and Connolly are not asking for honesty. They are saying 'no' to a mode of inquiry. We cannot neatly package our values and list our biases as a propaedeutic to inquiry, because their elucidation and discovery are among the fruits of inquiry. 'In particular', Taylor writes:

> my aim is to call into question the view that the findings of political science leave us, as it were, as free as before, that they do not go some way to establishing particular sets of values and undermining others. If this view is shown to be mistaken, then we will have to recognize a convergence between science and normative theory in the field of politics.
>
> (Taylor, 1985a: 60 61)

His argument is that inquiry is not simply value-laden but transvaluative: inquiry transforms the inquirer's evaluations and thus transforms the inquirer, and the converse of this relationship holds as well. In 'What Is Human Agency?', Taylor demonstrates the back and forth of these effects, writing: 'That description and experience are bound together in this constitutive relation admits of causal influences in both directions: it can sometimes allow us to alter experience by coming to fresh insight; but more fundamentally, it circumscribes insight' (Taylor, 1985c: 37). For Taylor, objections to the fact/value dichotomy are arguments over the constitution of the seeable and the seer. Language is the charged and charging (i.e. constitutive) medium in and by which these relationships unfold. As formulations of the capacities, powers and functions of language, the terms 'articulation' and 'expression' emerge in Taylor's arguments against behavioralism and remain signal components in his continuing work.

In 'Self-Interpreting Animals', the role of language in Taylor's refusal of the subject/object distinction upon which his refusal of the fact/value dichotomy is predicated is worth noting. 'Let us look at common experiences', he writes of the interpretation of human feeling, 'and see how our experience of these emotions has been changed by our coming to accept different terms, or a new vocabulary, in which to talk about them.' Taylor poses, as an example,

> someone who has been ashamed of his background. This is what we say (and also he says) retrospectively; at the time, it was not at all clear to him. He feels unease, lack of confidence, a vague sense of unworthiness. Then he is brought to reflect on this.
>
> (1985c: 69)

Reflection is here not uni-directional. The reflecting human subject does not merely turn inward, but also outward: 'our feelings incorporate a certain articulation of our situation, that is, they presuppose that we characterize our situation in certain terms'. The articulations characterize self and world, and 'at the same time they admit of   and very often we feel that they call for further articulation, the elaboration of finer terms permitting more penetrating

characterization. And this further articulation can transform the feelings' (ibid.: 63 64). The reflecting subject moves back and forth between inspection of his feelings and inspection of his situation:

> He comes to feel that being ashamed for what you are, apologizing for your existence, is senseless. That on the contrary, there is something demeaning precisely about feeling such shame, something degrading, merely supine, craven. So he goes through a revolution like that expressed in the phrase 'black is beautiful'.
>
> (ibid.: 69)

The shame, Taylor tells us, now disappears or is substantially diminished. These transformations continue to reverberate and affect how this fellow sees himself and sees the world: 'What he can now feel ashamed of is having felt such shame. At the same time, the various features of himself and of his background which were formerly objects of shame undergo a transvaluation' (ibid.: 69). This is a conceptual, as well as personal and worldly, transvaluation. 'In order to deny an essential, constitutive role for language', Taylor concludes, 'one would have to envisage a non-conceptual analogue for such changes in outlook.' And, again, what can and cannot be seen is crucial: 'It is not just applying the name that counts, but coming to "see-feel" that this is the right description; this is what makes the difference. Language is essential here because it articulates insight, or makes insight possible' (ibid.: 70 71).

My complaint against Taylor and Connolly is that in the aftermath of the fact/value dichotomy debates they shrink from the continuing challenges of constituting the seeable. In response to this charge, they would argue to the contrary that they are taking up this task, since entering into the relationships among language, thought and world from the vantage point of any one of the three involves constitution of the other two. This is the hermeneutic assumption that Connolly takes advantage of in his response to Iris Marion Young's complaints against his *Identity\Difference* (Young, 1992: 511 514). 'Young castigates me', he writes, 'for ignoring the "material" conditions of the political culture I admire. Does this mean the dimensions I focus on are "immaterial"?' (Connolly, 1993: 130). They are hermeneutically speaking quite material, and that is the problem. Although Taylor and Connolly effectively took hermeneutic advantage in their arguments against behavioralism, their subsequent work often takes this advantage as an excuse not to go further and follow through the hermeneutic implications they introduced into the study of politics. Interpretively, we must say that the answer to Connolly's question is yes: these dimensions are material. The problem is that he is constituting the seeable without looking. By this I mean that inspection of the world in both Connolly's and Taylor's work too often becomes a gesture noted but not actively pursued.

The statement 'black is beautiful', for example, does not *simply* express the revolution in self-understanding Taylor assumes it does. The phrase is an

artifact of past, and an accoutrement of present and continuing, political struggle targeted at changing the world. Minds and feelings may follow, but this is not necessarily the first aim. If we go back to Taylor's argument, we see the subtle priority the evaluating human subject has in his interpretations. He presents the self-interpreting animal as situated, but this fact is assumed generally, whereas it could be pursued as a specific problem of inquiry. Taylor leaves out the worldly complications in which the speaker of the phrase 'black is beautiful' might find himself. For instance we could situate the origin of the phrase institutionally by tracing the history of *de jure* and then *de facto* school segregation in the United States. Consider the doll test as evidence in this history: the choosing of a white doll, as the 'pretty doll' by black children suggests the insurgency of the phrase 'black is beautiful'. We could investigate the series of precedents in case law that pre-dated the use of the doll test as evidence in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas* (1954) and probe the role of these cases in overturning the separate but equal Jim Crow doctrine of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). And now we can reflect on the continued resilience of the doll test: children still pick the white doll, fifty years after the Supreme Court decision in *Brown*. What do these facts tell us about the interpretation of the phrase 'black is beautiful' as a statement of self-understanding and/or as a statement of insurgency. Is blackness, politically, less insurgent in twenty-first-century American politics? Why and how?

Each of these lines of inquiry reverberate with and raise further interpretive questions. We are compelled to move from institutional inquiry and reflect on the spheres and fields of referentiality maintaining the first two words of the phrase 'black is beautiful,' as Ralph Ellison does in a dream sequence from the Prologue of *Invisible Man*. 'My text this morning', the passage begins, 'is the Blackness of Blackness'. It continues:

> And a congregation of voices answered: 'That blackness is most black, brother, most black … '
> 'In the beginning … '
> 'At the very start,' they cried.
> ' … there was blackness … '
> 'Preach it … '
> ' … and the sun … '
> 'The sun, Lawd … '
> ' … was bloody red … '
> 'Red … '
> 'Now black is … ' the preacher shouted.
> 'Bloody … '
> 'I said black is … '
> 'Preach it, brother … '
> ' … an' black ain't … '
> 'Red, Lawd, red: he said it's red!'
>
> (Ellison, 1995: 9, italics removed)

'He' doesn't actually say black is red, but the interaction of call and response presents red as the 'red' of a bloody history, and as the 'red' (namely 'read') of the riddle 'what is black and white and red all over?' The interaction of call and response also reminds us that language exceeds the bounds of any one reflecting human subject. In these introductory lines Ellison is resolutely not reading blackness as the absence of or in contrast to whiteness. The problematic of *Invisible Man* is, however, recognition and then complication of this and other predominant interpretations of what black is. Ellison neither ignores nor capitulates to these interpretations. This is also how the phrase 'black is beautiful' functions. The statement 'black is beautiful' faces and at the same time resists reality. Taylor's formulation does not capture the insurgency and related worldliness of the phrase at its first utterance in American politics.[10] And clinging to the notion of the phrase as a revolution in self-understanding insulates the interpretation from new meanings that may evolve as our politics changes.

While it may seem that these inquiries would require the work not of a political theorist but of a political scientist  or a historian, or a student of American literature  remember that the lines of possible inquiry I have suggested are required by Taylor's argument. 'If this view is shown to be mistaken' he argued against the assumption of value-neutrality, 'then we will have to recognize a convergence between science and normative theory in the field of politics.' We could pose the central question of this chapter in these terms: what does this convergence, and thus an interpretive approach, require of political theory? If we take "science," here, to mean the study of something in its specificity more attention must be paid to facticity and the presentation of evidence. I am not suggesting that the rendering of evidence should  or, even more to the point, could  become the central activity in the sub-discipline of political theory. But if the descriptive and appraisive dimensions of interpretation are not distinct from each other, and if the convergence is to affect political theory, the way in which theorists describe requires scrutiny and care. You have to look. This requirement is posed by Taylor and it is also posed and then inadequately met in Connolly's work.

Arguing with Nietzsche that uncertainty and dependence foster resentment on a personal level, Connolly's concern in *Identity\Difference* is with the social and political constructions of this dynamic: with what he calls 'generalized resentment'. He maintains that this generalized mode 'finds expression in a diverse set of practices today, ranging from drug use through litigiousness, "mindless" violence, teenage suicide, and high divorce rates to tax evasion and "work according to rule"'. These are immediately followed by an inventory 'of those in officially recognized conditions of dependence, such as third-world countries, convicted criminals, mental patients, welfare claimants, affirmative-action candidates, coddled athletes, minorities, teenagers, illegal aliens, and privileged college students'. These positions of dependence, he tells us, become targets of resentment for 'those in positions of official independence (Connolly, 1991: 22 23).

In these passages, Connolly's aim is to demonstrate the meaning and worldly significance of generalized resentment and thus he makes evidentiary claims. But these claims are susceptible to the precise criticisms he raised against the operationalization of terms in behavioral inquiry. Just as we are not describing when we say 'Empire State Building' or 'Jim', we are not describing when we list 'third-world countries' and 'teenagers'. As we were taught in *The Terms of Political Discourse*, '[t]o describe a situation is not to name something, but to characterize it' (Connolly, 1983: 22). The evidentiary claims of *Identity/Difference* work best if we relinquish the view that a 'description does not refer to data or elements that are bound together merely on the basis of similarities adhering in them', because these lists are held together by what Connolly identifies as generalized resentment. 'To describe', he held in *Terms*, 'is to characterize from one or more possible points of view, and the concepts with which we so characterize have the contours they do in part because of the point of view from which they are formed' (ibid.: 23). And the terms Connolly uses in these characterizations are indeed open to contestation. What, for example, does 'officially' mean when used to describe the recognition of dependence and independence? No person or agency officiates over these designations. They are determined and counter-determined discursively in language and practice. The construal of 'minorities' as dependent in some, perhaps even in predominant discourses, is countered by other formulations that do not resent but simply refuse the positing of this noblesse oblige; and an analysis that treated 'dependent' and 'independent' as cluster concepts would examine these contending discourses. If description is an interpretive endeavor, we must consider plural viewpoints that are factically as well as normatively contingent. If, as noted earlier, different interpretations are possible 'as new and unforeseen situations arise' then the concept in question is an 'essentially contested concept' and although Connolly does not present it or the terms used to express it in this manner, 'generalized resentment' is a contestable concept that could be interrogated and elucidated as such. One must do more than simply name it.

## It's not *your* world: the siren call of subject-centered analysis

My criticism of the priority of evaluation in Taylor's and Connolly's work does not counter but instead relies upon their arguments against value-neutrality. What we have is a problem of interpretive orienteering    and the direction one takes matters because it determines what is revealed and concealed in inquiry. We could, for example, reformulate my charge that Taylor and Connolly take hermeneutic advantage without following through the hermeneutic implications of their own work and say that they do not take hermeneutic responsibility. 'Responsibility falls to us', Taylor writes, and this 'us' includes the investigator, 'in the sense that it is always possible that fresh insight might alter my evaluations and hence even myself for the better.' In an example prefacing this conclusion, he tells us, 'we take a limit of a man's

insight as a judgement on him'. Note that responsibility is being attributed with regard to vision. Taylor continues, 'It is because of what he has become    perhaps indeed, in response to some terrible strain or difficulty, but nevertheless what he has become    that he cannot see certain things, cannot understand the point of certain descriptions of experience' (Taylor, 1985a: 38 39). And the tasks of vision and revision, in *The Terms of Political Discourse* compel Connolly also to argue that the investigator must take responsibility for his or her work: 'the social scientist has an obligation to *endorse* those ideas that he thinks would help nourish a politics of responsibility were they to be incorporated into the politics of our polity' (Connolly, 1983: 204, italics in original). Connolly's argument here, like Taylor's, is posed narrowly against the goal of value-freedom in behavioral inquiry. He maintains that 'one can hardly study our politics without staking out a position on some of these contested concepts, and the position one endorses will not be neutral in its political import' (ibid.: 205). But what if the concern with responsibility becomes, on its own terms, irresponsible? In this section, I explore how the entreaty to specify the normative implications of one's findings leads into a cul-de-sac and I explore how the focus on the perspective of the evaluating human subject secures the hegemony of normative theorizing in Taylor's and Connolly's continuing work.

Taylor and Connolly ostensibly take opposing positions with regard to the work of Michel Foucault. While Taylor will not yield his celebration of truth and valorization of modern identity to Foucault's criticisms (Taylor, 1985d: 152 184; 1989: 487 489) Connolly defends Foucault's refusal to endorse these values. But his defence accepts    or, more precisely, shares    important features of the ground on which Taylor wants to pitch their argument. In response to Taylor's 'Foucault on Freedom and Truth', Connolly tells us: 'It is true that Foucault refuses to endorse the life of one period over another, and it is also true that the endorsements he does make are not couched in the subject-centered vocabulary most familiar to us' (Connolly, 1985: 369). For Connolly, the question to pose is that of endorsement because his own thinking is a product of the discursive field he and Taylor have sown together. Connolly takes up Taylor's charge that Foucault is 'neutral' on these matters, and rightly argues that he is not: 'Taylor's characterization of Foucault as a neutralist illicitly assimilates the Foucauldian assault on subject-centered normative judgment to a stance that depreciates evaluation altogether' (ibid.: 369).

What is of interest in this context is that these are the terms around which Taylor and Connolly are quibbling. Any hint of neutrality and thus the natural science model, their former and shared foe, is a source of alarm for both. And such hints are especially vexing for Connolly the defender. Foucault's inquiries certainly do not follow a natural science model but interpretation does proceed specifically rather than generally for him and it often advances in the third person voice. He looks before evaluating; and, indeed, Foucault tries to suppress, in his terms 'suspend', predominant evaluative frameworks

in order to constitute the seeable.[11] This suspension does not attempt neutrality: it is a shift in perspective, and thus entails the construction of a new frame that presumes the mutual constitution of fact and value. Foucault understands that to consistently give priority to evaluation is to performatively disavow, regardless of whatever you may declaratively endorse, that the findings of inquiry are inescapably appraisive and can be transformative. Foucault's mode of inquiry, however, is ultimately too much for both Taylor and Connolly, as are the implications of their own work, because their reaction against social science is so very reactive.

'I agree with Taylor', Connolly writes, ' … that we should cherish some ideal of subjectivity, and Foucault seems to me, although there are counter-tendencies in his work as well, to be too willing to dispense with the ideal of subjectivity altogether' (Connolly, 1985: 371). In Connolly's accounts of genealogy the search for endorsement compels a reading that tries to extract normative injunction from Foucault's work. 'Discordance', 'dissonant' and their cognates are the terms with which Connolly first defines genealogy (Connolly, 1987: 155 159). He writes as if the genealogist must always celebrate these conditions that are for Foucault findings 'at certain moments and in certain orders of knowledge' (Foucault, 1980: 112). 'Genealogy seeks not attunement with higher unities', Connolly maintains in *Politics and Ambiguity*, 'but attunement to discordance within the self and the identities officially established for it' (Connolly, 1987: 155). The manipulation of ideals displaces questions of inquiry and compounds Connolly's disregard for description as interpretive task. He recognizes, but is unsatisfied by, the fact that genealogical interpretations are exercises in critical redefinition. 'Genealogy', he concludes in *The Ethos of Pluralization*,

> is necessary but inadequate to a mode of reflection that seeks critical detachment from the contemporary ontopolitical matrix. One reason this is so, is that detachment from any particular set of dispositions and presumptions inevitably attaches one to another set.
>
> (Connolly, 1995: 35)

This is the shift in perspective Foucault's studies produce but this shift evokes for Connolly the fear of neutrality. 'It is hard', Connolly continues, 'indeed impossible, to become detached as such.' Although he had previously argued that Foucault's work does not attempt neutrality, it seems that Foucault does depreciate evaluation too much for Connolly as well as Taylor. We must, Connolly insists, endorse, because 'it is important to articulate the ideal to which your strategies of critical detachment are attaching you' (Connolly, 1995: 35).

But what if you don't know? Is there no space here for inquiry into the un-evaluated or into the not-yet-evaluated? And must, or even can, the investigator be this all-knowing? Do we want an interpretive approach to the study of politics that requires the exaggeration Connolly poses as a standard of

adequacy: that the interpreter be able to lay down — in his terms, 'articulate' the law of her own interpretation? Exaggeration here meets exaggeration: the entreaty to endorse is a reactive response to the assumption and goal of value-neutrality. If, however, fact and value are mutually constitutive, neither facticity nor normativity can have the hegemony of either simple fact or compulsory yes-saying.

Focus on evaluation and on the evaluating human subject, for both Taylor and Connolly, extends from the self as inquiring author and determines the substance, and by that I mean the what, of their thinking. This is not to say that there are no differences between them, or that their disregard for evidence is at all times cursory. But the evidence they give tends to be of a certain sort and directed toward a certain end. Taylor, for example, well understands the interpretive requisites of descriptive narration, as he demonstrates in his carefully evidenced *Sources of the Self*. This text draws widely on literature and the history of Western thought, but its theme is the qualities and conditions supporting the human subject as moral agent. Connolly and Taylor both, at times, isolate and explore current political examples. And when called forth by a specific event — for example, his explication of the response to a resolutely unrepentant young black man accused of murder in Baltimore — Connolly's presentation of generalized resentment becomes vivid and compelling. But like Taylor, he remains steadfastly focused on the self. In *The Desire to Punish* we are asked to probe and speculate on Dontay Carter's desire to murder and boast, and the reader is asked to resist the desire to punish him for these transgressions (Connolly, 1995: 41 74). Compare Taylor's 'Shared and Divergent Values' on the prospects of Canadian separation: we are asked to probe and speculate on the values and the *self-understandings* animating the conflict between French Canadians and the rest of Canada. My concern is not with the intrinsic worth of the perspective of the self in Taylor's and Connolly's continuing work, but with its disciplinary meaning and consequences — with, that is, what it occludes. Insistently reading politics through the perspective of the self as evaluating (recognizing, desiring, expressing, and/or resenting) human subject, they systematically fail to theorize an interpretive political science advanced from the perspective of either language as itself a constitutive force or from the perspective of worldly events as themselves constitutive forces. The retreat from evidence into the self is not simply an "empirical" aversion. It is a retreat, as well, from the fullness of language.

## Conclusion

In *Modernity and Identity*, Taylor raises the possibility that we are reaching the limits of identity discourse, which he has now long participated in, because he suspects 'limits are needed if we are to gain insight into the complex and confusing struggles proceeding in the world today' (Taylor, 2001: 152 153). In this essay, he corrects a telling misstep made in *Sources of the Self*. There he referenced the effects of the Industrial Revolution as 'causal'

and dismissed such institutional and social forces from his considerations, when, of course, these effects are no less constitutive than the twin forces of Enlightenment and Romanticism that he probes as contending grounds of modern identity (Taylor, 1989: 393). When he later calls into question the focus on identity, he suggests that the institutional forces of modernization must, as well, be treated as objects of interpretive inquiry (Taylor, 2001: 148 151). The horizon of meaning is more complex than identity discourse and, in my more rarefied terms, the hegemony of normative theorizing allow.

My aim in this chapter has been to isolate a point of manifestation, an origin among many, in order to illuminate traps and limitations in the contemporary practices of political theory in North American political science. I have selected and highlighted moments from the work of William Connolly and Charles Taylor, but an overview of their respective œuvres has not been attempted. By probing the hegemony of normative theorizing in their work, as a language game with discernible moves, my aim has been to show that simply issuing an injunction to address the practices of political theory and political science will not suffice. We cannot simply be relevant and practical, theorize as abstractly as we want, and/or do interpretive work on command. Forces in language and practice, in the discourse of political theory and the various discourses of political science, shape and affect how we think. These forces can be analyzed, and re-analyzed, because what we say, and do and think always exceeds the bounds of any one interpretation. I learned this hermeneutic fact from Connolly and Taylor and expressly from Connolly as his student. To roughly paraphrase Wittgenstein, these lessons were *tips*, rather than principles that apply in the same way in every instance like calculating rules. Among the many tips I have taken from Connolly's work and pedagogy, none has been more valuable than the fact that, indeed, the terms of political discourse are not instruments of political inquiry: the choice and selection of these terms is itself politics.

## Notes

1 One could argue that Perestroika was a political, rather than theoretical, movement at its inception: a movement concerned with institutional reform with compel ling, that is, the American Political Science Association and other institutions in the discipline to support an already existing methodological pluralism that inclu ded an interpretive political science. Out of the consciousness raising of this movement, however, a pedagogy among peers emerged and these encounters have been productive of new directions in thinking. I am indebted to Dvora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz Shea for their writings and their organization of panels and other events that have made these new directions in thinking possible (Yanow and Schwartz Shea, 2002; 2004). My worry that the limitations of the interpretive turn were being replicated began at one of these sessions, and critical pressure was brought to bear on my worries at later events. I am especially grateful to Lloyd Rudolph, leading discussion at a Methods Cafe organized by Yanow and Schwartz Shea at the APSA 2006 Annual Meeting, who encouraged me to write a first person interpretation as an act of self criticism targeting my identification of

the hegemony of normative theorizing. That exercise has created a number of, most helpful, intellectual headaches still to be worked through. But it has also strength ened my suspicion that what is innovative outside of political theory is becoming tired and worn within the subfield.

2 Lisa Disch and Patchen Markell have experienced fatigue with what I term 'the hegemony of normative theorizing" as theorists doing work that does not strive to be prescriptive, and I am grateful for their generous comments that have helped shape the arguments in this chapter.

3 The work of interpretive theorists in political science, and in the social sciences and the philosophy of inquiry generally, began in the post World War II era. But the linguistic variation on the interpretive turn deploying Wittgenstein and/or Hegel was most energetic in the 1970s, and it is this variation in isolation from other interpretive interventions (see, for example, Strauss, 1950: 35 80; Wolin, 1969) and from other interpretive insights throughout the history of political science as a discipline with which this chapter is concerned. See, for example, James Farr's argument that the import of situation was perceived in political science well before the linguistic turn (Farr, 1990); and in continuing analytical practice consider Ann Lin's explication of the interpretive moment in quantitative as well as non quantitative work (Lin, 1998).

4 Note that my identification of the hegemony of normative theorizing is a diagnosis particular to the subfield of political theory and at odds with, yet reinforcing of, the hegemonic positivism of political science as a discipline (Mihic, 1999; Mihic *et al.*, 2005).

5 Taylor in 'Language and Human Nature' (Taylor 1985b) and Connolly in 'Where the Word Breaks Off' (Connolly, 1987: 143 161) speak to the issues I am raising in this chapter. In these pieces they recognize that language stands against and exceeds the boundaries of thinking, and they figure this insight centrally in these pieces. My aim is to integrate this insight more centrally in the interpretive study of politics. Though I cannot develop this theoretical language in the body of the pre sent chapter, I will note here that my complaint is that interpretation and herme neutics in political theory are too often understood as phenomenology, a mode of interpretation that puts the phenomenological human subject at the center of interpretation. Defining genealogy, Foucauldian archaeology, Arendtian existenz philosophy, deconstruction, or structuralism as something other than interpretation assumes the equation of phenomenology and hermeneutics. For an early example of the interpretive approach that does not make this assumption, see Arendt's "What Is Existenz Philosophy?" In this essay, she critiques phenomenology and her criticisms of Heidegger target his phenomenological reductionism of the self as all or nothing, and as atomized (Arendt, 1946: 35 37, 47 51). For a more recent example of interpretation being assimilated to phenomenology, see Shapiro and Wendt's 'The Difference that Realism Makes: Social Science and the Politics of Consent' (Shapiro, 2007: 19 50).

6 Members of an international audience could counter that contemporary cultural studies   influenced by Marx's understanding of human activity as a mediation of agency and structure   is an approach that performs the kinds of analyses I argue are being occluded. Let me be clear that the interpretive limitations and traps I am describing, here, are conditions at play in political theory in North America. Within the North American Academy, interpretive political scientists outside of the subfield of political theory might argue that they are offering interpretations that engage third as well as first (and second) person perspectives. And in the American academy outside of political science, anthropologists, literary theorists, historians and other interpretive analysts are for a variety of reasons not tied to the peculia rities of the hegemony of normative theorizing. See, for example, in political science Timothy Mitchell's 'Can the Mosquito Speak?' (Mitchell, 2002: 19 53) or

Bennett and Reed's 'The New Face of Urban Renewal: The Near North Redeve lopment Initiative and the Cabrini Green Neighborhood' (Bennett and Reed, 1999). Consider also these earlier examples of North American interpretation out side of political science that are neither agent denying nor agent centered: Albert O. Hirschman's 'Paradigms as a Hindrance to Understanding' (Hirschman, 1987) and Gayle Rubin's 'The Traffic in Women: Toward a "Political Economy" of Sex' (Rubin, 1975).

7 Recent critics have identified, and questioned, Connolly's concern with the ethical action of individuals. See Moya Lloyd's chapter in this volume; also, Chambers and Finlayson's 'Ann Coulter and the Problem of Pluralism: From Value to Politics' (Chambers and Finlayson, 2008).

8 Clifford Geertz has noted how the 'natural science' model in the human sciences is a straw man, or straw phenomenon, in Taylor's work. Geertz writes:

> We are confronted not with an articulated description of a living institution, one with a great deal of history, a vast amount of internal diversity and an open future, but with a stereotype and a scarecrow   a Gorgon's head that turns agency, significance, and mind to stone.
>
> (Geertz, 1994: 84)

I agree that behavioral analysis is rarely so unmodified as to be this simplistic. But in defence of Taylor and Connolly, I want to note that in the living institution that is political science one can encounter inquirers apparently deeply committed to enacting this stereotype and it is this straw phenomenon behavioralism that their work is posed against.

9 Cf. Stanley Fish's interpretation that 'someone who says "black is beautiful" is not so much interested in the accuracy of the assertion (it is not constatively intended) as he is in the responses it may provoke   surprise, outrage, urgency, solidarity' (Fish, 1989: 495). But then without reference to intent, it is constative as well.

10 Colin Gordon notes that this stance especially characterizes Foucault's lectures on governmentality: 'One of the conspicuous attributes' of these lectures, he writes, is their serene and (in a Weberian sense) exemplary abstention from value judgments.' Foucault abstains from a particular kind of evaluation:

> He rejects the use of an academic discourse as a vehicle of practical injunction ('love this; hate that; do this; refuse that … '), and dismisses the notion that practical political choices can be determined within the space of a theoretical text as trivializing the act of moral decision to the level of merely aesthetic preference.
>
> (Gordon, 1991: 16)

11 'Suspense', 'suspension', etc. are English cognates of the French *la suspension* (Foucault, 1972: 25). Cf. *L'archéologie du savoir* 'il faut donc les tenir en suspens. Non point, certes, les récuser définitivement, mais secourer la quiétude avec laquelle on les accepte' (Foucault, 1969: 37).

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# 6    Hate, loathing and political theory
## Thinking with and against William Connolly

*Moya Lloyd*

## Introduction

Emotion and affect clearly play a role in politics.[1] For many contemporary political theorists, particularly liberal and deliberative types, they actively hamper it. As Michael Walzer puts it, where '[i]nterests can be negotiated, principles can be debated, and negotiations and debates are political processes' containing the behaviour of those involved in politics, 'passion, on this view, knows no limits, [it] sweeps all before it'. It is 'impetuous, unmediated, all-or-nothing' (Walzer, 2004: 110 111). It leads (ostensibly) to violence, conflict and war.

Refreshingly, William Connolly offers a different take on the connections between emotion and political values, judgments and actions (see also Krause, 2006). Specifically, his aim is to demonstrate how affect-imbued ideas (might) help to nurture the ethos of generosity he is seeking to affirm. He is thus concerned with how emotion and affect actively contribute towards the development of a particular normative project, rather than hindering it. As will become clear, Connolly's point is not, however, that affectivity and emotion serve simply as auxiliaries to a rationally derived ethos, the 'glue' binding us to our political values and judgements. They are, rather, constitutive elements in the generation, nurturance and consolidation of that very ethos.[2]

Just as Connolly claims to think both with and against Nietzsche in articulating his own theory, so in this chapter my goal is to think both with and against Connolly in examining the relation between politics and affect.[3] Thinking with Connolly, I will deploy several of his insights into the layering of culture, the brain/body/culture network, the relation between ideationality and affect, and the link between micropolitics and techniques of the self. Thinking against him, however, I use these insights not to understand how a democratic ethos might be cultivated (which is Connolly's goal) but to understand how it might be hampered through the production of certain bodies as worthless or hateful. My interest, therefore, is in the conditions of possibility underpinning Connolly's pluralist project and, in particular, the opposition he establishes between resentment and (the ethos of) generosity, an opposition I seek to trouble. For if, as Connolly surmises, generosity is the

necessary condition for the generation of a democratic ethos, then what happens to those bodies and subjects for whom such generosity is difficult, if not impossible? Do they cease to be democratic subjects? In response, I will suggest, that rather than generosity being a precondition of democratic engagement for such persons, it may be precisely resentment that enables them to act; resentment at being, what Judith Butler calls, 'unintelligible' (Butler, 2004a; 2004b; see also Lloyd, 2007, Chap. 6).[4] In short, I seek to worry away at the link between ethics and democracy implied by Connolly's work.

Against Connolly, I will contend, therefore, that the relation between generosity and resentment is more ambivalent, unpredictable and multifaceted — more undecidable, in Derridean terms — than he generally allows. To illustrate my argument, I explore the work of African-American feminist author and activist Audre Lorde. I focus here on the role of affect in the process of cultural corporealization and on the racializing norms that constitute both the body politic and the fleshy bodies that populate it. To begin with, however, I offer a brief exegesis of Connolly's argument in *Neuropolitics*, the text I concentrate on in this chapter.

## Affect-imbued thinking made flesh

*Neuropolitics* is an impressive and wide-ranging work. In it, Connolly explores the role of neuroscience, cinematic technique and philosophy, among other things, in understanding the relations between the brain, body and culture, and their role in the cultivation of an ethos of generosity. By blending together insights drawn from all three realms, Connolly is able to articulate an account of thinking that is distinct, in his own words, 'from the Kantian model of command through the Habermasian model of deliberative ethics and the Rawlsian model of justice, to the Taylorite model of attunement to a higher purpose in being' (Connolly, 2002a: 85). What these accounts share is an understanding of thinking as a rational process. By contrast, what Connolly proposes is that thinking should be apprehended as *both* cognitive *and* affective. Not only that, but it ought also to be recognized as both somatic and culturally variable. (Indeed, as he writes elsewhere, the body is 'simultaneously the text upon which the script of society is written and the fugitive sources from which spring desires, resistances and thought exceeding that script' (Connolly, 1995: 12).) As noted above, to make his case, he draws on a range of different disciplines.

From neuroscientific studies of brain/body processes, Connolly takes the idea that thinking has a layered character, where culture is mixed with affect, nature with judgment, and where pre-cognitive memory traces and somatic habits are folded into perception. In short, mind and body are 'intrinsically connected' (Connolly, 2006: 72). Studying film allows for confirmation of this interconnectivity. Cinematic techniques, such as flashbacks, non-linear chronology, dream sequences in vivid colours or the use of dissonant sounds, 'communicate affective energies to us' (Connolly, 2002a: 13) that alter our

bodies, structure our perceptions and impact on us in a number of ways before rational or conscious processing kicks in. This, Connolly concludes, exposes 'the complex relays [that exist] among affect, thinking, techniques and ethics'. Potentially, film can also 'teach us how to apply pertinent techniques to ourselves' (ibid.: 2). Finally, Connolly turns to philosophy, and specifically the philosophy of Spinoza.

It is Spinoza's idea that mind and body are 'two aspects' (viz., thought and extension) of the same substance that Connolly fixes on (ibid.: 7; see Spinoza, 1955: 86). For it suggests that because mind and reason are so indelibly tied to materiality and affect that 'each change of the body is matched by a parallel change of mind (and vice versa), even though neither body nor mind can be understood through the concepts appropriate to the other' (Connolly, 2006: 68). The implication of this for ethics and politics is clear to Connolly: concentrating on expanding the opportunities for rational deliberation will never be enough. It is also necessary to engage affective and corporeal capacities because they too can change habitual patterns of thought and of (political and ethical) judgement (ibid.: 68).[5] 'Sometimes', he writes in 'Confessing Identity/Belonging to Difference' (the introductory essay produced for the 2002 edition of his 1991 book *Identity/Difference*), 'it is wise to work tactically on the visceral register of identity, on thought-imbued feelings of attachment, faith, disgust, shame, ambivalence, love or disdain that influence action and judgment but fall below direct intellectual regulation' (Connolly, 2002b: xviii) because what happens in the visceral register impacts on the cognitive:

> To work on an established sensibility by tactical means, then, is to nudge the composition of some layers in relation to others … You do so to encourage the effects of action upon one register to filter into the experience and imagination available on others, thereby working tactically upon a dense sensibility whose layered composition is partly receptive to direct argument and deliberation, partly receptive to tactics that extend beyond the reach of argument, and partly resistant to both.
>
> (Connolly, 2002a: 107)

Connolly is distinct from other contemporary theorists. He is not interested in thought or speech *per se*. His focus is 'the sensibilities and intensities that inform the communicative material *for* thought' (Williams, 2007: 351) and the role these play in ethical and political engagement. Or, rather, the role they play in nurturing an ethos of generosity.

Central to Connolly's discussion are the two terms that interest me in this chapter, that is, resentment and generosity; terms that he sets in opposition to one another. His affirmative project involves the articulation of an ethos suited to a context of deep pluralism; a democratic ethos open to difference. In *Identity/Difference*, he examines how identities may become entrenched and how because identities are formed in relation to difference there is always the possibility that those differences will be denigrated, marginalized, and/or

excluded. In cases like these, difference is converted into otherness. This is most likely to happen when tendencies to fundamentalization reign (Connolly, 1995: xxi). What is to be done?

According to Connolly, a way needs to be found increasingly to blend presumptive generosity for the 'plurivocity of being' (Connolly, 2002b: xx) into ethical and political life. To nourish generosity (towards difference), he argues that existential resentment must be starved. For it is existential resentment, as he sees it, that leads us to treat those from whom we differ as a threat both to us and to our way of life; as requiring perhaps, deserving suppression, conquest, or elimination; as being unworthy of our friendship, assistance, sympathy or grief; and even as being to blame for all that is amiss in our lives (our failings, the injustices we suffer, and so on). Resentment, he surmises in post-Nietzschean vein, translates into a desire for revenge, a retaliatory orientation towards alterity, and an obdurate refusal to admit the uncanny. Generosity, by contrast, is sustained by 'an attachment to the abundance of life' (ibid.: xxi), by its responsiveness to that which exceeds established conventions, and by a capacity to embrace the *new* new 'beings, identities, and cultural movements [that] surge into being' or new words and phrases that bubble up 'from a virtual register hard at work below the threshold of feeling and intellectual attention' (Connolly, 2002a: 55, 75).[6] In short, generosity is a positive resource for ethics and politics but resentment (expressed through negative affects) is not. The main aim of Connolly's work is to find ways in which generosity can be nurtured and, by implication, ways in which resentment can be converted into generosity.

For Connolly, this entails a double practice of ethical experimentation. The first form of experimentation Connolly refers to (echoing Foucault) as 'relational techniques of the self': 'the choreographed mixtures of word, gesture, image, sound, rhythm, smell, and touch that help to define the sensibility in which your perception, thinking, identity, beliefs, and judgment are set' (ibid.: 20). The second form involves what he terms 'micropolitics', that is relational techniques

> organized and deployed *collectively* by professional associations, mass-media talk shows, TV and film dramas, military training, work processes, neighbourhood gangs, church meetings, school assemblies, sports events, charitable organizations, commercial advertising, child-rearing, judicial practice and police routines

one of the 'critical functions' of which is to organize 'attachments, consumption possibilities, work routines, faith practices, child-rearing, education, investment, security, and punishment' (ibid.: 20 21, my emphasis).

Arts of the self and micropolitics are not entirely distinct. They are rather 'two sides of the same coin' (Connolly, 1999: 148), operating 'in-between' subliminal attachments and consciously-held beliefs; emerging groups demanding rights and existing groups resisting them; and one set of ideals and

another. Techniques feed into micropolitics and micropolitics impacts on techniques. Cultivating an ethos of generosity is not an exclusively solitary endeavour. It also necessitates what Connolly (paraphrasing Deleuze) calls the 'cultural collectivization and politicization of arts of the self' (Connolly, 2002a: 108). Work on the self is required in order to tend one's ethical sensibility in relation to others. This newly tended sensibility is then brought to bear on micropolitical relations, serving to reconfigure them in a more open and responsive direction (see also Connolly, 1999: Chap. 6, for a fuller discussion of the political implications of this ethos). There is thus a dynamic relation between the two.

As Connolly has it, the lifeblood of a *democratic politics of becoming* is 'presumptive generosity' and arts of the self plus micropolitics are the means by which it is folded into the visceral register of being *and* into the public ethos of political life (Connolly, 2002a: 137). This is where I want to press Connolly's argument further from a democratic perspective. As he acknowledges, there is nothing in the affective or infrasensible dimensions of thinking *per se* that necessarily produces a stance of generosity towards the other. Indeed, the converse is entirely possible as he observes in *Why I Am Not a Secularist*, noting that the 'visceral register' may act 'to harden strife between partisans' (Connolly, 1999: 3).[7] The links that are formed between 'practices of memory, perception, thinking, judgement, institutional design, and political ethos' (Connolly, 2002a: 21) may well work to nurture resentment rather than to support a generous ethical stance. In fact, I would surmise, they might do more than this: they might also nourish and sustain forms of subordination through their recycling of norms of possibility and thence also of impossibility (see Butler, 2004a: 31).

To illustrate what I mean by this, in the next section of this chapter, I explore how race hatred is produced and supported by the circulation and transfer of affect, a circulation and transfer that I argue constitutes certain bodies as hated and as hateful. My focus here is on an essay written by Audre Lorde, entitled 'Eye to Eye: Black Women, Hatred, and Anger' (Lord, 1984a: 145 175), originally published in 1983. I have three purposes in reading Lorde's work with and against Connolly's: to show that the relation between resentment and generosity is more complex than Connolly assumes; to raise questions about the conditions of possibility for cultivating generosity, including who might be considered culturally capable of the democratic work Connolly describes; and, finally, to suggest that democratic struggle also involves a struggle with norms, and specifically with the social and cultural norms that render some persons unintelligible.

## Race-hate and the construction of loathsome bodies

As the title of Lorde's essay suggests, her topic is the anger of Black women or, rather, her own anger as a Black woman. It is not her anger against the white racist culture that has produced her as an object of resentment that

concerns her primarily, though she is certainly vexed by this and it underpins other essays in the volume from which 'Eye to Eye' comes. It is the anger she feels in her interactions with other Black women.

In order to work on this anger, Lorde has first to attend to the suffering she continues to feel as a result of 'unmetabolized pain', as she calls it. Pain, that is, that has not yet been 'recognized [or] named' and that thus cannot be 'transformed into something else' (Lord, 1984a: 171). As part of her attempt to metabolize that pain, Lorde works over a series of prior experiences concerning her treatment at the hands of white Americans. She offers six anecdotes, the first of which I will consider in this chapter. It concerns the 5-year-old Audre:

> The AA subway to Harlem. I clutch my mother's sleeve, her arms full of shopping bags, christmas-heavy. The wet smell of winter clothes, the train's lurching. My mother spots an almost seat, pushes my little snowsuited body down. On one side of me a man reading a paper. On the other, a woman in a fur hat staring at me. Her mouth twitches as she stares and then her gaze drops down, pulling mine with it. Her leather-gloved hand plucks at the line where my new blue snowpants and her sleek fur coat meet. She jerks her coat closer to her. I look. I do not see whatever terrible thing she is seeing on the seat between us    probably a roach. But she has communicated her horror to me. It must be something very bad from the way she's looking, so I pull my snowsuit closer to me away from it, too. When I look up the woman is still staring at me, her nose holes and eyes huge. And suddenly I realize there is nothing crawl-ing up the seat between us; it is me she doesn't want her coat to touch. The fur brushes my face as she stands with a shudder and holds on to a strap in the speeding train. Born and bred a New York City child, I quickly slide over to make room for my mother to sit down. No word has been spoken. I'm afraid to say anything to my mother because I don't know what I've done. I look at the sides of my snowpants, secretly. Is there something on them? Something's going on here I do not understand, but I will never forget it. Her eyes. The flared nostrils. The hate.
>
> (ibid.: 147  148)[8]

The origin of the noun, 'emotion', is Latin [from *è movè  re (è   out + movè  re* to move)]. It is a noun of action. The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives one of its obsolete forms as 'A moving out, migration, transference from one place to another'. What Lorde bears witness to in her testimony is pre-cisely this: something    emotion, affect, it is not yet clear    moving out, migrating, transferring from the ageless fur-coated body of the white woman to the confused, uncomprehending child. As her nostrils flare, mouth twitches, huge eyes stare, hand 'jerks' pulling her coat closer to her and body shudders on standing to hold the rail strap, wordlessly, the corpus of the woman symptomatically expresses a set of 'thought-imbued energies' (Connolly,

2002a: 76) that pass to the child, conveying *hatred* of her small black body. It is, as the older Audre comments, the young Audre's flesh, her skin, that has exposed her to the woman's affect-imbued gaze. It is her body   her black body   that has made her vulnerable to this affective transfer (Butler, 2004a: 21; 2004b: 26).

Affect, as Connolly observes, is contagious; it infects as it 'flows *across* bodies' (Connolly, 2002a: 75).[9] This infectiousness interests me. For the affect that passes between the bodies of woman and child, passes not between two pre-constituted bodies, I propose, rather, as it passes, it *produces* one of those bodies, on Lorde's telling, as a hated body, a hateful black body. The affect exhibited by the woman expresses, in other words, a racially freighted and culturally encoded emotion, race-hatred, that infects the child. Or so Lorde believes. Even though the 5-year old Audre cannot initially 'name' the hatred she sees in the woman's eyes, she sees it nevertheless.[10] Her flesh is shaped by it. The hatred corporealizes her. Furthermore, Lorde's body, the 'porous boundary' always already given over to the other (Butler, 2004b: 134 135), is at that moment inserted into an economy of hate where it is produced (ultimately reproduced) and circulates as a pollutant, an impurity, a 'bad' body (as Lorde describes her fleshly self). It is made into a corpus that cannot be allowed to 'touch' the 'pure' white body of the woman seated next to her. And, of course, to guarantee this non-touching   indeed to negate the possibility of touch   the woman herself stands up. She literally moves away from the child. The space of the subway train becomes an affectively-imbued space, a politicized space.[11] At this moment, difference, following Connolly we might say, is transformed into otherness, a denigrated, devalued otherness.

Taken together with the five other equally distressing stories Lorde tells of her meetings with white Americans, we see how her fleshy body is reiteratively invested with emotional value, a value that performatively shapes it as a body   a repulsive body, a 'Black' woman's body, a body 'steeped in hatred' (Lorde, 1984a: 146). It becomes a body, to borrow from Connolly, that 'by the very visibility of its mode of *being* as other' (Connolly, 2002b: 66) is produced again and again within this racialized economy of hate as an existential threat.[12] Racist culture is thus corporealized through the movement of affect between two (or more) racially marked bodies, reinscribing that marking as it flows between them. It is this flow of affect at a micropolitical level, I suggest, that shores up racial resentment and bolsters racial hierarchies. Hatred and loathing are not independent of or separate from the culture of racism; they are layered into it, both its visceral products and its mainstays. They are one of the dispositional anchors feeding off, yet nourishing that culture, encoded in, to borrow from Connolly's borrowing from Foucault, the 'symbolic systems' and 'real practices' that normalize, regulate and discipline the fleshy bodies of those performatively constituted as inferior, not-good-enough, as Black and female (Connolly, 1995: 195).

It is where Lorde goes next in her discussion of race-hatred that is telling. She reveals how the hatred and contempt that circulate through the affective

economy of racism are deeply, perniciously, contagious contaminating not just relations between Black women and the white Americans they meet but also *the relations between Black women*. 'Every Black woman in America', Lorde writes, 'lives her life somewhat along a wide curve of ancient and unexpressed angers.' Since '[o]ther Black women are not the root cause nor the source of that pool of anger', she wonders, 'why does that anger unleash itself most tellingly against another Black woman at the least excuse?' 'Why', she asks, 'do I judge her in a more critical light than any other, becoming enraged when she does not measure up?' (Lorde, 1984a: 145). Her answer, cruelly truncated for the purposes of this chapter, is that her rage is an effect of internalizing racism's visceral register. The hatred exhibited towards her, becomes a hatred she turns against herself; the body that is hated by others becomes a body she hates; the loathing others exhibit towards her becomes a loathing directed against her self. The circulation of hate    with its emotionalization of the black body and its corporealization of culture    does not stop there, however. It pulses though the affective economy of racism 'organizing attachments' (Connolly, 2002a: 21), *affect*ing judgements and actions, (and to paraphrase Connolly, 2002a: 19) recoiling back on Lorde as it sets emotional barriers between not only her and white Americans but also between her and other Black women    her sisters, her mother, her daughter, her friends, anonymous Black women she encounters in libraries.

The passage of corporealized emotion that scores Lorde's encounter with the white woman on the train continues its movement on and through the social body she traverses marking her corporeo-emotional encounters with the  Black women she meets there:

> For if I take the white world's estimation of me as Black-woman-synonymous-with-garbage to heart, then deep down inside myself I will always believe that I am truly good for nothing. But it is very hard to look absorbed hatred in the face. *It is easier to see you as good for nothing because you are like me.* So when you support me because you are like me, that merely confirms that you are nothing too, just like me. It's a no-win position, a case of nothing supporting nothing and someone's gonna have to pay for that one, and it sure ain't gonna be me!
>
> (Lorde, 1984a: 168 169, my emphasis)

Lorde's struggle suggests that the 'entanglements of identity with difference' that Connolly sees, in *The Ethos of Pluralization*, as central to the 'rage against difference' (Connolly, 1995: xvii) might operate in different ways than he usually acknowledges. As Lorde's essay attests, it is not those whose identity differs from hers whom she resents, it is those with whom she shares an identity    Black women.[13] The norms that define Lorde as other    as less-than    generate, I would suggest, the optic through which she views those like her. They colour her 'visceral habits of perception' (Connolly, 2002a: 47), conditioning her affective response to other Black women.[14] So her aim in

this essay is to consider ways to stop metabolizing the hatred that has become 'like daily bread' to her, that she has 'learned to live upon' (Lorde, 1984a: 152, 156), because the by-product of that metabolization is rage against her 'sisters'.

How, though, in a context like that described by Lorde, can the abundance of life be embraced by someone who is taken by others and who takes themselves to incarnate lack (lack of humanity, lack of reason, lack of goodness, etc.), someone who 'count[s] for less than nothing' (ibid.: 159)? How is it possible for them to practise presumptive generosity towards others when their entire body and being are branded as hateful and loathsome both by themselves and by others? Lorde appears to concur with Connolly that working on the self is not just possible for those like her but also vital for them.[15] This, however, has less to do with the articulation of an appropriate democratic ethos capable of embracing and facilitating the difference constitutive of pluralism (Connolly's project). It has rather to do with survival psychic, social, personal. The reason for this is because the norms defining Lorde are ones that produce her as less-than, as 'never-good-enough' (ibid.: 170). When she, as a Black American, expresses emotion, she is told: 'SO WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU, ANYWAY? DON'T BE SO SENSITIVE!' (ibid.: 148), because within the prevailing racialized world she inhabits, Black subjects are posited as over-emotional, even as saturated with emotion.

The stakes in engaging with her emotions are, therefore, distinct from those typically envisaged by Connolly. As she writes:

> in america (*sic*) white people, by and large, have more time and space to afford the luxury of scrutinizing their emotions. Black people in this country have always had to attend closely to the hard and continuous work of survival in the most material and immediate planes. But it is a temptation to move from this fact to the belief that Black people do not need to examine our feelings; or that they are unimportant, *since they have so often been used to stereotype and infantilize us*, or that these feelings are not vital to our survival; or, worse, that there is some acquired virtue in not feeling them deeply. That is carrying a time-bomb wired to our emotions.
>
> (ibid.: 171 my emphasis)

In demanding the right to work on her emotions, Lorde is, in effect, challenging particular norms of possibility.

Let me explain. As I see it, the issue here concerns what Butler has called 'liveability' or, more recently, 'survivability': that is, 'the ability to live and breathe and move' (Butler, 2004a: 31). For Butler, the ability to live a liveable life is implicitly tied to the norm of possibility: the existence, in other words, of norms by which particular persons can be recognized as fully human. In turn, this is tied to the idea that to be a subject is to be intelligible. As Butler writes in *The Psychic Life of Power*, the subject is 'the linguistic occasion for

the individual to achieve and reproduce intelligibility, the linguistic occasion of its existence and agency' (Butler, 1997: 11). The norms governing intelligibility determine who counts    who or 'what will and will not appear within the domain of the social' (Butler, 2004a: 42). The survival of any subject depends, therefore, on their intelligibility    their approximation to the norm. Those outside or beyond the norm are by contrast unintelligible    '"impossible", illegible, unrealizable, unreal and illegitimate' (Butler, 1999: viii). They are, in effect, non-existent as subjects.

It is these norms of possibility that Lorde, in my view, is contesting when she argues that Black women must attend to their emotions. This is because Black women's emotions have been construed historically as unimportant, infantile or as excessive. Rather than assuming that ethical responsiveness is open to (almost) all as Connolly contends, Lorde demonstrates how racializing norms work restrictively to underwrite who is capable of ethical work on themselves. To date, in America, for Lorde, this has meant white people not Black.

To be fair, Connolly himself notes that 'There is no cosmic guarantee that such a sensibility must find a foothold in everyone. Having a relatively fortunate childhood helps' (Connolly, 2002a: 197). Those on whom the 'contingencies of life press … hard' (Connolly, 1999: 201, n. 11) may struggle to find space to work on themselves. He even goes as far as to note that 'in a highly stratified society many individuals and constituencies are in an unfavourable position to pursue such experimentation', though he then qualifies this by noting '[t]his latter fact, however, can easily be exaggerated' (ibid.: 149 150). But he then follows on from this by suggesting that because of stratification the onus increases on those 'who do find themselves in a favorable position' to cultivate a more generous sensibility towards others (ibid.: 150). Hence his focus on practices through which 'We pluralists' (Connolly, 1995: xix) can engage with others (a perpetually renewable 'them') in a less stingy and more civil fashion. What he does not do is consider how those in a less favourable position, those who are culturally unintelligible and unreal, might be able to engage democratically.

In the final section of this chapter, therefore, I want to reflect on the implications for democratic engagement of Connolly's construction of democracy as an ethos (see also Vázquez-Arroyo, 2004).

## Democratic engagement for the unintelligible

One of the tensions Connolly discusses in his work is that between pluralism and pluralization. His attempt to rework the 'pluralist imagination' is precisely an attempt to explore the tension between these two impulses (Connolly, 1995). He seeks a way to negotiate, that is, the way that the pre-existing 'culture of pluralism' acts both as a resource for pluralization (the emergence of new modes of difference) and also as a limitation on those new drives. As we have seen, he advocates an ethos of critical responsiveness as a means to

remain open   or, perhaps more accurately to become open   to these 'contemporary movements of pluralization' (ibid.: xiv xv). His focus is thus on how to react positively to the emergence of new political movements challenging the status quo. This is where generosity fits. Connolly presents it as the most appropriate ethical response to democratic movements; part of what he terms 'agonistic democracy' (Connolly, 1991). There is certainly much that is laudable in this endeavour. I worry, however, that it also risks rendering those such as Lorde unintelligible as democratic subjects.

When generosity is figured as the norm governing democratic engagement then those who are ungenerous or resentful are, in effect, posited as outside that norm. As such, they are figured as impossible and illegible as democratic subjects. This adjudication depends, of course, on the idea that *to be an agonistic democrat is to embrace an ethos of generosity*. To allow that agonistic democracy involves more than presumptive generosity, we clearly need to consider how those like Lorde who are both resentful and normatively unintelligible might be able to make demands. We need to think about how they can act democratically. I want to suggest that one way they might do so is by mobilizing their resentment and their unintelligibility, both of which involve struggling with the norms that define who counts.

Democracy is conventionally concerned with how excluded groups have striven to transform their lot in life. One way of characterizing this is to conceive of democracy in terms of the performative constitution and reconstitution of the *demos*. The people   *demos*   (the democratic 'we') is produced when the excluded demand to be acknowledged. They might lay claim to a right, for instance, or an ontology, from which they have been constitutively excluded. In Jacques Rancière's formulation 'those who have no right to be counted … make themselves of some account' (Rancière, 1999: 27). It is when the unintelligible, those who fail to figure in the political realm as fully human, declare a 'wrong' (to borrow from Rancière) that the people (*qua* democratic subject) are produced. The effect, as Judith Butler observes, is that 'an invocation that has no prior legitimacy can have the effect of challenging existing forms of legitimacy', clearing the way for new, more universal, form (Butler, 1997:147). Arguably, marshalling resentment in the form, say, of anger at injustice or inequality   rather than generosity   will be necessary to galvanize such declarations of wrong. Moreover, their effect may be to heighten conflict by exposing the contingency of the social order   by revealing 'the presence of two worlds in one' (Rancière, 2001: 21).

This, I want to suggest, is what happens with Lorde. Her Black body renders her unintelligible in a 'white' world   this is why she hates and loathes it and other bodies like it. Her resentment towards herself and others like her gives rise to her demand to have her emotions recognized as *human* emotions, as legitimate emotions, and thus to her challenge to the terms that define her as 'never-good-enough'. While her aim *vis-à-vis* other Black women might be to seek to transform those emotions into more generous ones towards them, there is a second dimension to this process. In seeking to love herself and

those like her, Lorde is simultaneously contesting the (white) norms of intelligibility governing the social world she inhabits. As she comments in another essay in *Sister Outsider*, 'My anger is a response to racist attitudes and to the actions and presumptions that arise out of these attitudes'; it is an 'anger of exclusion, of unquestioned privilege, of racial distortions, of silence, ill-use, stereotyping, defensiveness, misnaming, betrayal and co-optation' (Lorde, 1984b: 124). 'Focused with precision', however, anger 'can become a powerful source of energy serving progress and *change*' (ibid.: 127, my emphasis). In fact, anger, as Lorde understands it, in declaring a wrong can lead to a fundamental shift in 'those assumptions underlining our lives' (ibid.: 127).[16] Through the expression of this anger (or resentment, in Connolly's lexicon), Lorde as a person of no account petitions to be counted and, in so doing, her act is a *democratic* act, potentially a radically transformative one, because it seeks to reconfigure the norms defining the terms of liveability, of survivability.

## Conclusion

Convinced that politics cannot purge itself of affect or emotion or conceive of thinking as a purely cognitive process, in this chapter I have endeavoured to understand what it is that emotions and affects do politically and how they do it. Thinking with Connolly, I have suggested they configure bodies and intercorporeal relations. In the case described by Lorde their movement from one sensuous being to another acts as a mechanism of subordination. In the circulation of hatred and loathing, as I showed earlier, hatred becomes self-hatred and loathing becomes self-loathing. Self-identification is filtered through the other, layered into the flesh, incarnated in somatic dispositions towards others, remembered in conscious thought and at levels subsisting below it.

Where Connolly has sought to show how affect and emotion might be worked on to generate the agonistic respect that he believes ought to underpin democratic encounters, thinking against him, I have sought to demonstrate how they might work to support exclusion, to intensify discord between persons, perpetuate the abjection of certain bodies, and reinforce prejudice. In short, how they might generate and bolster resentment. As such, I have endeavoured to confront Connolly's stress on generosity as central to the cultivation of a democratic ethos with the way that negative affects (such as resentment, anger, hatred and loathing) might both block the cultivation of that ethos, as well as fostering democratic struggle. Out of a concern that Connolly's assumption of generosity as the grounds for democratic engagement acts as a norm of possibility rendering the ungenerous, the angry, the resentful unthinkable as democratic subjects, I have also indicated how resentment and other negative affects may drive the unintelligible to make democratic demands. In this respect, to view democracy as an ethos practised by the favourably located (who respond positively to the struggles of the

disenfranchised) is to hazard conceiving it far too narrowly. For democracy is also, essentially, 'the place where the people appear' (Rancière, 1999: 100).

## Notes

1 Unfortunately, I do not have scope in this chapter to elaborate how affect and emotion might be differentiated. I have tended to use affect here to refer to what Erin Manning terms 'the with ness of the movement of the world' (Manning, 2007: xxi), an initial visceral response; while reserving 'emotion' to refer to culturally encoded and thus culturally variable sentiments. Emotion might be thought of, therefore, as affect canalized along certain culturally defined routes.

2 In this, Connolly goes much further than thinkers such as Michael Walzer, for instance, who, while also critical of the limits of liberal rationalism and similarly prepared to contest the antinomy between 'passionate intensity' and 'principled rationality' that underpins it (Walzer, 2004: 130), fail to explore the mechanisms through which affect inflects and modulates thought and vice versa.

3 Specifically, Connolly notes that his aim *vis à vis* Nietzsche is to 'turn the geneal ogist of resentment on his head by exploring democratic politics as a medium through which to expose resentment and to encourage the struggle against it' (Connolly, 2002a: 154). Here Connolly is citing his own words in *Political Theory and Modernity* (Connolly, 1988: 175), where he explores Nietzsche's work at length.

4 To be clear, I am not saying resentment or negative affects will necessarily work in this way, just that they might.

5 For more on the implications of the adoption of Spinozan 'parallelism', see Chapter 4 of *Neuropolitics* (Connolly, 2002a) and Connolly's essay 'Experience and Experiment' (Connolly, 2006).

6 As Stephen White reminds us, for Nietzsche, the overcoming of resentment required a distancing from the ordinary and everyday; for Connolly, it is the extraordinary in the ordinariness of everyday life that interests him (White, 2000: 133).

7 See *Neuropolitics* where he discusses how one might shun a friend because 'a racial stereotype clicks in at the possibility of intimacy' (Connolly, 2002a: 35).

8 See also Ahmed (2004). Ahmed's focus differs from mine, however, in that she is interested in how emotions secure collectives. She thus reads this passage in terms of the hate experienced by the white woman and how it functions to align her with 'the bodily form of the community' (that is, a white communal body) against black bodies/Black people (ibid.: 33). What this interpretation occludes, however, is Lorde's focus on *intra* racial not inter racial hatred.

9 The full quote is:

> The contagion of affect flows *across bodies*, as well as across conversations, as when anger, revenge, or inspiration is communicated across individuals or constituencies by the timbre of our voices, looks, hits, caresses, gestures, the bunching of muscles in the neck, and flushes of the skin. Such contagion flows through face to face meetings, academic classes, family dinners, public assem blies, TV speeches, sitcoms, soap operas and films. Affect is infectious across layered assemblages, human and otherwise.
>
> (Connolly, 2002a: 75)

10 As she observes later in the essay: 'If I'd been grown, I'd probably have laughed or snarled or been hurt, seen it for what it was. But I am five years old. *I see it, I record it, I do not name it, so the experience is incomplete. It is not pain; it becomes suffering*' (Lorde, 1984a: 172, my emphasis).

11 The fact that the encounter takes place on a subway train is, I think, significant in that it intensifies the affect that is released. In future work, I want to develop the link between space and affect further.

12 If I had time, I might press into service Judith Butler's discussion of materialization to explain this process; that is, where 'to be material means to materialize', and 'where the principle of that materialization is precisely what "matters" about that body, its very intelligibility' (Butler, 1993: 32). Matter and meaning are inextricably linked. To materialize is to become meaningful; it is to fit within a particular frame of intelligibility, sustained through the reiteration of regulatory norms. The mate rialization of Lorde's body as a hated hateful *Black* body is thus secured through normative violence. See Lloyd (2007: 68 77).

13 To clarify, I am expressly not arguing for a fixed sense of identity (and it seems doubtful Lorde is either). Identity, as I have indicated elsewhere, is shot through with difference, even contradiction (Lloyd, 2005). So I am using it here in a non essentialist sense.

14 Chapter 2 of *Neuropolitics* is called 'The Color of Perception'.

15 Certainly in the last few pages of her essay, Lorde turns her attention to how to 'metabolize' the anger she feels towards others, talking of Black women 'mothering ourselves': learning to 'recognize and nurture the creative parts of each other without always understanding what will be created' and 'laying to rest what is weak, timid, and damaged without despisal' (Lorde, 1984a: 173 174); and noting how learning self love must be a prelude to learning how to love another or accepting their love (ibid.: 175; see also Connolly, 2002b: 176).

16 It might seem appropriate at this point to press into service a distinction Connolly uses in a footnote in *The Ethos of Pluralization*, where he differentiates between *ressentiment* understood as 'stored resentment that has poisoned the soul and migrated to places where it is hidden and denied' and resentment, which on this occasion at least, refers to the sentiment that 'might arise when someone has injured you unjustly, and you call that person on it, or when you are enraged by lies another tells about you and gets away with it' (Connolly, 1995: 213 214, n. 17). We might, that is, argue that Lorde's encounters with other Black women express *ressentiment* while her anger at White Americans expresses (righteous) resentment. As the discussion above shows, both experiences for Lorde are inextricably inter connected. It is unclear to me, therefore, exactly how we would differentiate between them.

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# 7 A post-secular faith
## Connolly on pluralism and evil

*James Martin*

## Introduction

In his 2002 State of the Union Address, US President George W. Bush warned his audience of an 'axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world'. It is tempting to roll one's eyes in contemptuous disbelief at this now familiar refrain. Yet, however we may react to Bush's terminology, it is certain that we cannot help but react. That phrase, of course, was calculated precisely to have an immediate, practical effect by dividing the world and forcing us to take sides. For few notions have the visceral, rhetorical power of the term 'evil'. Even when we oppose its use, we often react with the very gut instinct such notions are designed to activate. While, on occasion, philosophers accuse each other of 'category errors', perhaps even of some disgraceful 'performative contradiction', these complaints barely come close to the sheer normative force of vocabularies that invoke religious terms.

It might be assumed, then, that a serious, emancipatory politics cannot deal in such charged concepts without collapsing into a potentially barbarous mysticism. Surely the language of evil lends itself too easily to the apocalyptic visions of reactionary conservativism to be of value for those with progressive goals? Yet William E. Connolly is one of a number of contemporary political philosophers who has looked to the vocabulary of religion and, indeed, to the term evil in order to explore the possibilities for a radical, democratic politics. How he does this and how we might respond to the challenge to think pluralism in relation to evil are the focus of this chapter.

## The post-secular turn

If national and international politics have long been witness to the deployment of a none-too-subtle religious language, in recent years this language has also come to preoccupy political philosophy. Ideas about evil, but also other elements of a religious style of discourse, including the very notion of religion itself, have come into focus in broadly 'post-modern' philosophical enquiries (see, for example, Badiou, 2001; 2003; Derrida, 2001; Eagleton, 2005; Vattimo and Rorty, 2005). Common to many of these enquiries is a

deliberate renunciation of 'secularist' rationalism and an effort to engage an array of ideas and experiences that, once, might have been dismissed by a section of the progressive Left as being of an unacceptably religious nature. Of course, aspects of religious discourse have always been present in philosophy   in the sense that modern philosophy 'took over' or 're-occupied' the fundamental themes that theology once arrogated to itself   but political philosophers have long been wary of thinking their concepts primarily in the terms of religion, for fear of giving ground to what Hegel called a 'rapturous haziness' that offers 'edification rather than insight' (Hegel, 1977: 6, 5). If modern philosophy inherits questions of the soul, salvation, charity or justice, it has largely modified these terms by translating them into a secular frame.

However, in the work of recent thinkers such as, for example, Derrida, Laclau or Badiou, we witness a returning interest in the structure of religious discourse, be it through notions of the 'Messianic' or the universalism of St Paul. In renouncing a purely secular language that renders all experiences transparent to rational discourse, vocabularies attuned to a religious register come close to grasping the sometimes ineffable and often abundant excesses of meaning in social and political contest. Religious texts and religious thought often invite us to reason from an *aporetic* sense of being   a fundamental dislocation of selfhood   as the premise to a deeply ethical engagement with the world. Contemporary philosophers, increasingly released from the secular-rational strait-jacket, have found this combined ethical and ontological language to be a bountiful resource. Without in any way endorsing religious worship, nevertheless the practical, performative character of the language of the religious   its direct appeal to a sense of self-hood and its paradoxical insertion in the world   has caught the imagination of philosophers (see Caputo, 2001). As we shall see, Connolly shares in this 'postsecular' trend in his effort to reconstruct a radical pluralism by reference to a concept of evil.

But the notion of evil also has a particular resonance outside of philosophical enquiry. Evil is a powerful evaluative term in popular discourse as we continue to witness experiences of terrorism, genocide, civil conflict and plenty other acts of daily but almost incomprehensible barbarity (see Cole, 2006). As a term that designates the utterly malicious, sometimes barely comprehensible qualities or motivations of certain acts, accusations of evil usually encompass both a profound moral response and themselves invoke a desired moral order as a way of framing and making sense of actions that transgress the limits of our moral intuitions. For this reason, too, it is also a deeply problematic notion. It may help us look across our moral horizons but in so doing it permits us crudely to reinforce them, assigning responsibilities and suggesting punishments for moral transgressions that, on reflection, may seem just as bad as the 'crimes' they claim to redress. In setting a moral frontier, popular discourses of evil may allow us to name the unnameable, yet they often do so by radically narrowing ethical engagement. The 'problem' of evil, at least from the perspective of post-secularism, concerns how we remain critically attuned

to our evaluative intuitions while at the same time avoiding the importation of crude, exclusionary logics that a highly charged language often entails.

Below I want to explore some elements of this problem in relation to Connolly's work. For Connolly occupies a distinctive position in contemporary political philosophy, somewhere between the two poles noted above. That is, as he has himself declared, he stands as an exemplary post-secularist, one seeking positively to engage the dynamic technologies of the self offered up in religious discourse (see Connolly, 1999) while refusing the moral conservatism and metaphysical rigidity common to religion in favour of a radical pluralism (see Connolly, 2005a). Yet, as we shall see, although Connolly wholeheartedly rejects a metaphysical notion of evil, the term returns in his own reaction to the September 11 attacks in the USA, a 'non-theological' concept of evil then comes to stand as an important plank in his defence of pluralism. As I shall argue below, this version of evil appears to describe a destructive nihilism, conceived as the visceral annihilation, or closure, of a meaningful world. In turn, this usage raises the question of whether, in defence of a robust pluralism, it is necessary to figure evil in a stronger narrative than Connolly is prepared to admit.

## Pluralism beyond secularism

As is well known, Connolly's contribution to political philosophy is propelled by a radical orientation towards pluralism that extends beyond the established liberal pluralism of post-war political science to endorse a variety of social differences from race and ethnicity to gender and sexuality. In *Why I Am Not a Secularist* (Connolly, 1999), Connolly underscores the post-secular reasoning that informs his radical pluralism. Secularism, he argues, has tended to narrow down the horizons of democratic thought, constraining it within a liberal mindset that, he feels, is 'insufficiently alert to the layered density of political thinking and judgment' (ibid.: 4). While secular liberalism has doubtless advanced the cause of democracy, not least in its separation of Church and state, its tendency to an arid rationalism, and often to a dogmatic insistence on a single form of 'public reason', nevertheless fails to engage the rich and contrasting multiplicity of experiences, libidinal investments and beliefs at work in a democratic order.

Connolly's 'post-modern' pluralism, by contrast, seeks to open up to a greater range of social and cultural experiences of difference by refashioning secularism around what he has called a 'politics of becoming', that is, an anti-essentialist conceptualisation of social identities, differences and their mutual relations (see Connolly, 2002). While retaining secularism's distrust of dogmatic religiosity, Connolly promotes an 'ethos of engagement' among secular and religious traditions in order that new connections as well as contrasting differences can be positively explored. An ethos of engagement is imagined to open up possibilities in which different 'faiths' (theist and atheist), as he calls them, may enter into contest and modify their mutual hostility, with the potential to cultivate a wider landscape of democratic interaction.

'Forbearance and modesty' claims Connolly 'are presumptive virtues in pluralist politics' (Connolly, 1999: 9). Greater engagement among contrasting faiths, conducted in an atmosphere of 'generosity' towards the differences of the other, can escape secular liberalism's hard-line refusal to engage 'the visceral register of subjectivity and intersubjectivity' without simultaneously submitting to a single conception of the Good. Although he does not imagine pluralism to bring a glorious peace and harmony to diverse and antagonistic democratic cultures, Connolly dares to argue for a public life where contrasting metaphysical conceptions have not been 'strained out' or privatised but brought into a more productive proximity. The best that can be hoped for here is perhaps an 'agonistic' respect rather than a new consensus.

Connolly's efforts to address the layered, 'visceral register of being' as a mark of the depth and intensity of social identity are central to his argument for pluralism. For here plurality is itself a condition of the self, as much as of society, and Connolly's aim in delineating an ethos of engagement is to permit the otherness within individual selves to flow more freely than at present in a wider world of other selves. Plurality is both 'within' and 'without', we might say. Connolly's proposed ethos is not therefore a rational consensus to be achieved by universal reason among self-contained, singular selves, nor even a unifying cultural tradition, so much as an invitation to explore the otherness within, to soften    without altogether abandoning    the structures of personal identity.

In this endeavour, Connolly takes up a distinctively Nietzschean orientation to morality. Moral values are treated not as eternal principles so much as metaphysical tools to order the layers of desire across the fabric of the self. The task is not to relinquish these in favour of some 'post-metaphysical' order of procedural values but to return ourselves to the work they do on the 'inside' as well as the 'outside'. It is no surprise, then, to find Connolly inviting us to consider cultivating the 'arts of the self', that is, to undertake a 'selective desanctification' of elements of our individual identity, weakening its hierarchies and exploring its intensities such that its differences no longer coalesce around a dogmatic vision of wholeness and unity (see Connolly, 1999: 143 152).

Although brief, this summary of Connolly's post-secular approach to pluralism serves to illuminate some of the character of his political ethics, in particular the Nietzschean/Foucauldian presentation of how moral values work upon the self. It was in this vein, too, that Connolly undertook his earlier examination in *The Augustinian Imperative* (Connolly, 1993) of the kind of moral authoritarianism he hoped (and continues) to challenge with his pluralist ethos of engagement. It is here, too, that we first come across the problem of evil in his work.

## Connolly on Augustine

The 'Augustinian Imperative', as Connolly sees it, involves the designation of an authoritative and objective moral order towards which we are encouraged,

as a matter of urgency, to adapt ourselves 'from within'. In his book, Connolly explores the structure of this argument by traversing Saint Augustine's texts concerning his own (that is, Augustine's) conversion to Christianity and his admonishment of pagan practices. While Connolly follows the logic of Augustine's Christian message, he is not interested in the nuances of theology so much as the exemplary nature of Augustine's moral discourse. The faith to which Augustine converts and upon which he becomes an authority can be seen to exemplify the structure of moral discourse more generally, whether it be religiously inspired morality or a secular version of the Moral Law. The Augustinian imperative is the imperative of all moralities: if you fear the loss of yourself in eternal damnation, then reach out for salvation by purifying your soul of evil through acceptance of the Divine command. Moral order will then be restored.

Bound up with the imperative to align oneself with the moral order, as Connolly views it, is a politics of difference and identity in which the self is constituted through moralising practices that shape and discipline, hollow out and repress various elements of subjectivity. The transcendental source of commands that calculate punishment and rewards in this scenario is all the more powerful for its presumed neutrality and its inscrutability. Subjects of Christian conversion act upon themselves with strategies of power designed to smooth out moral unevenness, internal dissonances, contradictions and fugitive experiences that pervert and transgress a Divinely instituted harmony they are forbidden to question.

But, of course, there is a deception at work here. Connolly examines Augustine's comments on confession as a practice in which a divided will, in need of unification with a 'higher' transcendental guide, invokes the very order that purportedly 'completes' it. Echoing Foucault's remarks on confession as a power relationship operative via a procedure of 'unburdening', an interiorised self-disclosure aimed at normalising Truth (see Foucault, 1978: 60 63), Connolly suggests that the very act of confession creates the divided identity that confession is designed to restore. The obsessive attention to admitting and expunging one's personal misdemeanours and desires is itself a process of fabricating a higher, purer self against which, inevitably, we are diminished. Likewise, Augustine's message is sustained through the vilification of certain practices as well as other doctrines that present religion, and particularly Christianity, in ways that reduce the demand for salvation by an omnipotent God.

While the question of evil is not the sole focus of Connolly's enquiries, nevertheless, the nature of evil for Augustine occupies much of the text. Evil denotes the transgression of the moral order, whether conceived as a Divine command or the natural harmony of the Cosmos created by God. Rooted in the 'original sin' of Adam and Eve, evil is not itself a quality of the Divine will but is the force that subverts that will. It lies within the intrinsically divided soul of the individual subject who desires to act with free will, that is, without the guidance of its higher source. Evil is therefore a condition in

which, like Adam and Eve, we are set loose from our essential dependency on a higher will and act with what Augustine calls the 'deformed liberty' of subjects who presume the autonomy of God himself. 'Evil' therefore describes a condition by which, in acting against the Divine command, we deprive ourselves of our full identities as subjects of God.

This conception of evil as the transgression of an intrinsic moral order, as the self-deprivation of a higher moral source with which, despite ourselves, we are intrinsically bound up, has become a powerful counterpoint to modern liberal thought. Arguably, it provides a more compelling response to the question of malice and wickedness in human behaviour than did Kant, for example, in his *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. For Kant (1998), 'radical evil' appears, ultimately, to reduce to egoistic behaviour    a failure fully to attune oneself to the universality of a rational maxim. For Kantian liberals, moral demands issue from an autonomous rational subjectivity whose law must be self-given. But, as Simon Critchley argues, this autonomous self is a precarious construction, premised on an asserted 'fact of reason' that can only tell us what our duty is but cannot motivate us to pursue it (Critchley, 2007: 26 37). In François Flahault's terms, the problem of 'malice', as he prefers to call it, is that it affects 'subjects of existence' and not 'subjects of knowledge' (Flahault, 2003: 9). That is, evil (or malice) reaches into the structure of our being and our answering it cannot merely be a matter of knowing 'right' from 'wrong'. In Critchley's terms, a compelling ethical demand is one that divides us to the core, one that exceeds the fantasy of autonomous selfhood. The rational subjects of the Enlightenment, who regarded themselves as essentially good, sought to master themselves so as to escape the problems of existence raised with the idea of evil. By contrast, the Augustinian subject is always-already a divided self with a precarious, uncertain existence that cannot be mastered without Divine guidance.

The attraction of Augustine, to Connolly and to many others, then, lies precisely in this acknowledgement of the problem of existence    a sense of existential unease or division that persistently erupts within us and which refuses the psychic self-sufficiency of Enlightenment rationality. As suggested earlier, it is precisely this awareness of the aporetic nature of human existence which has attracted post-secularists to religious texts. These have been utilised to explore the contingency of subjectivity and to develop critiques of liberal reason on that basis. Yet Augustine's response to this aporetic condition    the onto-theological strategy of Divine salvation    is, of course, not attractive for those of a radical democratic persuasion. Nor, according to Connolly, is it wholly convincing.

The question of how an omnipotent and omniscient entity can permit, or at least fail to foresee, the transgression of His own will remains a glaring problem and Connolly swiftly exposes this blind spot in Augustine's vision of a Divinely governed order. Indeed, the reason Augustine is worthy of examination at all is because his effort to construct a watertight case for a moral order simply *cannot* fulfil its promise, and the gaps in this case are opportunities for

Connolly to explore moments in Augustine's texts where alternative readings may be possible.

Augustine's imperative turns out to be a good foil for the kind of post-Nietzschean 'generosity' towards difference and otherness that the moralising discourses of 'modern Augustinians'   for instance, the religious Right in America who often dwell upon the absolutes of culture and identity rather than theology   usually disavow (Connolly, 1993: 82). As we have noted above, the 'critical pluralism' to which Connolly subscribes is a kind of inverse of the thirst for a Moral Law. It is the 'inverse' in the differential sense that moralising discourses renounce the 'ethical' engagement with otherness that Connolly welcomes; but it also shares a similar structure of sensibility concerning the inward cultivation of the self, one also present in the work of Nietzsche and Foucault. While both these thinkers set themselves the task of thinking ethics outside the strictures of a universal morality, both, nevertheless, understood the place of self-cultivation and an affirmative 'faith' in overcoming limitations involved in any ethical discourse (ibid.: 119 128, 146 151).

If, then, Connolly's exploration of the Augustinian imperative is designed to critique the tradition   be it secular or religious   of 'smooth morality' and its vilifying hostility towards those who transgress the moral law, nevertheless it is true that he also retains a sympathy for the language of religiosity or, better, the ethical programme of facing up to the sources of diremption within us   or what Connolly calls the 'rift in being'   that Augustine powerfully explores. This characteristically post-secular orientation has an important bearing on how he goes on to develop his approach to pluralism.

## Between nihilism and pluralism

If we fast forward twelve years from the original publication of *The Augustinian Imperative*, however, we find Connolly turning directly to the theme of evil following the terrorist atrocities in the USA of 2001 (see Connolly, 2005b). This piece also appeared, in revised form, as the opening chapter (entitled 'Pluralism and Evil') to his *Pluralism* (Connolly, 2005a). Connolly now revisits his thesis of an Augustinian imperative, this time in relation to Islamicist terrorism and the theological moralising that has accompanied it. In this text, explicitly devoted to the question of evil, Connolly no longer treats evil merely as the *attribution* of responsibility for transgressions against an authoritative moral order. Rather, evil is regarded as an ever-present *temptation* on the part of those who hold to any faith (secular or religious), a temptation to 'take revenge' against the faith of others regarded as subversive or inferior. Describing this as 'the tendency to evil within faith', Connolly now employs the term not merely to describe the repertoire of fundamentalist discourse but also as a legitimate descriptor in itself, openly accepting that the language of evil can be deployed in such a way as 'to retain the sense of suffering and despair attached to the word, while pulling it away from *necessary*

attachment' to ideas of 'a commanding God, free will and primordial guilt' (Connolly, 2005b: 138). That way, he hopes, it might be possible to realign the term evil to the defence, rather than the subversion, of pluralism, relocating it in an expanded, non-theological sense of faith and religiosity.

Once more, then, Connolly's response to the Augustinian imperative is not the secular reaction that denounces religious discourse as such but, rather, he undertakes to step closer to the world of religious faith, to explore its internal structure and tensions. 'To be human', he argues 'is to be inhabited by existential faith' (ibid.: 139). All human experience is relayed through explicit belief systems but also by visceral, embodied investments that exceed the tight rationality of mere 'belief'. Whether we are explicitly religious or not, we are all prone to the disruptive effects such investments produce when challenged or dislodged. To allay the temptation to undertake acts of violent revenge (that is, to practise evil, to enact it upon others), Connolly advises a 'hesitation' within faith rather than a 'universal' morality over and above it. That is, he invites a certain degree of reflectivity that does not undo the complex knots of faith so much as loosen them sufficiently to negotiate a world filled with other kinds of believers.

While we may debate the terms of Connolly's proposed resolution to inter-faith conflicts and their place in sustaining pluralism, what is noticeable here is the characterisation of evil that this text brings to his discussion. For evil is not now for Connolly the transgression of a pre-defined, wholly incontestable moral order. Rather, it designates what we might define as a destructive nihilism, that is, the enforced withdrawal of its victims from an open horizon of being by the imposed negation of difference. For instance, reflecting on the 9/11 attacks, Connolly paints a startling picture of how the perpetration of evil undertakes a negation of one's world:

> Evil surprises; it liquidates sedimented habits of moral trust; it foments categorical uncertainty; it issues in a fervent desire to restore closure to a dirempted world; and it generates imperious demands to take revenge on the guilty parties. When you experience evil, the bottom falls out of your stomach because it has fallen out of your world.
>
> (Connolly, 2005b: 133)

Evil negates your world, it hollows out the guts of your being; it leaves you empty, uncertain, and disoriented. This is no longer the theological evil attributing responsibility for moral transgression but evil conceived as annihilation, the negation of existence. But here Connolly has begun to approach the work of others writing in a post-Nietzschean tradition for whom evil can be translated as a denial or annihilation of being. This notion still shares with Augustine the sense of a deprivation, not of a transcendent God but, rather, of a world of infinite possibilities.

Although, on occasion, Connolly disputes the insights of philosophers such as Heidegger   for whom being is conceived as a fundamental 'openness', the

'dwelling' in a meaningful 'world' (see Heidegger, 1993: 252) his own efforts to describe evil as the collapse of 'your world' nevertheless parallel some of the latter's concerns. In his 'Letter on Humanism', for instance, where Heidegger rejects the reduction of Being (now capitalised) to the qualities of specific beings refusing the association of his philosophy with 'humanism' he refers in passing to evil as a capacity for 'nihiliation', a negating power proper to Being as such. Distinguishing evil from the 'mere baseness of human action', Heidegger describes it instead as the 'malice of rage' or as 'the compulsion to malignancy' that is one of the essential possibilities available to human existence (ibid.: 260, 261) and not a perversion of some fixed ontological structure.

The 'openness to Being' by which Heidegger characterises existence is simultaneously a propensity to enact a closure, to fend off or forget the terrifying 'abyssal' ground that appears when we bring ourselves to question Being. In his *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger referred to the 'demonic' and 'destructively evil' character of modern America and Russia where metaphysical cultures had 'disempowered' the spirit that opens up to Being (Heidegger, 2000: 47 49). Let us set aside, if we may, the reactionary conservatism that informs Heidegger's text (and which led him, momentarily, to utterly misperceive the malicious rage of Nazism). Evil, he suggests in both instances, denotes a particularly virulent, destructive form of closure to the possibilities of Being, a 'darkening of the world'. In a similar vein, as part of his elaboration of freedom as a constitutive dimension of human existence, the French Heideggerian, Jean-Luc Nancy, argues that 'the possibility of evil … is correlative to the introduction of freedom'. Here, freedom is not a civil right or a subjective choice but an ineliminable precondition of any existence:

> This means that freedom cannot present itself without presenting the possibility, inscribed in its essence, of a *free renunciation of freedom*. This very renunciation makes itself known as *wickedness* … [I]nscribing freedom in being amounts to raising to the level of ontology the positive possibility and not through deficiency of evil as much as of good.
>
> (Nancy, 1993: 16 17; italics in original)

Where Connolly talks of the properties of 'faith' and a tendency to evil in the form of revenge, and Heidegger refers to 'Being' and to evil as nihilation and the 'malice of rage', Nancy refers to the 'free renunciation of freedom' as the very possibility of freedom itself. Evil, wickedness, rage, malice: these are the marks not of a 'deformed liberty' that perverts an original purity, as in Augustine, but a possibility for traumatic closure that haunts all beings by virtue of their ontological freedom, a capacity to shut out the light in the aperture to the world that we are as beings. Acts of evil, in this sense, so often reduce us to mere bodies, to organisms at the limits of sheer survival, unable to project ourselves towards a world of open possibilities. Connolly's intimation of a non-theological conception of evil, already pre-figured in *Why I Am*

*Not a Secularist*, follows a similar line of reasoning. Evil serves to denote the negation of the possibilities for being rather than moral corruption: it is the urge to renounce the freedom to be otherwise than we are that, perhaps inevitably, human beings experience in their conflicts with others, and that seals off plurality and the generosity towards difference that a pluralistic culture should cultivate.

It is in light of this propensity for nihilistic 'evil within faith' that Connolly underscores the need for different 'existential faiths' to stave off the worst excesses of metaphysical closure if pluralism is to thrive. Thus he calls for a 'double-entry orientation' of faiths to themselves, calling to anyone with belief to 'honor the terms of your faith, while acknowledging its contestability in the eyes of others' (Connolly, 2005b: 143). This eloquent message, delivered in the first-person address common to religious discourse, makes a direct appeal to subjects of faith for whom belief is a matter of deep personal commitment. As an ethical demand for generosity, however, it amounts, effectively, to an injunction to 'think twice' before insisting on the automatic primacy of one's own moral standards. Such a demand is hardly unreasonable but does it concede too much to those who might virulently oppose a radical pluralism such as to render impossible a wider culture of generosity? Is Connolly not inviting participants in western democracies to adopt an unlikely 'holding pattern' on the basis of an optimistic hope that we might eventually get used to avoiding the violent clashes of faith? Is this not perhaps more likely to stimulate a retrenchment of difference into a condition of bare, snarling tolerance as opposed to an ethos of active engagement?

Perhaps the problem here is that Connolly is addressing subjects primarily as bearers of faith, that is, as participants in an interiorised narrative of the 'soul' with its distinctive dramas and commitments. His aim, of course, is to explore the unevenness of that interiority, yet this only partially disrupts the Platonic harmonisation of the soul and the city that Augustine and other monotheistic arguments seek. A pluralistic ethos is sought but still in direct conversation with the soul as if this were the privileged site of ethical generosity. But, as Stuart Hampshire argued in his *Justice as Conflict* (Hampshire, 1999), rather than reasoning from the interiority of the soul    with its tendency to 'pure' and 'universal' principles    we ought to recognise, too, the impact of public practices and procedures of conflict and argumentation in shaping our ethical dispositions towards each other. Our internal life, he suggests, is as much (if not more) a product of public habits and customs as it is of its own, deeper deliberations and questions. To the Platonic image of harmony Hampshire proffers the 'Heraclitean picture':

> [E]very soul is always the scene of conflicting tendencies and divided aims and ambivalences, and correspondingly, our political enmities in the city or the state will never come to an end while we have diverse life stories and diverse imaginations.
>
> (ibid.: 19)

Connolly would surely agree with the Heraclitean picture of the soul. But for Hampshire, expanding that logic in a liberal society demands we direct ourselves to the institutionalisation of adversarial procedures so as to normalise conflict between rival points of view (see ibid.: 40 51). Such an orientation (moving from an emphasis on the divided soul's deliberation with itself to an emphasis on the divided city's public deliberations) demands what Hampshire calls a 'moral conversion' (ibid.: 40) that reframes how we conceptualise virtue and justice. It requires us to address citizens not simply as subjects of faith but, rather, as subjects of political disputation and contest. A pluralist ethos, then, might better be conceived as the result not of subjects thinking twice so much as of institutions and practices that expose them to alternative and competing points of view. For this to come about, however, we need to do more than merely stay the propensity for evil. We need a narrative that motivates us to engage others as adversaries; one which transforms the tendency to nihilate others into a common aversion to our own silencing.

## Beyond evil

Certainly there are available alternative accounts of how to cultivate radical pluralism which argue a stronger line on the cultivation of a common political culture, rather than an ethos of engagement. The Italian philosopher, Gianni Vattimo, for instance, has argued in favour of a 'post-modern' outlook on emancipation by developing the theme of nihilism (see Vattimo, 2004). For him, nihilism is not simply a 'destructive' condition of negation but implies a wider situation concerning the end of modernity in the West. Drawing upon Nietzsche and Heidegger, Vattimo understands nihilism as a loss of transcendent authority 'the dissolution of any ultimate foundation' (ibid.: xxv) that leads to the generalisation of a 'hermeneutic' imperative: there is no single Truth, only interpretations (see Vattimo, 1997). The loss of authority for Reason, Science and Religion the central feature of modern culture, he argues constitutes, in his view, a pervasive experience of nihilism, for which metaphysical constructs are revealed as merely transient creations. For him, this is the very precondition for an emancipatory politics.

While Vattimo is likely to concur with Connolly that pluralism demands a generosity and dialogue among faiths and, perhaps paradoxically, Vattimo remains a committed Christian, albeit of a post-modern sort the logic of his argument is to insist on the *shared*, if uneven, sense of this loss of foundation as a common nihilistic sensibility. In this respect, a generous pluralism can be cultivated, not simply as a withdrawal from the hard-line metaphysical certainties inspired by our faiths, but by an awareness of the 'overcoming' of metaphysics in which we are all (at least in the West) implicated. That is to say, pluralism is intrinsically bound up with a common narrative describing the loss of a transcendent authority to all our judgements. Interestingly, Vattimo regards that narrative as inspired by a distinctively Judeo-Christian message concerning the human source of all things Divine. Christianity, for

Vattimo at least, directly prefigures a post-metaphysical culture in which dialogue, generosity and forbearance are themselves cardinal virtues (see Vattimo, 2002; Vattimo and Rorty, 2005).

Vattimo's effort to narrativise nihilism, as the story of our age, is given a different twist in the work of Laclau and Mouffe. In their work, both separately and together, radical pluralism is also conceived in relation to a central narrative, to which they refer with the term 'hegemony' (see Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). If Vattimo identifies emancipation, generally speaking, with the decline of universal foundations conceived as kind of cultural condition, Laclau and Mouffe develop a more strategic account in which pluralism depends upon a hegemonic culture that assembles a common set of values over which we conflict. It is this sense of antagonism that acts as a negative centre (see Laclau, 1996) to a plurality of struggles, unifying them into a precarious but universalising order. Here, then, nihilism is figured as a series of mutual enemies (for instance, inequality, injustice, racism, and so forth) which are strategically conjoined.

It is this centrality of a hegemonic narrative to a pluralist project that characterises Chantal Mouffe's 'agonistic' democratic theory, which parallels much of Hampshire's concerns (see Mouffe, 1993; 2000). In her account, a radical democratic space is constituted, like all political space, through the political division between antagonists of varying degrees of intensity. In disputing the necessity of 'rational consensus' as the basis of a democratic community, Mouffe underlines the importance of a framework of contested values over which different groups take up adversarial positions. This agonistic framework can only ever be a temporary consensus, a hegemonic construction that assembles opponents around a shared agenda. The precondition for a democratic pluralism, then, is less an ethical disposition of generosity towards different systems of belief than a capacity to stage conflicts in a way that we can successfully distinguish adversaries from antagonists, disputants from outright enemies.

Although they share many of the same presuppositions as Connolly    not least a rejection of the aspiration to a rational consensus and the longing for philosophical foundations, plus an awareness of the multiple character of subjectivity    Vattimo and Laclau/Mouffe develop their own approaches to radical pluralism by reconfiguring the negative experience of nihilism via 'strong' narratives designed to pull difference into closer alignment than does Connolly's pluralist ethos. In very different ways, the potential for evil is therefore transformed into a more integrative outlook which demands institutions and practices of mutual questioning and deliberation over contrasting points of view. For Vattimo, this comes in a shared experience of the loss of foundations that places social differences in, at least minimally, a 'cultural' proximity such that different interpretations come into a common conversation. For Laclau and Mouffe, it is the pull of antagonism that brings adversaries into a shared, but contested, political space where differences are open to rearticulation. For each, however, it is necessary, in order to avoid the

worst excesses of nihilistic behaviour, to reconfigure their negativity into a positive, unifying narrative rather than neutralise nihilistic impulses through a shared ethos.

Where Connolly directs his attention to an ethos that speaks to but does not seek radically to dislocate subjects of faith, instead teasing them out from their bunkers, Laclau/Mouffe and Vattimo take a more robust approach, defining more explicitly the terms of pluralist engagement among subjects of a post-metaphysical culture (Vattimo) or a radical and plural democratic politics (Laclau/Mouffe). Put another way, Connolly defends pluralism by warding off evil spirits, guarding difference through an injunction to 'think twice'. Laclau, Mouffe and Vattimo, on the other hand, defend pluralism by transfiguring the potential for evil itself into a kind of good.

Of course, the cost of accentuating the negative in these strong narratives is, inevitably, the placing of limits on pluralism. If a pluralist democratic culture is bound up with a unifying narrative that transforms the negativity of nihilism into the positivity of common spaces of engagement, then that plurality is nevertheless restricted to the (hegemonic, post-metaphysical) terms of those spaces. Less interested in exploring the 'paradoxes' of difference outside such space, Vattimo and Mouffe are consequently less 'generous' to potential opponents of pluralism than is Connolly: Mouffe explicitly repudiates efforts at 'ethical' approaches to politics that, in her view, 'do not emphasize enough the need to put some limits to pluralism' (Mouffe, 2000: 134) and, in turn, she underlines the potentially 'dis-associative' and openly hostile character of political subjects. Vattimo, on the other hand, is less pessimistic about ethical engagements, but even he suggests we 'translate our ethical precepts … into the language of the overcoming of metaphysics as oblivion of Being', with the idea of 'sin' being recast as the 'fall into metaphysics' (Vattimo, 2004: 69, 68). For those who refuse to renounce their own metaphysical certainties, Mouffe's and Vattimo's narratives are likely to be seen more as a provocation to adversarial conflict than a polite invitation to a dialogue that respects the integrity of faith.

## Conclusion

In appropriating a non-theological concept of evil, Connolly has sought carefully to side-step the type of divisive 'command morality' that President Bush invoked with his designation of an 'axis of evil', while acknowledging the terrible damage that extremist violence (of any kind) can cause. In this, Connolly's post-secular style of reasoning has proved a unique and productive resource, permitting him to explore the tragic psychic dramas that motivate such violence, as well as the *ressentiment* it stimulates among its victims. To address both constituencies without automatically pitting the one against the other in some *faux* civilisational 'clash' is an impressive feat for which Connolly justly deserves praise. The destructive nihilism he invokes with his use of 'evil' is undoubtedly a possibility even (especially?) for the most righteous

among us, and doubtless a pluralist culture would do well to develop antennae sensitive to its signals.

But it remains questionable how much a commitment to a radical pluralism requires the danger of destructive nihilism to be transposed into a common narrative of concern, one that defines in strong terms specific values of public engagement and which supports a more adversarial politics. As I have suggested above, in all likelihood, such a narrative will set limits to the ethos of generosity among contrasting faiths that Connolly invites us to explore outside of any 'strong' assemblage of values. The price of successfully expounding a pluralist faith, then, may well be the redrawing of the axis of evil rather than its total erasure.

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# 8 Beyond secularism

## Immanence and transcendence in the political thought of William E. Connolly

*Luca Mavelli*

## Introduction

A distinctive feature of William Connolly's political philosophy is its disclosure of flows of life and possibilities of becoming in the seemingly inert spaces between identity and difference, private and public, secular and religious, hidden and manifest. For Connolly, life overflows and invests these attempts to organise our existence. The task of the philosopher, he suggests, is not that of regulating and constraining life, but rather striving to grasp its protean character, its endless dynamics of transformation and reproduction, aware that 'being exceeds every interpretation' (Connolly, 2002a: xi). Connolly's philosophy thus unravels alternatives to contemporary forms of being, dissects the inner conceits of identity and, most of all, unveils the anti-pluralist character of seemingly natural political dispositions that marginalise minority subjectivities and force them to adapt to hegemonic/authoritative forms.

This chapter explores Connolly's critique of one such authoritative form: secularism. The distinctiveness of Connolly's approach to secularism does not rest on a sweeping condemnation of the hegemony of the secular outlook, nor does it simplify it into a multicultural appeal for peaceful coexistence between secular and religious perspectives. More radically, Connolly maintains the necessity of rethinking secularism in its limits, conceits and ontological assumptions (particularly the very possibility of a clear-cut distinction between religious and secular) in a broader context of identity formation and ethical engagement with deep-seated sensitivities. Connolly's call for a 'refashioning of secularism' (Connolly, 1999b: 19) is thus an integral part of his overall political philosophy of immanent pluralism. Accordingly, this chapter strives to illuminate the main tenets of Connolly's narrative (beyond an exclusive focus on *Why I Am Not a Secularist*) within which the role and relevance of his critique of secularism may better be appreciated.

In order to reconstruct this narrative, two main arguments are put forward. First, Connolly's philosophy can be read as an attempt to address some of the tensions of modern thought highlighted by Michel Foucault in his analysis of the transformation of the modern episteme into an 'analytic of finitude' and in particular, of how the relocation of authority from the transcendence of

God to the immanence of Man that characterises the emergence of the modern subject, is paralleled by the ascendancy of an understanding of ethics as an authoritative mechanism of transcendental regulation that disparages uncertainty, cultivation and spiritual self-transformation as moral resources. Second, taking the relocation of authority from God to Man as a crucial dimension of secularism, I suggest that Foucault's account of the 'analytic of finitude' can be read as a philosophical description of the modern process of secularisation.

The chapter then explores Connolly's challenge to the constraining and anti-pluralist aspects of secularism by looking at how his philosophy strives to overcome the tensions of the 'analytic of finitude'. The main thesis advanced is that these tensions are prompted by an unfinished process of secularisation, with authority still partially located in a realm *beyond* the subject, namely the Kantian transcendental. Connolly's project can therefore be described as the attempt to locate all sources of authority and morality *within* the subject by pushing the process of secularisation to a stage where life, ethics and becoming may be experienced on a pure plane of immanence. Connolly, in sum, strives to pursue pluralism by 'rewriting' the transcendent(al) into the immanent.

The argument begins with a reading of Foucault's 'analytic of finitude' as a philosophical account of the modern process of secularisation, and is followed by a discussion of how the main tenets of Connolly's philosophy can be interpreted as a response to some of Foucault's concerns. Connolly's critique of secularism, it will be shown, targets a wider set of dispositions than those encompassed by secularism and eventually emerges as a critique of those philosophies   secular-humanistic, theistic, or a combination of both   which claim authority on the ground of transcendence, be it the expression of a theological order or of an abstract reason capable of mediating between (hence to *transcend*) conflicting world-views.

The chapter then assesses Connolly's success in breaking with (some of) the tensions of the modern episteme by placing Connolly in conversation with Jürgen Habermas. The entanglement of the German philosopher in the 'analytic of finitude' negatively affects his capacity to foster a genuine pluralism and offers a clearer sense of the strength of Connolly's argument. However, a more detailed examination of the unintended and unsolicited dimensions of the process of secularisation shows how some of the weaknesses that may be attributed to Habermas can actually be attributed to Connolly. The latter, in particular, fails to justify and accommodate the advocacy of seemingly transcendent(al) 'civilisational limits' in his philosophy of immanence. This argument raises doubts over the very possibility that the transcendent(al) may be rewritten into the immanent and asks whether it must be an essential component of political imagination and, as such, also central to Connolly's view immanent pluralism. The chapter concludes with a modest subversion of Connolly's approach which places the possibility of pluralism not in an unattainable translation of the transcendent(al) into the immanent but in the recognition of its very centrality to seemingly conflicting religious and secular perspectives.

## Foucault and the 'analytic of finitude'

According to Alain Renaut (1997), the emergence of the subject of the modern episteme is characterised by the attempt to gain independence from God, Divine Law or Tradition as sources of external normativity and to relocate the foundations of authority and morality in the individual. This shift, however, prompted the question of how, given the immanence and finitude that define subjectivity, the transcendent character of social norms could be validated without any reference to a transcendent religious order.

For Michel Foucault, the possibility of an immanent validation is opened by Kant's philosophical revolution. Foucault (1970) associates the appearance of the modern episteme with a deep mutation in the understanding of knowledge. In the classical age, knowledge was conceived as a transparent relation between being and representation and thus man had no role other than to identify the correspondences between language and objects. Once the idea of a God-given order begins to crumble, however, the notion of such an identity becomes increasingly untenable. As language emerges as a human creation, detached from the sacred order of being, Man is no longer the exterior observer of an externally given order. Modernity thus witnesses the emergence of Man as a 'historical/transcendental doublet' (ibid.: 303 343): Man becomes at once, and for the first time, object of knowledge within the order of things, but also a transcendental source of that very order. For Foucault, the condition of possibility which allows Man to be both empirical and transcendental substance rests on what he calls the 'analytic of finitude'.

With Kant, knowledge as an *analysis of representations* (possible by virtue of the correspondence between language and objects) transmutes into knowledge as an *analytic of representations*, namely 'the attempt to show on what grounds representation and analysis of representations are possible and to what extent they are legitimate' (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982: 28). This analytic completely overturns the meaning and implication of man's finite being. Human finitude, rather than appearing as a hindrance to the possibility of knowledge, becomes its condition of existence. For Foucault (1970: 315):

> [T]he limitation [of Man] is expressed not as a determination imposed upon man from outside (because he has a nature or a history), but as a fundamental finitude, which rests on nothing but its own existence as a fact, and opens up the positivities of all concrete limitation.

In other words, man's finitude is the condition of possibility for a knowledge which is by definition limited as its condition of existence is entirely contained in the finitude of Man.

This crucial configuration of modern thought, Foucault maintains, is fundamentally unstable as it generates a constant tension between 'the transcendental and the empirical', 'the cogito and the unthought', 'the return to the origins and the impossibility to grasp them' (ibid.: 318 335). As Dreyfus

and Rabinow explain, this tension rests on the fact that man is conceived at once:

> (1) as a fact among other facts to be studied empirically, and yet as the transcendental condition of the possibility of all knowledge; (2) as surrounded by what he cannot get clear about (the unthought), and yet as a potentially lucid cogito, source of all intelligibility; and (3) as the product of a long history whose beginning he can never reach and yet, paradoxically, as the source of that very history.
>
> (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982: 30)

The ethical translation of this unstable epistemological formation is a notion of moral action as 'principled autonomy' (O'Neill, 2002: 83 86), whereby subjective freedom meets objective moral law thanks to the existence of *a priori*, *universal* and *transcendental* cognitive faculties. As Armando Salvatore (1997: 30) suggests, '[t]he result of this subtle, and indeed fragile, solution was the ambiguous invention of a matrix of morality that is immanent in the subject but accords with the rules of transcendence; hence it is not transcendent, but "transcendental".' Kant's introduction of the 'transcendental' thus emerges as a crucial step in a process of secularisation understood as the relocation of authority from the transcendence of God to the immanence of Man. Although crucial, however, this step is far from being decisive because, Salvatore (1997: 30) remarks, Kant's delicate construction cannot really escape a reference to a realm *beyond* the subject. It is thus in this context of not fully accomplished secularisation, with the sources of authority and morality lying halfway between 'within' and 'beyond', that the frantic condition of the modern subject, split between the empirical immanent and the transcendental, acquires a special salience. This condition, which Connolly pictures as 'the compulsion to clarify opaque elements in its desire, perception and judgment by converting itself into an object of inquiry' (Connolly, 1995: 11) appears in fact to shape three important tendencies.

First, in the attempt to reduce the shadows that haunt its existence but assuming itself to be the very master of those shadows, the subject of the modern episteme deploys a whole set of transcendental arguments (regulative ideals, forms of command morality, universalisms) to bind the empirical immanent to the transcendental, the fluctuation and unpredictability of the former to the reassuring 'stability beyond reach' of the latter. A characteristic of the modern episteme is thus the attempt to draw 'the double into the fold of the subject' (ibid.: 12). This endeavour is a direct consequence of the structure of the analytic of finitude, concerned as it is 'with showing how the Other, the Distant, is also the Near and the Same' (Foucault, 1970: 339).

The implication is that the modern episteme is crucially concerned with bringing difference to identity by denying difference a dimension of authenticity. Foucault vividly explores this argument through his studies of madness, sexuality, imprisonment and punishment. Difference, in this account, is not

*variation*, but *deviation* from a common and transcendental substance. Moreover, once this *a priori* substance is presupposed, and thus once human beings are considered, as in the Kantian model, *already* endowed with those moral attributes which enable them to comply with the transcendental ideal, the notion that a spiritual transformation of the self may be required in order to be able to know the other appears redundant. Within this perspective, the distance between the self and the other, between identity and difference, solidifies and becomes an exclusive responsibility of the other, unable to comply with a common, transcendentally identified, rule of being.

This argument leads to the third central characteristic of the modern episteme: the separation between philosophy/knowledge and spirituality/ethics. According to Foucault, this separation begins with Descartes who marks the emergence of the 'detached knowing subject with a corresponding domain of objectively representable and knowable objects' (Han, 2005: 188). Although Kant complicates this picture by transforming the knowing subject into a transcendental subject and showing that the possibility of knowledge 'is itself dependent on transcendental conditions which alone can open up the realm of experience', his transcendental subject, endowed with 'a priori' ideas, reinforces the Cartesian 'epistemologisation' of philosophy (ibid.: 198). The separation between knowledge and spirituality engendered by the modern episteme paves the way for a central contradiction of modernity in which the indefinite progress of knowledge fails to translate into improvements of the moral condition. Max Weber's account of modern subjectivity as an 'iron cage' in which meaning and knowledge exist in a state of tension (Turner, 1996: 85) is emblematic of the fact that truth 'such as it is [in the modern episteme] … can no longer save the subject' (Foucault, quoted in Han, 2005: 196).

## Connolly and the 'analytic of finitude'

The political philosophy of William Connolly can best be understood as a response to this set of issues raised by Foucault. Connolly sees the transcendental as a form of political and ethical argument that tends to foreclose the possibility of political contestation; as the conceptual apparatus of legitimation employed by majority constituencies to justify their occupation of the authoritative moral centre and force minorities to adapt to that centre (Connolly, 1995: 15; 1999b: 6, 154). In this respect, Connolly deems Foucault's genealogical approach remarkable in alerting us to the 'constructed character of contemporary formations of self, morality, convention, rationality', and in thus disclosing the contingent character of argumentations which seek legitimation in transcendental presumptions 'prior to ethically informed action' (Connolly, 1995: 29). At the same time, he considers Foucault's perspective insufficient for dispelling transcendental presumptions because it is based on a detachment almost impossible to achieve and which risks collapsing into forms of cynicism and disenchantment (Connolly 1995:

35, 1999b: 14) reminiscent of Weberian modernity. For these reasons, Connolly does not base his challenge to the transcendental solely on a strategy of detachment, but also on a parallel strategy of attachment. The core of his approach rests on the acknowledgement that:

> your implicit projections surely exceed your explicit formulations of them and that your formulations exceed your capacity to demonstrate their truth. You challenge closure … by affirming the contestable character of your own projections, by offering readings of contemporary life that compete with alternative accounts, and by moving back and forth between these two levels.
>
> (Connolly, 1995: 36)

This 'relational art of the self' needs to be matched by a 'generous ethos of political engagement' based on the reciprocal willingness to accept the contestability of one's own transcendental beliefs (Connolly, 1999b: 143 and ff.). The aim, Connolly explains, is to activate a general ethos of forbearance and critical responsiveness among constituencies that honour different moral sources (ibid.: 39). In order to expose this possibility, Connolly valorises uncertainty, cultivation, lived experience and practice as chief ethical virtues to be experienced on a pure plane of immanence which stands clear of *a priori* ethical assumptions. To this scope, he challenges the very kernel of the 'analytic of finitude'   the ambivalent condition of the modern subject, conceived at once as immanent and transcendental substance   by subverting the terms of the Kantian argument. Hence, instead of regarding the immanent and the transcendental as properties of a universal human substance, Connolly maintains, drawing on Spinoza and Deleuze, that a universal human substance can only be experienced in immanence (see Wenman, 2007: 7 8). The core of this subversion is the reconceptualisation of a resource whose status in Foucault is notoriously controversial: the body.

   In 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', Foucault introduces us to a body 'totally imprinted by history … moulded by a great many distinct regimes' and thus primarily conceived as 'a surface for the inscription of social order, a material substratum for the application … of power' (Foucault, 1984: 83; Levin, 2001: 5). According to Judith Butler (1989), however, this understanding overlooks how Foucault's latent references to an ontological prediscursivity of the body would envisage in the latter 'a dynamic locus of resistance to culture per se'. Although Foucault overtly denies an 'ontological independence of the body' outside culture and discourse, for Butler (ibid.: 602),

> [H]is theory nevertheless relies on a notion of genealogy, appropriated from Nietzsche, which conceives the body as a surface and a set of subterranean 'forces' that are, indeed, repressed and transmuted by a mechanism of cultural construction external to that body.

Connolly vigorously embraces this perspective. Turning Foucault's claim that 'the soul is the prison of the body' (ibid.: 606) into the more affirmative image of a body 'more layered, rich and creative than the soul' (Connolly, 2002a: 85), Connolly identifies in the transcendental the external dimension of authority that inscribes a hegemonic order onto the body. However, he also considers the body a reservoir of immanent forces of resistance in the form of thought-imbued intensities operating below the threshold of rational awareness, and therefore not always susceptible to reasoned translation.

Connolly plays down the extent to which this immanent space of 'protean infrasensible and layered sensibility' (Connolly, 1999b: 13) is the locus of the process Norbert Elias, Max Weber and Michel Foucault identified as 'internalisation of external constraints', 'iron cage', and 'bio-power' (Elias, 2000; Szakolczai, 1998; Turner, 1996). On the contrary, for Connolly, the existence of this infrasensible space calls into question the very possibility that ethics may be transcendentally secured and thus vindicated by justification through necessity. The presence of this space shows in fact that there is more to thinking and politics than can be grasped and interpreted by those perspectives that claim authority on the ground of transcendence, be it the expression of theistic faith or abstract universal reason. The latter, in fact, does not represent an effective advancement on the route to a relocation of authority from God to Man. Entangled in the 'analytic of finitude', Kantian forms of reason just shift their faith from a transcendent cosmological order to various forms of command morality, rational agreement, or deliberative consensus (Connolly, 2006b: 79). The apparent immanence of these accounts, however, is not 'in itself' as it ambiguously continues to accord with, and therefore is dependent on the *a priori* rules of transcendence (Deleuze, 1997; Salvatore, 1997: 30; Wenman, 2007).

Starting from a conception of the body as a site of articulation of experimental strategies, a 'micropolitics' aimed at modifying the 'infrasensible register of subjectivities and intersubjectivities' (Connolly, 1999b: 183) in the direction of a generous dimension of pluralism and engagement, Connolly strives to overcome the modern Kantian tension between the empirical and the transcendental by conceiving these dimensions of life as expressions of the same plane of immanence. In this perspective, the body does not speak an apodictic truth, but is part of a complex formation Connolly labels the 'body/brain/culture network' (Connolly, 2002a; 2005; 2006a). Within this immanent formation, he suggests, rational argumentation takes place together with layers of undetected sensitivities, the result of both our bodily dispositions and collective attachments which are expressions of religious and secular faiths. Thus, Connolly's philosophy of immanence neither disregards reason, nor faith and, as we shall see in greater depth in the next section, nor does it conceive these two dimensions in antinomic terms. However, against a transcendental ethics that vindicates authority by appealing to a realm *beyond* the subject, Connolly opposes a more complex and unstable attunement between abstract reasoning, bodily inclinations and communal religious or secular identifications.

This perspective, which poses as its highest goal the achievement of pluralism, inevitably calls the modern subject to confront her transcendental beliefs and opens the way for a disquieting flow of becoming which threatens already established normative assumptions. Connolly, however, does not consider this a reason for despair or nihilism, but rather views it as the very possibility for a spiritual transformation of the self which, founded upon an ethos of attachment and cultivation, might re-instil meaning in a world whose disenchantment is to be found in the very coldness, rigidity and distance of an ethics of transcendentally secured rules (Connolly, 1995: 29). With the inscription of the empirical and the transcendental in the immanent, Connolly strives to escort us out of the aporia of the 'analytic of finitude' by advancing the Kantian unfinished process of secularisation to a new level: there where life, ethics and authority may be experienced on a pure plane of immanence.

## The transcendent(al) conceits of secularism

Against this background, Connolly's critique of secularism as an important hegemonic formation can be better grasped. Connolly, in fact, does not question the project of relocation of authority and morality from the transcendence of God to the immanence of Man that characterises secularisation. On the contrary, he questions contemporary expressions of secularism for not being, as it were, secular enough, that is to say, for still relying on a conceptualisation of the subject divided between the empirical and the transcendental. This approach, he suggests, encourages an understanding of ethics as authoritative mechanisms of transcendental regulation that disparage uncertainty, cultivation and spiritual self-transformation as moral resources.

According to Connolly (1999b: 20 21), the hegemonic authority of secularism is based on the universalisation of a specifically Western (and more specifically European) experience of emancipation from religious conflicts and oppression which considers the privatisation of religious belief as a necessary condition of modernity and pluralism.[1] Organising the public sphere into a space of rational communication purged of any sign of embodied religious emotion, secularism operates with the presumption that 'argument, rationality, language or conscious thought' can be insulated from 'visceral intensities of thinking, prejudgment, and sensibility' (ibid.: 36). Secularism, therefore, is an expression of a transcendental ethics that, in order to provide an unequivocal set of ethical dispositions, sacrifices a whole series of 'complex registers of persuasion, judgment, and discourse operative in public life' which operate at the emotional level and below the level of rational awareness (ibid.: 20).

The alleged 'political purity' of secularism, therefore, conceals an ambiguity since some of the registers it claims to suppress 'continue to operate … below the threshold of appreciation by secularists' (ibid.: 163, 20). The registers Connolly refers to are specifically those grounded in Christian sensibilities.

The result is that while secularism claims authority in the name of a public realm devoid of religious accretions and on the grounds of its supposed neutrality and capacity to *transcend* competing faiths,

> that realm remains safe for Christianity as long as the unconscious mores that *organize* public reason, morality and politics are Christian. Christianity does not need to be invoked that often because it is already inscribed in the prediscursive dispositions and cultural instincts of the civilization.
>
> (ibid.: 24)

For Connolly, the transcendental conceits of secularism appear particularly evident in the multicultural context of Europe where Muslims have increasingly become perceived as a source of disturbance within a carefully guarded configuration of authority resting on secular/Christian sensibilities (Connolly, 2006b). The negative perception and stigmatisation of Islam in Europe are the result of a general limit of the mainstream European ideological mindset which understands religion as a universal category pertaining only to metaphysical experience. This reduces religion to the otherworldly; to a cognitive framework which neglects how much religions may, in Talal Asad's words be 'practical mode[s] of living … [and] techniques for teaching body and mind to cultivate specific virtues and abilities that have been authorised, passed on and reformulated down the generations' (quoted in Connolly, 2006b: 76). The cognitive understanding of religion, Connolly remarks,

> resides in the demand, growing out of the Christian Enlightenment, to disconnect the expression of religious belief from participation in embodied practices, so that it becomes possible to imagine a world in which everyone is a citizen because belief is relegated to the private realm and the interior self.
>
> (ibid.: 78)

According to Connolly, it is the transcendental ethics of secularism, 'deeply established in the unconscious of the European culture' (2006b: 75), which makes Europe: (1) unable to engage with the more ritualistic and embodied practices of Islamic religiosity;[2] (2) unable to recognise the extent to which dimensions of the European secular realm are shaped by Christian sensibilities; and (3) unable to foster an ethos of cultivation and public engagement conducive to more genuine dimensions of pluralism. From this perspective, secularism can be considered on a par with theistic faiths. Whereas the latter affirm certitude in the name of an order of being dictated by a transcendent God, the former does the same in response to the fear, resentment and sense of empowerment stemming from the belief in the absence of a divine order (Connolly, 2002a; 2002b; 2005). Secularism is thus a prominent expression of the attempt to cope with the tensions of the analytic of finitude: it reinstates

ethical certainty by binding the fluidity, unpredictability and plurality of life to a set of transcendental assumptions which demand religion be contained in the private closet; it reduces difference to identity by postulating that the universal and correct mode of religious experience is disembodied and cognitive; it transmutes religion, once conceived as a virtue, into a purely epistemological perspective (on this latter point, see Asad, 2003: 38 39, quoted in Connolly, 2006b: 77), thus dragging it into the same space that the modern episteme has reserved for knowledge: a space unable to have a bearing upon the improvement of the moral condition.

The secularism questioned by Connolly, however, is a social and political discourse that emerges from a conceptualisation of the subject as split between the empirical and the transcendental. It is therefore a secularism that has not yet fully relocated the sources of authority and morality from 'beyond' to 'within'. For this reason, Connolly maintains, this kind of secularism, like theism and any other doctrines based on transcendent(al) presumptions, cannot be taken as a central authoritative principle around which other perspectives must revolve, as it would inevitably hinder the possibility of a generous pluralism. For Connolly, we must translate the 'transcendental field into a layered immanent field' (2002a: 85), scaling down secularist and theistic perspectives into 'existential faiths', that is, 'a creed or a philosophy *plus* the sensibility that infuses it' (Connolly, 2006c: 285, emphasis mine). The aim is to work on the immanent level of sensibilities in order to disseminate a general virtue of forbearance and critical responsiveness across different faiths 'inspired by a love of the world or attachment to the complexity of being that infuses it' (Connolly, 2005: 116).

Connolly's philosophy of immanence is thus the attempt to develop an ethics of lived experience and practice which may achieve independence from a transcendent(al) realm *beyond* the subject; an ethics that may engender the pluralisation of identities and the possibility of becoming for subjugated subjectivities too often curbed by the imposition of external forms such as secularism. It is the attempt to move beyond secularism by further advancing the process of secularisation along a pathway that considers the empirical and the transcendental not as two distinct dimensions of the same substance, but as expressions of the same universal substance that, however, can only be in immanence.

## Habermas's transcendental secularism and the limits of pluralism

Although Habermas has generally overlooked the constitutive role of religion in the public sphere by endorsing a model of dialogic interaction based upon secular rationality (Calhoun, 1992: 36; Zaret, 1992: 213), he has recently been refashioning his position. In his latest publications (Habermas, 2006; Habermas and Ratzinger, 2005; see also Nemoianu, 2006; Salvatore, 2006), prompted by the new political importance gained by religious traditions and communities, Habermas (2006: 1) has questioned the extent to which the ideal

of a common human reason as the epistemic justification for the secular state can demand that citizens with religious beliefs act in the public sphere as if they were devoid of any religious conviction. The problem, he argues, is that 'many religious citizens would not be able to undertake such an artificial division within their own minds without jeopardizing their existence as pious persons' (ibid.: 8). Moreover, should the secular state discourage religious persons and communities from expressing themselves politically, it would risk cutting 'itself off from key resources for the creation of meaning and identity. Secular citizens or those of other religious persuasions can under certain circumstances learn something from religious contributions' (ibid.: 10).

In order to make room for religious contributions in the public sphere, Habermas suggests we draw a line between the 'informal public sphere', where religious reason can flow unconstrained, and an 'institutional public sphere', where only secular reason counts (ibid.: 9). This separation means that for religious beliefs to have an institutional representation, they need to be 'translated' into a secular language. *Separation* and *translation* are for Habermas two essential requirements: separation to protect religious and cultural minorities; translation to allow the wider public   be it secular or of a different faith   to understand and subject religious arguments to rational scrutiny.

Aware that by adopting secularism as the 'official language' of the public sphere, he may be restating its moral supremacy and relegating to the margins the religious sensibilities he wants to empower, Habermas introduces the notion of 'cooperative cognitive effort' to establish a dimension of equality in reciprocity. Secular citizens should strive to identify the truth in the statements of religious citizens and help them in the process of translation. Religious citizens should respect 'the precedence of secular reason and the institutional translation requirement' (ibid.: 15). Reciprocity demands religious consciousness be willing to question its assumptions and secular consciousness willing to recognise that religious argumentations may contain rational arguments (ibid.: 19).

A Connollian reading of these brief excerpts raises scepticism about the pluralist credentials of Habermas' account. Although Habermas seems, initially, to abandon the fiction of a neutral secular public sphere, he concludes with its vindication. Through mechanisms of containment   *separation* between 'informal' and 'institutional public sphere' and *translation* from religious to secular   he constructs a purified political space in which religious sensibilities can find a place only by conforming to the transcendental ethical standard of secularism. *Separation* and *translation* reproduce the Kantian split between the empirical and the transcendental and the idea that the former has to act in accordance with the rules of the latter (note how Habermas' account is the mirror image of Connolly's: whereas Habermas separates the empirical and transcendental and translates the former into the latter, Connolly strives to overcome this separation and proposes to translate the transcendental into the immanent). Habermas thus poses secularism as the epistemic foundation and authoritative centre of the liberal state and brings difference to identity by decoding religious consciousness through secular assumptions.

This perspective is crucially based on an understanding of secularism and religion as two predetermined ethical codes that exhaust and contain the range of possibilities of being. According to Talal Asad, a perspective (such as that of Habermas) that considers religion as an 'analytically identifiable category' is a function of 'the liberal demand in our time that it [religion] be kept quite separate from politics, law and science   spaces in which varieties of power and reason articulate our distinctively modern life' (Asad, 1993: 28). From the perspective of the analytic of finitude, this demand can be interpreted as the attempt to affirm human sovereignty over a space no longer considered the expression of a God-given order. This affirmation, as we have seen, requires the clarification of opaque elements in human experience through their conversion into objects of knowledge. The objectification and essentialisation of religion in a cognitive perspective concerned with the otherworldly are therefore expressive of the modern episteme as is Habermas's approach: he confines religion to the margins in order to dispel the threatening idea that the public sphere may be ruled by forces other than that of human reason. This perspective takes the secular narrative (the conversion of codes of Divine Grace into Reason) characteristic of Western modernity (see Salvatore, 1997: 27) as unambiguous in having fostered a clear demarcation between religious and secular space and, accordingly, envisages in the latter the possibility of an ethics grounded in secular rationality.

Connolly and Asad see the modern differentiation between the secular and the religious as much more blurred. Asad argues against the possibility of identifying religion in its essence, 'not only because its constituent elements are historically specific, but because that definition is itself the historical product of discursive processes' (Asad, 1993: 29). Connolly, as we have seen, distinguishes immanent and transcendental ethics, the latter encompassing all those perspectives that, by appealing to 'transcendental arguments prior to ethically informed action' (Connolly, 1995: 29), foreclose the terms of political contestation and the possibility of becoming. For Connolly, then, the important differentiation is not between supposedly secular and religious perspectives but between philosophies such as those of Kant and Habermas that, although nominally secular, still appeal to a transcendental dimension and thus propound an understanding of ethics as compliance with a set of rules defined *a priori*, and philosophies that draw on an immanent set of resources   like the 'Deleuzian metaphysics of a protean infrasensible and layered sensibility' (Connolly, 1999b: 13)   that, in a Spinozian fashion, interpret ethics 'as cultivation by tactical means of *hilaritus*, a love for life that infuses the body/brain/culture network in which we move and live' (Connolly, 2006a: 84).

In Connolly's philosophy of immanence, then, what matters is not which transcendent(al) perspective you endorse (theistic, secular, a mix of them), but the extent to which you supplement it with generous, immanent sensibilities of inclusion (Connolly, 2005: 48; 2006b: 285). Connolly's critique of secularism is thus significantly different from Habermas's. Where the latter confines

himself to softening the harsher aspects of secularism without challenging its moral primacy, Connolly makes secularism a perspective among others. The pluralisation of perspectives becomes the expression of a world of minorities engaged by an ethos of agonistic confrontation and critical responsiveness. The aim is to favour the emergence of new identities/sensibilities, an event that Habermas at the very least seems to disregard. The dialogic engagement he advocates, in fact, does not challenge the moral primacy of a transcendental secular reason. The Kantian subject, split between the empirical and the transcendental, thus reappears in the Habermasian subject committed to dialogic engagement but also pledging an unshakeable allegiance to the epistemic centrality of secularism. And like Kant, Habermas does not seem capable of escaping from reliance on a domain *beyond* the subject that, as Connolly remarks, becomes appropriated by majority constituencies to justify their necessary occupation of the authoritative moral centre and to force minorities to adapt to it.

## Connolly's immanence and the problem of limits

Although, *prima facie*, Connolly's perspective appears more capable of devising a genuine ethos of pluralisation, a more encompassing evaluation of Habermas' account needs to take into account some of the concerns that animate it. We need to return to the question of the transformation of the modern episteme into an 'analytic of finitude' and elaborate further on an element that has been only alluded to: the structural (as opposed to agency-led) process of relocation of the sources of authority and morality from the transcendence of God to the immanence of Man.

This process, in fact, was not just the manifestation of a 'will to truth' of the fledging modern subject, but also the more practical response to the social collapse of the idea of a God-given order resulting from long-term processes such as the Protestant Reformation, the emergence of modern nation-states, the spread of capitalism and the modern scientific revolution (on the effect of these developments on the process of secularisation see Casanova, 1994: 21 25). The collapse of Christianity as a system of truth posed not just the problem of knowledge highlighted by Foucault, but also a question of a 'breakdown of connections', the importance of which is signalled by the nineteenth-century emergence of sociology, a 'science of society' concerned, from its Durkheimian inception, with the exploration of the social bonds that held and may hold human beings together (Mazlish, 1989; Turner, 1991). At the turn of the nineteenth century, then, the modern subject appears to be caught in a contradiction: Christianity as a system of truth is collapsing, but with the collapse of Christianity, the cohesion of the social fabric seems also to be in danger (Turner, 1991: 38).

These brief remarks do not do justice to the sheer complexity of the issues at stake but may help us to appreciate some aspects of Habermas's account. From this angle, Habermas' defence of secularism as the epistemic foundation

of modern multicultural societies can be interpreted as the attempt to strike a balance between the possibility of pluralism and the preservation of the social fabric. Its crumbling connections, in fact, foresee not just the loss of community but also the reinvigoration of hegemonic formations that, in the name of community, may enforce authoritative rules which disparage minority prerogatives. This argument raises the question of how Connolly addresses the tension between 'pluralisation' and 'loss of cohesion' and the ensuing possibility that, in the absence of common epistemic (transcendent) foundations, hegemonic formations may gain strength.

Initially, Connolly seems to reject the very antinomic terms in which the problem is cast. He states that identifying 'extensive cultural *diversification* with the loss of cultural *connections* … misrecognizes the interdependence between identity and difference' (Connolly, 1995: 196, emphasis in original). However, he admits (ibid.: 194), 'the cultural conditions of possibility for the politics of pluralization also create temptations for the politics of fundamentalization'. This possibility, together with the necessity of defending 'general *civilizational values*' such as 'protection of life, respect for privacy, the appreciation of diversity, protection from undeserved suffering' demand that limits to pluralisation be established (ibid.: 194; emphasis mine). This advocacy of 'civilizational limits' (ibid.: 196) has been reiterated in Connolly's recent writings where he has argued that 'every political regime must set limits and seek to secure them through education and discipline' also because 'it is impossible to house every possible mode of diversity in the same regime at the same time' (Connolly, 2005: 40 43). This strand of argument appears to sit uneasily with his philosophy of immanent pluralism. The limits he advocates, in fact, appear more the projection of a transcendent(al) order than the outcome of immanent forces.

To account for this apparent contradiction it is necessary to consider the relationship Connolly envisages between ethics of responsiveness and social order. According to Mark Wenman (2007: 9), Connolly's idea of social regulation contemplates the 'supposition that the various forces at play in the cosmos tend to coalesce spontaneously into "underdetermined" patterns of regularity' and thus that social order 'is somehow … the spontaneous effect of the counterbalances and restraints of pluralist politics' (on the presence of 'spontaneous generous energies' in Connolly's account see also Asad, 2006: 224). Wenman attributes this perspective to Connolly's embrace of the Spinozan/ Deleuzian idea that life in its multiple expressions is the actualisation of the same immanent substance. This actualisation, he continues, has the effect of 'rob[bing] social actors of their capacity for agency and critical intervention' (Wenman, 2007: 10). This latter point, however, seems to be contradicted by an important analytic distinction Connolly (2005: 48; 2006c: 285) draws between 'creeds/philosophies/faiths' and 'sensibilities'. What counts for an ethos of engagement and pluralism, Connolly argues, is almost independent from the secular or theistic faith (or creed, or philosophy) you embrace    the transcendent(al) field    which is generally an expression of forms of

dogmatism, but resides crucially in cultivation of generous sensibilities    the immanent ethics of practice that draws on an embodied/visceral register. Social agency thus emerges as the central dimension of an ethics of responsiveness that appropriates and reconfigures transcendental presumptions into immanent sensibilities.

This account is postulated on an almost instrumental understanding of the transcendental dimension, which appears 'redundant' once the process of critical appropriation has taken place. Yet this understanding is coherent with the overarching tension between immanence and transcendence from which Connolly's ethical project takes its cue. This tension, in fact, metamorphoses into a whole set of antinomies    between dogmatism and sensibilities, reason and body, regulation and spontaneity    in a narrative structure that pictures the possibility of pluralisation as the permutation of the first entity into the second: the 'transcendental field into a layered immanent field', dogmatism into sensibilities, abstract reason into bodily dispositions, regulation into spontaneity. In the relationship Connolly sets between the ethic of responsiveness and social order, then, it is not agency that is sacrificed but the transcendent(al), which Connolly associates mostly with dogmatism, abstract reason and *a priori* regulation.

This ethical construction crucially rests on an interpretation of the process of relocation of authority from the transcendence of God to the immanence of Man as a manifestation of the 'will to truth' of the modern subject, and thus considers the tensions of the 'analytic of finitude' as the expression of an imperfect, still to accomplish, secularisation. What this account plays down, however, is the extent to which the relocation of authority from God to Man has *also* been the unintended and unsolicited result of structural processes. These processes, having undermined Christianity as a system of truth, may well constitute a favourable environment for the emergence of social forces aimed at the restoration of analogous systems of truth. Connolly, however, is reluctant to recognise an immanent authenticity to these forces. Having conceptualised the relocation of authority as an act of volition, he understands the Kantian transcendental as a temporary formation on the unfinished journey of secularisation and associates the transcendent(al) mostly with hegemonic/authoritative formations that disparage minorities and pluralism. By doing so, Connolly overlooks the possibility that the transcendent(al) may also be an important dimension of human experience *beyond* instrumental and primordial forms of reassurance; a dimension that may not be entirely subsumed in immanence; that helps shape political images of the good and thus, may be, the very force that, despite his emphasis on spontaneity and immanent sensibilities, leads Connolly to advocate limits in defence of civilisational values.

## Escape and return to transcendence

How does the ethereal and protean notion of transcendence enter, unacknowledged and uninvited, in the relationship Connolly sets between limits

and civilisation? To address this question let us turn to a brief discussion on the origins and significance of transcendence as thematised by the Axial Age Theory in the concise account of Armando Salvatore (2007: 51 67; for a recent extensive assessment of this research programme see Arnason *et al.* 2005). As Salvatore remarks, the idea of transcendence unfolded as a momentous transformation across a number of civilisations in a period of about ten centuries, with its final manifestation in the *Qur'anic* revelation. The idea of a transcendent order beyond mundane life is a crucial feature of those processes of social differentiation and complexification which resulted in the progressive sedimentation of values and re-articulation of the social bond around a notion of connective justice *beyond* mythical views of the cosmos based on unfathomable patterns of cyclical repetition (Salvatore, 2007: 51).

The new discourse of transcendence, Salvatore maintains, is based on

> a view of human agency as guided by a *telos* transcending particular situations and interactions. It is a *telos* directing practice towards a set of hierarchically ordered goals and goods, the highest ones being non-material goods and in particular goods of salvation, but also including the implementation of [divine] justice, which is inevitably rooted, in spite of its lofty status, in the daily connectivity of the *ego-alter* relationship.
>
> (ibid.: 60)

Hence, with the appearance of transcendence, the mythical cosmology which oversees the *ego-alter* relation gives way to an *ego-alter/Alter* connection in which God-Alter is the epitome of a just order and, as such, becomes the ultimate source of authority, mediation and inspiration (ibid.: 55, 61). The stabilisation of the otherworldly around the idea of divine justice crucially translates in new forms of inworldly *reflexivity* that enable 'human beings to reflect upon and to give expression to an image of the world as having the potential of being different from what it was perceived to be here and now' (Bjorn Wittrock, quoted in Salvatore, 2007: 52). This process, of course, should be taken as neither a polarised and emphatic transition from a non-reflexive to a reflexive age, nor should it be understood in purely idealistic terms. The potential of transcendence, in fact, is the result of 'ongoing socio-political and theological dialectics between orthodoxies and heterodoxies' in a cyclical confrontation on the sanctity of boundaries (Salvatore, 2007: 55).

This very short summary on the emergence of transcendence in the Axial Age offers a valuable framework within which to analyse Connolly's argument. To start with, transcendence enters Connolly's relation between limits and civilisation in the form of non-negotiable principles of justice such as freedom from torture, punishment for murder, the right to an education, efficient public schooling and the reduction of the gap between rich and poor (Connolly, 2005: 43). These principles are what Connolly labels 'civilisational values', the crystallisation of certain notions of the 'good' which, he suggests,

a 'political regime' has the right to secure through 'education and discipline'. These principles rest on an implicit element of transcendence not because they speak an *a priori* truth, but because they express a 'transcendence-inspired' sedimentation of values which has enacted a re-articulation of the social bond around a notion of connective justice. This argument of course holds if one subscribes to the framework of the Axial Age theory. However, even disputing the link this grand narrative sets between transcendence and civilisation, the connections it suggests between modes of social agency, connective justice and the idea of a transcendent just order *beyond* the subject appear very much reflected in Connolly's philosophy.

Connolly's political imagination is animated by a 'nontheistic faith in the plurovocity of being' (Connolly, 1999a: 8) inspired by a visceral gratitude for the abundance of life (Connolly, 2002b: 105; see also Connolly, 2002a: xix). This 'Deleuzian belief in this world' shapes an idea of the 'good' centred on the 'pluralism of multiple minorities'. As Connolly explains, 'The national image of a centred majority surrounded by minorities eventually becomes transfigured into an image of interdependent minorities … contending and collaborating within a general ethos of forbearance and critical responsiveness' (Connolly, 2005: 61; see also Connolly, 1996: 58). *Immanent* in this 'image of the world' is also its potentiality: a model of agonistic confrontation and selective collaboration among constituencies    that is, an ongoing dialectic between orthodoxies and heterodoxies on the nature, limits and sanctity of boundaries. Crucial for this process, Connolly suggests, is a reflexive social agency which appropriates and reconfigures transcendental presumptions into immanent sensibilities. With this move, Connolly curtails the transcendent source of axial reflexivity. Yet unlike post-Kantian philosophies, he does not locate new sources of reflexivity in secular reason (which he deems expressions of transcendental presumptions), but more radically turns to the visceral registers of embodied sensibilities. This approach, however, only nominally escapes transcendence. Connolly's conceptualisation of the body, in fact, although part of a complex formation that encompasses reason and culture (the 'body/brain/culture network') is nonetheless endowed with Nietzschean 'subterranean forces', a reservoir of immanent sensitivities seemingly characterised by ontological prediscursivity.

Connolly's 'body' thus resembles Kantian *a priori* cognitive faculties. On its transcendent character Connolly builds a philosophy of pluralism whose immanent status originates in the translation of authority and morality from the transcendent(al) into the immanent. This account thus strives to escort us out of the aporia of the 'analytic of finitude' by advancing the Kantian unfinished process of secularisation    and his transcendental reason    to a level where life, ethics and authority may be experienced on an embodied plane of immanence. This account, however, overlooks how the idea of a realm beyond the subject is not just a source of authoritative/hegemonic forces, but also of political imagination and thus, crucially, of possibilities of spiritual self-transformation. Political imagination acquires with transcendence

the 'potential to transcend social and even cultural boundaries, and integrate new groups and social arrangements … into the salvational path' (Salvatore, 2007: 54). Certainly, transcendence in its salvational/redemptive thrust can also engender the imposition of authoritarian forms which deny pluralism (for an illustration, see Mavelli, 2008: 82 86). At the same time, however, transcendence appears also the very source of those inspired forces, like Connolly's, which challenge anti-pluralist, hegemonic tendencies, indicating possibilities of becoming beyond seemingly natural political dispositions, beyond what is 'here and now'.

## Conclusion

This chapter has shown how Connolly's critique of secularism is part of a wider project that questions the possibility that ethics may be grounded in *a priori* transcendent(al) presumptions. This project has been explored as an attempt to overcome the tensions of the 'analytic of finitude' by advancing the process of secularisation *beyond* Kant's relocation of the sources of authority and morality from transcendence to the transcendental, from God to universal reason. Connolly thus performs a further relocation from reason to the deep sensitivities of the body, yet within a plastic formation that, guided by uncertainty and spiritual self-transformation as chief ethical virtues, invests all the way up, reason, belongings and beliefs in the search for an ever-changing attunement which may amplify the possibilities of becoming. Connolly pursues this task by recomposing the Kantian fracture between the empirical immanent and the transcendental through a translation of the transcendent(al) into the immanent. The main limit of this argument, however, is that it overlooks how the transcendent(al) may not be subsumed in immanence as it represents an essential source of political imagination from which Connolly himself draws inspiration.

   This argument, however, neither warrants an endorsement of Habermas' Kantian framework which downplays cultivation and self-transformation as chief ethical virtues and reinstates the authoritative primacy of secularism, nor the convicting of Connolly of a 'performative contradiction'. Rather, in a Connollian spirit of agonistic confrontation and selective collaboration, the aim of this chapter has been that of employing his perspective as an imaginative springboard to explore 'the dangers and possibilities [and limits] of deep, multidimensional pluralism in the late modern age' (Connolly, 2006b: 92). Accordingly, an unexpected role for the transcendental emerged from this analysis: as a source of the protean character of life and not just of hegemonic/authoritative forces that deny that protean element; one that does not simply cast doubts on the possibility that life, ethics and becoming may be found solely in immanence, but more importantly raises the question of what its implications are for a philosophy of pluralism.

   At the beginning of this chapter we discussed how Connolly's challenge to the transcendental encompasses a central strategy of attachment. Connolly, in

fact, exposes the limits of Foucault's archaeological detachment and takes his claim that 'there is no way you can say there is no truth' as an indication of the fact that a strategy of detachment cannot, alone, reduce 'the transcendental to a residuum' (Connolly, 1995: 35 36). The discussion in this chapter, however, indicates that Connolly's 'attachment' may not be able to rid itself of that residuum either. This state of affairs invites us to consider an alternative reading of Foucault, one which takes his statement as a Connollian case of 'implicit projections exceeding explicit formulations' (ibid.: 36). According to this interpretation, Foucault may be interpreted as suggesting that the tensions of the 'analytic of finitude' lie beyond the specific configuration of the modern episteme and more fundamentally rest in a common human condition that cannot escape a projection into a realm beyond itself.

This argument finds support in the analysis articulated in this chapter and brings to the fore the idea that opportunities for pluralism may not lie in an (impossible?) advance of the Kantian process of secularisation advocated by Connolly. Rather, possibilities for a generous ethos of engagement and critical responsiveness may rest on the very recognition that whatever perspective we endorse, religious or secular, we are all united in a common search *beyond* ourselves. This search, however, does not preclude, but actually *demands* the ethics of uncertainty, responsiveness and spiritual self-transformation envisaged by Connolly. And this is precisely because transcendence is not mere reassurance for our common dispersed condition or leeway for authoritative positions, but also a fundamental source of imagination, inspiration and enchantment for possibilities of life yet to be realised.

## Acknowledgements

## Notes

1 Connolly maintains that several other stories could be told about the origins and legitimacy of secularism. However, this narrative of emancipation is central because it 'has become the dominant self representation by secularists in several Western states. This story prevails largely because it paints the picture of a self sufficient public realm fostering freedom and governance without a recourse to a specific religious faith' (Connolly, 1999b: 20 21).

2 Although Connolly does not explicitly make this point, it seems to me a central, underlying assumption of his discussion of Islam in Europe with the related critique of the Christian/secular demand to disconnect religious belief from embodied practices.

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# 9 Connolly's embodied politics

## Revolutionising the practices of everyday life

*Gulshan Ara Khan*

## Introduction

What we need today is a form of political activism that both wins the intellectual argument against the structural violence of capitalist and neo-liberal economic practices and enables individuals to transform the very desires and sensibilities that reproduce these practices. William Connolly's materialist pluralism lends itself to just such tangible strategies and tactics of intervention that challenge the hegemony of capitalism. His approach is in marked contrast to the calls of post-Marxist thinkers, such as Slavoj Žižek, for 'authentic' revolutionary 'acts' that refuse the 'blackmail of capitalism' but which fall short of offering a constructive politics of resistance. Empty rhetorical gestures calling for moments of 'radical change' that break with the existing system (Žižek, 2000: 326) are of little practical import to the daily practices of individuals. In light of the looming ecological crisis and the brutal actuality of global injustices and inequalities, calls for acts of systematic change may be necessary. But Žižek's seductive rhetoric is hollow and lacks substantive content.[1] As Gramsci demonstrated, prior to any (Leninist) 'revolution' there must first be a 'revolution' in everyday 'common sense' (Gramsci, 1988). Although formed within the parameters of a different theoretical framework Connolly's politics seeks to undertake just such a task. His politically embodied approach  in particular, his work on 'neuropolitics'  indicates forms of intervention that tackle the complexity of contemporary capitalist relations and the behavioural patterns that support its continued existence, by making molecular changes to the emotional, visual and visceral fields of the repetitive and taken-for-granted practices of everyday life. Such a transformation of the repetitive nature of one's daily cognitive and behavioural patterns is itself a 'revolutionary' task.

In this chapter, I examine Connolly's materialistic pluralism to show how he engages with the layered nature of thinking and culture and champions concrete tactics that are able to revolutionise the practices of everyday life and to bring about substantive change. I begin by setting out the main elements of Connolly's innovative version of a post-structuralism which does not reduce life or matter to the play of linguistic signification but recognises a nuanced

and layered reality, outlining his materialist ontology and embodied conception of the subject and of 'neuropolitics'. I then outline Connolly's notion of the 'evangelical capitalist resonance machine' and his calls for a politics of intervention that engages with the 'virtual' and material registers of life. Next I turn to the 'anti-art' tactics of the Situationist International which, I argue, complement Connolly's analysis of 'neuropolitics' and provide vital ingredients for an active and vibrant political challenge to neo-liberal practices. The Situationists developed innovative techniques of intervention to dislodge and dislocate everyday behaviour in a capitalist society and these supplement Connolly's theory of political embodiment. In the final section, I explore the work of two contemporary political artists, 'Banksy' and 'The Vacuum Cleaner', and show how they are exemplars of Connolly's 'neuropolitics' in action. I argue that Connolly's work supports such artistic acts, the performance of which employs multiple techniques to induce visceral experiences in audiences. I conclude with further reflection on the need to emotionally dislodge everyday life practices so as to liberate them from capitalist desires and redirect them towards non-exploitative actions, habits and beliefs.

## Materialist pluralism and neuropolitics

Connolly's materialist ontology draws inspiration from the philosophies of Friedrich Nietzsche, Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, and the materialism of ancient philosophers such as Lucretius. He understands the world in terms of a deep 'multidimensional pluralism', that is, as an excess or an abundance of diverse 'energies' and 'protean' material forces of life that exist without 'any inherent purpose', differing in quality, quantity, and intensity (Connolly, 1999b: 186). The material forces of life always exceed any 'social organisation of humans and things' (Connolly, 1995: 33) and there is 'vitality' in an 'extra-discursive' realm of forces or material flows that escape any attempt at representation or expression (Connolly, 2002: 47).

Connolly's conception of 'immanent naturalism' is based on a rejection of law-like, purposive explanations of nature. Drawing upon contemporary science for instance, IIya Prigogine's 'complexity theory' Connolly makes the case that nature is always in a process of becoming (Connolly, 2002); that there is 'fluidity in things' and nature contains 'elements of unpredictability' (Connolly, 2002: 66, 82, 135; see also 1999a: 23). The world 'flows over with diverse "energies" and "forces"' that impinge on human life in multiple ways and that sometimes react to human infringement in 'unpredictable and uncanny ways' generating new formations that cannot be predicted in advance (Connolly, 1999a: 10). In Connolly's view, nature and culture are folded together in human life into complex layers; thinking, language, 'desire, identity and culture' are all deeply interconnected (Connolly, 2002: 17).

Connolly reworks the traditional notion of the political 'subject' recognising that the abundant forces of life disrupt any notion of the subject understood as origin or foundation. Instead, he develops a 'visceral' conception of

the 'self' understood as a living, thinking, breathing, material and embodied being with both conscious and unconscious memory and perception (Connolly, 1993: 156; 2002). Connolly draws upon Nietzsche and Foucault to explain some of the effects of existential and social injustice suffered by the 'self' in modern society. Following Nietzsche, he argues that the self is 'susceptible to suffering' and therefore becomes the site of 'resentment, violence, depression, and self-loathing paranoia' (Connolly, 1993: 157, 158; Nietzsche, [1887] 1994: 21). To be a self is necessarily to 'resent the transiency and suffering which defines the human condition' (Connolly, 1993: 153). However, it is the way in which the individual responds to this suffering that affects his/her relationship with him/herself and others in the world. Connolly agrees with Nietzsche that difficulties start to emerge when the 'sufferer instinctively seeks a cause for his suffering' and turns his/her dissatisfaction with the world and the self into hatred for that which is different or 'other' (Nietzsche, [1887] 1994: 99; Connolly, 1993: 158; 2002: 102, 105). This can lead to the emergence of fundamentalist identities and social forces (such as those implicated in the so-called 'war against terror'). Following Foucault, Connolly argues that in the modern world the self is drawn 'systematically into the orbit of social discipline' where 'real practices' fix 'dispositional patterns of desire on the self' (Connolly, 1995: 57). He uses the term 'micropolitics' to explain the way in which professional institutions deploy certain techniques in collectively 'organizing attachments' that inscribe particular relations within individuals and between others (Connolly, 2002: 21). Pressures and forces of 'normalisation' are 'deeply inscribed in the contemporary [social] order' in which strategies of 'therapy, self-confession, and self-policing' are deployed to instil 'standards of normality into the self, the group, and the nation' (Connolly, 1995: 88, 90).

However, according to Connolly, the self 'contains pools of "energy" and "impulses"' that decentre these attempts at social unity and normalisation (Connolly, 1993: 10). Connolly argues that the self has a (limited) capacity to work on the multitude of material forces that constitute his/her being. Individuals are capable, to a certain degree, of crafting and styling their subjectivities and habits towards particular ethical ends and aesthetic dispositions. To do so they need to develop a variety of different practices of work on themselves: 'techniques of the self' (Nietzsche, [1887] 1994: 176 177; Foucault, 1988a: 16 63).[2] These are practices that the individual can consciously and repeatedly engage in to challenge his/her internal tensions to attempt to 'modify particular patterns of desire' (Connolly, 1995: 76). The aim is to reduce *ressentiment*, to cultivate 'care' for oneself and respect for 'others' and in the process to be more receptive to change, difference and otherness. Connolly also advocates relations of 'agonistic respect' and 'critical responsiveness' as the means by which to cultivate a generous ethos of engagement with others (see Connolly, 2005a; Khan, 2008).

Connolly pays careful attention to the role invisible or 'virtual' forces play in processes of normalisation. This gives his work a critical edge over

deliberative democratic and post-Marxist approaches which fail to give an effective account of political embodiment. Connolly refigures the Freudian unconscious as a 'materialist energetic' by taking the notion of a 'dynamic unconscious' as constituted by 'reaction formations' and 'blockages' (rather than the 'imperialism' of the 'Oedipal' triad) from Deleuze and Guatarri's critique of psychoanalysis in *Anti-Oedipal: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Connolly, 1999a: 23; Deleuze and Guatarri, [1972] 1984: 51, 313 315). According to Connolly, many unconscious forces are 'virtual', that is, 'they are real without being actual: they exert effects (hence are real) without themselves being refined enough to be direct objects of existential inspection (hence lacking actuality)' (Connolly, 2002: 40, 122).

The concept of the 'virtual' is central to understanding the activist nature of Connolly's politics of resistance. This is because he addresses how intangible forces 'subsisting below the direct level of consciousness' are essential to forging bodily attachments to certain images, sounds and practices (ibid.: 85). Connolly distinguishes between the linguistic and the 'bodily' or corporeal register of being. The latter, being 'below the threshold of intellectual reflection', is not readily translatable into language (ibid.: 35). According to Connolly, we are necessarily bound within the linguistic register of being through which we communicate. However, the 'non-verbal' register of being has tremendous powers of affect because 'virtual' forces are 'effective in influencing conduct on its own accord and also affecting conscious judgement' especially as they become 'embodied in neurological processes' (ibid.: 85). In addition, they have a 'cultural' impact because they are incorporated into existing 'theories of morality' (ibid.: 85). Connolly calls the 'politics through which cultural-life mixes into the composition of body/brain processes' neuropolitics (ibid.: xiii).

The idea of 'neuropolitics' draws attention to the fact that any successful tactics of intervention need to understand the relationship between the virtual and the material in order to be able to dislodge and dislocate existing thoughts and practices. Indeed, an effective politics of intervention needs to adopt an embodied approach that engages with the unconscious forces that contribute to the formation of passions and cultures if it is to contest, subvert and re-orientate capitalist signs, images, and practices towards non-exploitative ones. Connolly's materialist strategy of resistance is premised on the idea that 'there is much more to thinking than argument' and that subliminal attachments, which form the basis of the repetitive acts of an individual's habits, dispositions and behavioural patterns, cannot be overcome simply by rational dialogue (ibid.: 17, 71). Effective techniques of intervention need to include 'choreographed mixtures of word, gesture, image, sound rhythm, smell and touch', the aim of which is to 'define' and redefine the 'sensibility' in which 'perception, thinking identity, beliefs, and judgement are set' (ibid.: 20).

There is often a disjunction between what groups and individuals say and do. Many groups and individuals are aware of certain 'facts' about their own practices. For example, it is widely acknowledged that one of the best ways to

challenge capitalism is to consume less and purchase energy-saving appliances and goods that have a life beyond the current trend. However, despite conscious awareness of the detrimental effects of their actions, many individuals continue to engage in consumption practices dictated by fashion, where goods are deliberately designed to be disposed of relatively quickly    'planned obsolescence'    to allow for new items to take their place (see Marcuse, 1991). It is important to contest 'facts' and win arguments against capitalist practices (and the inequalities and injustices they cause) by demonstrating their irrationality. However, it is also vital to deploy techniques that appeal to the unconscious because it is at this level that existing dispositions and beliefs have to be dislodged and re-channelled towards new ends. Indeed, advertising agents are well versed in the use of media campaigns seducing the subconscious level into forging attachments to particular objects (Bernays, [1928] 1972).

For example, in Britain, government agencies have recently deployed negative images and sounds in adverts that evoke a gut response to make individuals reduce their driving speed or give up smoking. Recognising the layered nature of being and developing embodied strategies of resistance is the first move towards shifting the manner in which we relate to ourselves, others and the environment. Ideas, beliefs, habits and cultural practices are not formed simply through discussion and dialogue but through a plethora of techniques and processes that operate on desire on a number of different registers. Individuals have emotional or, in the words of Judith Butler, 'passionate' attachments to fundamental beliefs and it is at the corporeal level that these very attachments need to be dislodged (Butler, 1997).[3]

## Evangelical capitalism

In his most recent work Connolly has employed the idea of 'neuropolitics' to explain the reactive political, religious and economic agenda of what he calls the 'Evangelical Capitalist Resonance Machine'    the alliance in the United States between neo-liberalism and 'evangelical Christianity' (Connolly, 2005b; 2008a); an assemblage between diverse affinities that seeks to shape an evangelical capitalist understanding of what it means to be an American in the contemporary world order. This resonance machine is constructed    and continues to be built    upon the infectious nature of resentment. Rather than building a positive, agonistic and inclusive sense of America, the evangelical capitalist resonance machine has been successful in stifling public life and debate. It has defined itself against Islam by metonymically linking it to fear and terror. The spread of 'Islamisation' is constructed as a sickness that threatens to contaminate both the international order and American liberty and freedom. This process makes Muslims equivalent to enemies, thereby creating an 'us' versus 'them' mentality and has given the Republican Right legitimacy to usher in policies that further cultivate a paranoid and fearful attitude towards alternative political, religious or cultural groups.

Connolly identifies the central role the American corporate media has played, and continues to play, in utilising the resentment underpinning evangelical capitalism by fusing 'major players' into this alliance who do not always 'share the same religious and economic doctrine' (Connolly, 2005b: 871). Media energise diverse affinities of sensibility by doing much of their work 'below the level of explicit attention and encouraging the intense coding of those experiences' (ibid.: 871, 880). For Connolly, the media implements 'neocortical politics'   it plants visceral seeds of resentment, dread and panic in the lower levels of registers of its recipients and harvests them at a later stage to make it appear as if they were the views of the recipients themselves (ibid.). Indeed, he identifies how, through sophisticated strategies of propaganda, media presentations manipulate virtual forces to install 'dispositions in habitual patterns of perception, identity, interest, and judgements of entitlement' (ibid.: 878): 'political leaders, talk show hosts, and product advertisers' are able to activate 'non-conscious patterns of resonance across large constituencies', demeaning 'particular groups' and placing them under suspicion while 'the results flow into consciousness' (Connolly, 2006: 74).

Connolly particularly focuses on the role that repetition plays in generating resentful associations, attitudes and beliefs towards minorities (Connolly, 2005b: 162). For example, he identifies how Fox News Network (owned by Rupert Murdoch) promotes right-wing Republican views, repeatedly airing images and sounds that reinforce a nationalist and exclusionist politics (Connolly, 2005c). Fox News has been successful in de-legitimising academics of an alternative persuasion and has sanctified particular think-tanks as 'experts', excluding the democratic left from their discussions (ibid.). Unfortunately, as Connolly acknowledges, moderate news companies with an oppositional and alternative agenda to evangelical capitalism do not have the resources to disseminate their alternative images and sounds because they are dropped after a few weeks of exposure when other newsworthy items take their place (ibid.).

Connolly argues that the political messages generated by evangelical capitalism must be contested and confronted by using similar tactics to those that it deploys, writing that a 'major contemporary challenge is to devise ways to expose and respond to such technologies of collective mobilization' (Connolly, 2006: 74). He puts forward a number of different approaches to address this task. For example, he suggests that a 'complementary task is to engage a positive minority movement within either evangelism or market capitalism itself' to subvert its aims (Connolly, 2005b: 882). Another tactic is for 'diverse existential faiths' to work on 'affinities' or make connections with opponents and form a 'larger assemblage of resonance' (ibid.: 883).[4] He suggests a 'tiered strategy' in which

> [Y]ou expose the tactics of those who do not themselves call attention to them; you introduce counterstrategies of cultural-corporeal infusion attached to a more generous vision of public life, and you publicize, as

you proceed, how these counterstrategies themselves impinge upon the affectively rich, non-conscious layers of life.

<div align="right">(Connolly, 2006: 74)</div>

From Connolly's perspective, any tactics of resistance that induce an emotional or bodily effect such as disgust, repulsion, shock, horror, surprise or laughter will have greatest impact in dislodging and unsettling attachments to sedimented ideas and practices. This lends itself to a form of political activism that uses the techniques of the multimedia to induce visceral responses to disrupt and dislocate established patterns of behaviour. For example, Connolly cites the American programmes *Northern Exposure* and *Six Feet Under* as affirmative examples of micropolitics in action because they open people viscerally to the risks and pleasures of diversity (Connolly, 2005a: 31). He also mentions the importance of films that move 'back and forth between one time and another' because they draw attention to the vitality and 'temporality of life' (ibid.: 163, 164). Connolly's praise for the satirical news television programme *The Daily Show* draws attention to the use of rhythms, sounds, gestures and images as a means of opposition, intervention and resistance to evangelical capitalism. *The Daily Show* has exposed 'how the image word rhythm sound regime of the Bush administration' works in creating metonymic links by associating certain images to implant a particular idea or belief about Democratic candidates and policies (Connolly, 2005c: 2). Indeed, for Connolly 'The Daily Show' is an example of a group of individuals who have successfully deployed tactics to generate alternative visceral responses from their audiences that challenge the ideology of the Republican Right.

Connolly, then, appreciates how choreographed mixtures of images, words and sounds   the trade of artists and multimedia   can be key tools in resisting, dislodging and dislocating capitalist and neo-liberal practices. In the following two sections I will explore the close proximity between these ideas and the work of the Situationist International and the artists known as 'Banksy' and 'The Vacuum Cleaner'. I will argue that the methods of intervention developed by the Situationist International supplement Connolly's 'neuropolitics' to provide vital ingredients for an active politics to challenge and transform the practices of everyday life.

## Political and aesthetic intervention

For Plato, philosophers seek to uncover truth through reason whilst artists undermine reason by appealing to emotions through techniques of illusion. In his disdain for artists and his desire to banish them from his ideal state, Plato was perhaps aware of the power available to artists to evoke what Connolly calls 'sub-cortical responses' and thereby unsettle established patterns of thought and behaviour. For contemporary political thinkers it is still a commonplace that the 'world of ritual, artistry, technique and micropolitics' is dangerous and should be prevented from impinging on rational political

debate and deliberation (Connolly, 2002: 17). This is a naïve and reactive understanding of politics that surreptitiously seeks to justify the status quo because politics is never a disinterested activity. In a media-driven age, governmental agencies spend a significant proportion of their budgets paying for the skills of unelected individuals and organisations to shape and steer the political imaginary of citizens towards interested agendas. Non-governmental agencies and actors also spend large amounts of money funding individuals, projects and campaigns that support particular visions of the world. Mass media and multinational corporations employ armies of experts trained in the art of inducing emotions, employing images to induce particular feelings or to generate a particular effect: being happy, a sense of belonging, or feelings of resentment towards marginalised or excluded groups.

Connolly's suggestion that intellectuals need to become 'well versed' in the techniques of 'neuroscience and advertising' is thus of great salience in attempting to defuse the false dichotomy between art and politics (Connolly, 1995: 4). The strategies of intervention that follow from Connolly's embodied account of politics have to be artistic in challenging, disrupting and dislocating existing desires and attachments through techniques that combine 'image, voice, sound, and rhythm to work on the visceral register of being' (Connolly, 2005a: 31). A politics of resistance that fails to address the virtual forces of life and does not engage with capitalism, inequality and injustice on a visceral/cultural register will be ineffective and unsuccessful in its objective in achieving substantive social, cultural and political change. In this section I examine the strategies of the Situationist International movement of the 1950s and 1960s as complements to Connolly's embodied theory of politics and in turn I consider the contemporary heirs of the Situationist movement through the terms of Connolly's sophisticated theoretical analysis of neuropolitics.

Formed in 1957, the Situationist International was composed of a number of European avant-garde political and artistic groups and individuals whose most prominent members were Guy Debord and Raoul Vanegeim. Rooted in Marxist theory, the movement developed innovative and 'revolutionary'[5] tactics informed by their 'incisive critique of modern society' to transform everyday life (Knabb, 2006: ix). Their methods of intervention were influential in leading to the May 1968 revolt in France (ibid.: ix).

The Situationists believed in the power of art to transform society but differed from other avant-garde movements because they developed a provocative and experimental art form that questioned the nature of art itself (Plant, 1992: 3, 4). The movement's 'anti-art' stance was influenced by its members' Lettrist and Dadaist roots, which sought to destroy the conventional context of art as a special, exclusive and elitist activity and reconstitute it as an integral aspect of everyday life to be lived and realised in the present (Plant, 1992: 4; Debord and Wolman, 2006: 14). Its practice was thus centrally defined by the idea of 'actively constructing situations', by the 'concrete construction of momentary ambiences of life and their transformation into a superior passional quality' (Debord, 2006a: 38). One of their many insights is that a

'person's life is a succession of fortuitous situations' which are not identical but the 'majority [of which] are undifferentiated' to give the 'impression of sameness' or mediocrity (ibid.: 40). As 'psychogeographical researchers' acting on the idea that geographical structures, organisations and situations are ideologically imbued and constitute the subjectivities of individuals the movement developed the political notion of 'Unitary Urbanism' which focused on creating a new 'material environment of life' by utilising the arts and modern techniques to bring play and life back into the monotony of daily existence (ibid.: 38 39). This understanding of modern life gave the movement an active programme that focused on criticising, artistically intervening into and revolutionising the behaviour and *mores* of everyday life through the techniques of '*dérive'*, '*détournement'* and the concept of 'the spectacle'.

The technique of *dérive* (drift/drifting) which connects space and place through 'playful constructive behavior and awareness of psychogeographical effects' enables an individual or a small group of people, for a short period of time, to let themselves go by dropping their 'usual motives for movement and action' and by allowing themselves to be drawn to the 'attractions of the terrain' in which they find themselves (Debord, 2006b: 62). The aim of this technique is for individuals to 'emotionally disorient themselves' to give rise to 'new conditions' of behaviour and bring about the disappearance of old dispositions (ibid.: 64). The method of *détournement* uses existing artistic creations and defacing them so as to subvert their intended message towards alternative ones (Debord and Wolman, 2006: 14 21). The notion of 'the spectacle' influenced by Marx's work on commodity fetishism and alienation and Georg Lukác's notion of reification is premised on the idea that capitalism creates a 'society of the spectacle', a 'social relation among people mediated by images' (Debord, 1994). The world and social interactions are objectified as commodities. The spectacle is a capitalist *Weltanschauung*, which appears harmless and has a unifying function (ibid.). Conceptualising the spectacle helps to provide an alternative world vision to capitalism.

Constructing situations through these techniques produces the sorts of dislocations groups and individuals need to dislodge them from their everyday taken-for-granted behaviour and practices and to emotionally stimulate them into questioning their ideas and beliefs. For the Situationist International, this was to be achieved using modern culture to create 'collective ambiences, ensembles of impressions' that would be 'both the product and the instruments of new forms of behaviour' (Debord, 2006a: 36, 40).

The techniques theorised and used by the Situationist International are an integral aspect of many contemporary anti-capitalist collectives today. Some have been successful in temporarily re-claiming public space and capturing the imagination of individuals and groups by appealing to their desires and passions through the use of colour, sound and image to offer an alternative vision to capitalism. For example, 'Reclaim the Streets', a non-violent direct action collective formed in 1991, was successful in the 1990s and early years of the new millennium in staging protests in the streets and roads against the

dominance of the car in public space, its contribution to pollution and the economic and political forces that sustain its power. Their demonstrations (with a surprise element regarding time and place) consisted of street parties with a carnival-like atmosphere that deployed the techniques of *dérive* and 'the spectacle'. The collective created an alternative spectacle and catered for diverse desires by providing numerous forms of entertainment, which sought to seduce passers-by and draw them into the attractions: sand, dancers and music systems with high intensity speakers and sofas laid out in the middle of motorways and busy streets tempt passers-by to be part of the fun. The routine of everyday life is brought to a temporary halt as the alternative spectacle occupies the space until the police force manage to restore their conception of order. In addition, many activist artists such as 'Adbusters' (the anti-corporate activist organisation) use the Situationist tactic of *détournement* to parody adverts by major transnational corporations such as Nike with the aim of subverting their intended effect by altering its meaning through comical or tragic effects.

There is no direct intellectual lineage between Connolly's materialistic pluralism and the Situationist International's 'anti-art'. Nevertheless, there are a number of important affinities and shared points of emphasis between their respective works. There is not the scope in this chapter to construct a comprehensive map of the connections and differences between them but it will suffice to mention a few. Connolly's 'pluralism'[6] draws upon the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze who was influenced by the Situationists (see Plant, 1992) and a particular conception of desire is central to his work as it is to Connolly's. The aim of the Situationists, like Connolly, is to liberate and revolutionise capitalist desires and subjectivities and re-orientate them towards non-exploitation (Vaneigem, 1983). Implicit in the movement's approach is the acknowledgement that changing social relations and getting people to think differently requires more than just the force of the better argument. They recognise that their tactics have to appeal to the non-rational and non-conscious aspects of human subjectivities. What's more, the Situationist International's use of the term revolution transcends its traditional Marxist usage understood as a radical disruption by a privileged agent of history. Like Connolly, the movement understands intervention as rooted in altering everyday passions and subjectivities (Debord, 1994; 2006a: 36). Nietzsche's *The Genealogy of Morality*, in different ways, is an important source of reference for both perspectives. In *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, Raoul Vaneigem seeks to develop a concept of masters without slaves. Elsewhere, I have argued that Connolly's 'ethos of pluralisation', which manifests in the civic virtues of 'agonistic respect' and 'critical responsiveness', also seeks to create a conception of masters without slaves (Khan, 2008). Both seek to radicalise subjectivity by freeing it from reactive and oppressive ways of thinking and being.

Connolly's materialist pluralism shares many parallel ideas and concerns with the Situationist International about capitalist manipulations of everyday

life. However, it is important not to reduce his work to the ideas and practices of the Situationist International or vice-versa because there are important differences between them that complement their respective approaches. For example, Connolly's apprehension about 'cultural manipulation', which is both a redeeming feature of and a possible hindrance to his work, is at odds with the explicitly Marxist agenda or vanguard style of politics characteristic of the Situationist International. Connolly asks the question 'How can you participate in such strategies without becoming an envoy of cultural manipulation?' He accepts the perspectival nature of all claims to truth and he recognises that the passions and desires of groups and individuals are constantly being culturally manipulated by the multimedia and professional organisations: through sounds, images, and rituals unconscious forces are strategically orientated towards particular patterns. However, Connolly says that to contest the cultural manipulation of evangelical capitalism it is important for individuals to *publicise* how their counterstrategies impinge on non-conscious layers of life (Connolly, 2006: 74). This is problematic because there is no way to escape cultural manipulation and publicising one's agenda may not be the most successful way to engender new behaviour. Contemporary forms of capitalist practices do not reveal the exploitative character of their images, signs and practices. Maybe in an ideal agonistic democracy (of the sort that Connolly describes), the tactic of exposing the subjective nature of one's counter-strategies ought to become the norm. However, under contemporary capitalism the struggle is to develop both covert and overt counter-strategies in order to challenge capitalist practices to work towards creating an alternative society.

Connolly's work can benefit from the Situationists' unreserved desire to act immediately because they readily acknowledge the need to 'publicize desirable alternatives to the spectacle of the capitalist way of life' but not to confess the fact that they are doing so (Debord, 2006a: 43). They have little apprehension about the use of cultural manipulation in challenging capitalism and actively seek to create new ambiences as 'material' not only for new experiences, but also for the production of 'propaganda' because they acknowledge the immediacy of undertaking 'effective ideological action in order to combat the influence of advanced capitalism' (ibid.: 43). At the same time Connolly's non-proselytising ethos of pluralisation complements the tactics and theory of the Situationist International by introducing diversity and agonism into their explicitly Marxist agenda. Connolly's materialist ontology and account of virtual forces also provide the work of the Situationist International with a sophisticated theory of embodiment and action. Keeping these differences alive facilitates a dynamic tension between Connolly's materialist pluralism and the anti-art of the Situationist International. Mirroring back and forth between Connolly's embodied political theory and the techniques of the Situationist International furnishes groups and individuals with the necessary tools in the struggle against contemporary forms of capitalism.

## Art and the revolution of everyday life

In this section I examine the activities of the contemporary political artists known as 'Banksy' and 'The Vacuum Cleaner'   contemporary heirs to the legacy of the Situationist International   to draw out the implications of Connolly's techniques of the self and neuropolitics. For Connolly, it is important that individuals and groups band 'together in opposition' to form 'cross-territorial citizen assemblages' that 'extend beyond the walls of the state' (Connolly, 1995: 155, 157; 2000a: 194, 195; 2001: 352). Anti-capitalist demonstrations, marches and alliances between a wide range of groups and individuals are an important form of protest that challenges dominant neo-liberal institutions and ideas. They also raise awareness by captivating the imaginary of citizens. However, the unprecedented pace of change aided by technological and global developments has altered the nature of capitalist relations and practices (see Hardt and Negri, 2000). They have become complicated and pluralistic and therefore require unconventional and innovative strategies and tactics of intervention.

Connolly's emphasis on techniques of the self and his work on 'neuropolitics' call for different types of opposition and resistance which place emphasis on the individual taking his/her own action and creating their own forms of protest to challenge capitalist practices and in the process introduce ambiguity into the minds of those individuals who bear witness to the artistic practice. Indeed, Connolly's theoretical framework supports the tactics of intervention of individual artists as well as utopian and anarchist groups   such as intentional communities   that seek to re-appropriate space through affirmative techniques that broaden the political imaginary of groups and individuals.

Banksy is the pseudonym of an anonymous Bristol-based 'graffiti' artist who has successfully managed to seize the unique space of city walls to illegally stencil his provocative, ironic and humorous images. His focus is not on clever words and arguments but on graffiti stencils that deliver a potent political message in a simple well-constructed image. Banksy's graffiti and other subversive activities have caught the attention of the locals who are exposed to his images on the walls of Bristol and London, and in a world bombarded with continuous images his work has captured the imagination of an international audience. His artistic critique of contemporary politics, culture and events has found its way onto the inhumane security wall surrounding Bethlehem in the West Bank separating it from Israel (Banksy, 2005: 110 117). Indeed, some of his work has been successfully sold at Sotheby's. The mystery surrounding Banksy's identity has also been the focus of much media attention. In an age driven by celebrities craving media attention and seeking to advertise their latest products, Banksy remains faceless and it is his work and not his personality that takes centre stage in tackling the inequalities of contemporary capitalism. Banksy's graffiti is 'democratic' because it is there for all to see and it is not 'elitist' because there is 'no price of admission' (Banksy, 2005: 8).

Apart from inducing a more generous vision of public life by putting forward an alternative perspective and creating a 'better-looking world', Banksy's art has the power to generate visceral responses of shock, humour and surprise (ibid.: 8). For example, Banksy's image of two policemen kissing mocks the homophobic sentiments which perhaps circulate in the police force; the message speaks loudly and has subversive effect (ibid.: 29). His vision of the police as 'villains' who claim to be 'doing their job' draws attention to the view that the 'greatest crimes' are 'committed' by people 'following the rules' rather than 'breaking' them (Banksy, 2001; 2005: 51). What concerns him about the police force is that 'some people represent authority without possessing any of their own' (Banksy, 2005: 28). Banksy makes a distinction between different types of power relations, with the police force exercising coercion and domination as opposed to self-autonomy. Not everyone has the resources to fund advertising space and Banksy has shown that all you need is 'initiative' and not huge sums of money to be creative, autonomous and have authority (ibid.: 19). He has successfully created a personalised public billboard to publicise his alternative message and his signature mark under his stencilled pictures readily acknowledges it is his perspective. Banksy's images may not compete with the likes of CNN, Fox News or brand names, but his work nonetheless is able to instigate a sub-cortical response from those who are exposed to it, even if this manifests only as a flicker of an eyelid or a glance. In towns and cities where spaces for leisure and sociality are minimised at the expense of building more shopping centres, Banksy's activities re-appropriate public space to give it a cultural, social, political and humorous edge.

Banksy's images appeal to sub-cultures not typically drawn to the art gallery, museum or mainstream politics. His work has attracted the interest of frustrated youths and marginalised groups and individuals. Banksy's reoccurring stencil image of the rat as the 'ultimate role model' for the disenfranchised tells the 'insignificant' and 'persecuted' that they have the power to bring 'entire civilisations to their knees' by using their initiative (ibid.: 83). Putting aside the clarity of his subversive images and the emotions they may evoke, there is much risk involved in stencilling his crimes of passion. The danger of getting caught by some of the people he mocks is real, yet this threat adds to the salience and subversive nature of his art. Banksy has placed his work on the walls of the British Museum in London without the permission of the curator. His actions seek to question the rationale and authority of museum culture and offer a surprise for those who encounter his 'primitive' wall art (ibid.: 155).

Banksy's much sought-after work — like that of many of his counterparts — is at risk from becoming what it seeks to defy: another commodity or spectacle to be owned for the sake of owning it. He has a simple message to those who seek to commodify his work: 'I can't actually believe you pay for this shit'. There is undoubtedly a limited lifespan to certain types of oppositional acts and gestures. The incorporation of dissent into the capitalist system is

well documented by Herbert Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man* (Marcuse, 1991). Banksy's anti-art along with his anonymity may well be reduced to another commodity in the formless logic of capitalism. However, this constitutes both a strength and weakness of the style and scale of his protest. His anti-art is a form of intervention that seeks to challenge capitalism here and now. On the other hand, the limited lifespan of Banksy's art, which focuses on the present, has a 'radically democratic' conclusion by keeping art and politics alive, ensuring its work is never complete because new forms of intervention need to be developed to respond to different times and places. This does not undermine the effectiveness that Banksy's work has had and continues to have for those who perceive him as a role model and his work as a form of political activity.

James Leadbitter is a UK-based performance artist also known as 'The Vacuum Cleaner'. He created his act, 'Cleaning Up After Capitalism', as a response to Richard Branson opening up a Virgin store in Kuwait and his proposal of opening up another one in Baghdad once the war is over. Armed with an old-fashioned upright vacuum cleaner and wearing a fluorescent yellow sleeveless plastic jacket with the words 'CLEANING UP AFTER CAPITALISM' printed on the back, Leadbitter performs his act of vacuuming outside on the streets and inside major chain stores warning people to watch out for the dirt of capitalism.[7] This is a powerful image which has a visceral effect by dislodging our sensibility because the vacuum cleaner is a noisy machine associated with cleaning indoors. By vacuuming outdoors Leadbitter creates a new association, suggesting that dirt (and not litter), which we cannot see, is created by capitalism. This invisible dirt of inequality, injustice, poverty, exploitation and alienation are the effects of capitalism. Indeed, much like Connolly's notion of the 'virtual', this draws attention to the idea that there exist invisible forces and ideas, which have a detrimental effect on the environment and on the lives of citizens all over the world. Leadbitter's performance art and those of his 'sub-contractors' seek to get people to question what lies behind and beneath the fluorescent neon signs and stores filled with an endless supply of goods.

Both Banksy's and Leadbitter's art demonstrates how autonomous gestures are able to generate a political message without the aid of a political party or mass movement. In addition, their work does not remain confined within 'the force of the better argument' in drawing attention to the injustices and violence created by capitalist and neo-liberal practices. Nor does their art rely on Žižekean 'radical acts' to suddenly liberate desire. Instead, like the strategies that follow from Connolly's neuropolitics, their art seeks to initiate a 'gut response' by dislocating and dislodging subliminal investments into everyday objects and ideas. However, many commentators have questioned the effectiveness of such isolated avant-garde acts against neo-liberalism (Hall, 1988: 27; Laclau, 2000: 210; Littler, 2005: 229). They have argued that the scale of intervention presented by individual/group-based artists or local activists is no match against a global enemy like capitalism and that wide-ranging coalitions

are more 'politically fruitful' (Littler, 2005: 229). Broad assemblages connecting disparate groups and individuals together against neo-liberalism is a necessary strategy of resistance. However, it is important not to reduce such alliances to an homogenous unity, a substantive alternative, a set of ethical guidelines or counter-hegemony in the Gramscian sense of the term. They encompass a wide range of disparate struggles and perspectives. Moreover, the negative consequences of capitalism and globalisation are not the exclusive concern of the left (which itself is a heterogeneous collective) but also of right-wing extremist groups such as the British National Party. It is therefore crucial that *alternative* relations (not just oppositional relations) and gestures of resistance are created and supported. Opposition to evangelical capitalism must be pitched at all levels: various registers of the self; interpersonal and communal relationships; the local, national and global. What Connolly's work demonstrates is that while isolated avant-garde gestures may appear ineffective, because the impact is not immediately felt or clearly visible, they may nonetheless seep into a lower register only later being able to surface at the rational layer.

A false dichotomy between hegemonic[8] coalitions and 'isolated avant-garde gestures' or 'do it yourself' movements is generated by many thinkers on the political left (see, for example, Day, 2005; Littler, 2005). The former is often sought by those nostalgic for traditional forms of radical political intervention. The latter re-appropriate the term revolution and subvert it to refer to the transformation of everyday behaviours and *mores*. Connolly's work shows that the two different forms of resistance are not mutually exclusive (Connolly, 2008b). The various activities which constitute political intervention are part of a network of resistance. They play different roles and generate diverse effects in re-appropriating, challenging, displacing and subverting capitalist signs. Wide-ranging coalitions crystallising together around different relations and connections are a key tactic in the struggle against capitalism because size and strength matter for the simple reason that they generate a greater force, which is more likely to capture media attention and get wider coverage. However, Banksy's stencil graffiti art and James Leadbitter's performance art play an equally fundamental role — in a different context — in challenging the dominance of neo-liberalism. Their art embeds itself in the busy monotony of everyday existence and offers a political surprise for observers or passers-by who glance at it. Activists performing individual artistic gestures have united with other activists engaging in traditional forms of protest.

For example, demonstrations of the UK-based 'Stop the War Coalition' saw a wide array of different types of protestor uniting against the Bush/Blair alliance for war in Iraq. The mainstream press and media limit their coverage to such displays of opposition, and avant-garde activists taking part lose out. This is because their acts are witnessed by those attending the demonstrations who have at some level committed themselves to being part of an anti-capitalist coalition. Isolated avant-garde gestures displayed or performed in city centres and residential areas have the added benefit of exposing their art to people

who are not drawn to demonstrations or are not actively politicised. Artistic intervention    in its multiple forms    is vital in re-orientating capitalist desires and attachments towards non-exploitative and non-hierarchical relations with all forms of life.

In order to stay committed to the Situationist International's 'revolutionary' legacy of 'praxis' anti-capitalists should read Connolly's work on neuropolitics to aid their understanding about developing effective embodied techniques in their attempts to dislodge groups and individuals from capitalist and neo-liberal desires and practices. What's more, Connolly's techniques of the self and his virtues of 'agonistic respect' and 'critical responsiveness' are fundamental to those seeking to craft an affirmative ethos of engagement with the self and others (see Khan, 2008).

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined the political implications of Connolly's materialist ontology and examined his advocacy of tactics of intervention which appeal to the visceral register of being in order to be effective. I have shown that his conception of political embodiment has a critical edge over alternative perspectives such as deliberative democracy or post-Marxism because of the weight it gives to engaging with 'virtual' forces and the emotions in challenging and subverting capitalist-orientated desires and mobilising non-exploitative practices. Connolly's politics of intervention recognises that challenging the complexity of contemporary capitalist relations requires the use of tactics, strategies and methods which can evoke a gut response such as laughter, horror, joy or shock. The urgency of transforming existing social relations requires professionals, academics and protestors to learn the skills of performance artists to construct creative situations to dislocate established associations and attachments and expose groups and individuals to alternative ones in order to generate a new political imaginary.

## Acknowledgements

## Notes

1 Žižek accepts as much himself. When discussing the impotence of the 'Left' in contemporary politics he states that 'it is more important than ever to hold this utopian place of the global alternative open, even if it remains empty, living on borrowed time, awaiting the content to fill it in' (2000: 325).
2 Connolly also uses the terms 'arts of the self', 'tactics of the self" or 'adult strategies of self modification'.
3 Lacanians call this a fundamental fantasy. See, for example, Žižek (1999).
4 This idea resonates with Ernesto Laclau s (2005) concepts of 'articulation' and 'logic of equivalence'

5 The Situationist International do not use the term 'revolution' to refer to a major upheaval, radical break or popular mass movement, but rather to indicate shifting and steering of the everyday practices and processes of life towards non exploitative and non alienating ones.
6 See Wenman (2008) for an exposition of Deleuze's influence on Connolly's deep and multidimensional pluralism.
7 See http://www.thevaccumcleaner.co.uk (accessed 14 September 2007).
8 Elsewhere I have identified problems with Laclau's use of the term hegemony (Khan, 2008).

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# 10 Must we persist to continue?

## William Connolly's critical responsiveness beyond the limits of the human species

*Jairus Victor Grove*

### Introduction

Genetics, computer science, neuroscience, and nanotechnology are converging. Increasingly what can be fabricated is limited more by the imagination than technical capability. Many already speak of a singularity a convergence of organic and inorganic life and physical and biological sciences in which the capability to intervene in the course of human history will experience a sudden and dramatic shift in scale. Whereas scientific discovery has previously accelerated the pace of politics, economies, warfare, or medicine, synthetic biology enables the ability to intervene in the very conditions of existence, even to radically alter the trajectory of human evolution or to create new sentient beings. In response to this opening I am going to try my hand at what William Connolly calls the political theorist as seer. The task: to read the entrails and portents of scientific, technological both organic and inorganic evolution and to look for the 'pluripotentiality inhabiting … such temporal tiers' (Connolly, forthcoming: 3). To what end? The concept of critical responsiveness as developed throughout Connolly's work has been received in strictly human terms, not always either man or woman, but always human (see Connolly, 1993). As such, a certain intelligibility or logic of recognition underwrites the application of Connolly's deep pluralism and its struggle to acknowledge previously unintelligible parts of newly emergent identities. The one extending presumptive generosity has at least an inkling of where to look or listen for the incipient, but not yet fully public or political demands of those whose minor tradition is not yet audible. Thus, Connolly's concept of generosity and critical responsiveness has been circumscribed by a certain humanism when placed in the context of other concepts such as the public sphere and democracy. Nevertheless the potential of these concepts has not been exhausted by the humanist frame, and, in the hands of an immanent naturalist, these concepts must be pushed beyond the accepted limits of the species community.

The aim of this chapter is not to prove the existence (or inevitability) of artificial intelligence or of newly emergent post-human forms of life, any more than to declare the end of *man* or join the chorus of doomsayers who predict

our demise. My aim is to consider the possibilities and *limits* of a moral order grounded in what we now call the human species. In the first section of the chapter I will lay out some actual and possible trajectories of social beings that have not been welcomed into the species family with open arms, the next considers the concept of the species in the moral theory of Jürgen Habermas and the third section considers critical responsiveness as a strategy for pursuing generosity without the presumptive boundary of a common humanity. This is ethics without a net, with nothing to reassure us that our duty has been done or that our generosity is sufficient. The moral calculation of where our commonality begins and ends is, from this perspective, an alibi for indifference and even cruelty. Fortunately, Connolly is not a theorist of moral actions or duties but of ways of life, ethos, reflective vigilance, and care. I argue that these are the resources we need in a world of material and political becoming. Tumult need not be cause for panic and resentment.

## Hostility towards variation and the emergent

In the early part of the twentieth century   beginning as an offshoot of mind body debates   some materialists began to describe the human qua human as a machine. A debate between *Machinists* and *Anti-Machinists* thus ensued (Bunge, 1956; Herrick, 1929; Kantor, 1935; Kapp, 1954; Miles, 1957; Northrop, 1927; Roberts, 1931). After twenty years of academic speculation, the introduction of the first thinking machine, ENIAC, provoked a slight shift in this discourse. Rather than simply debating whether 'Man' was a machine, the question was inverted: could machines become human? One particular Anti-Machinist, Paul Ziff, denied the possibility that machines could ever do more than process data. In particular, Ziff asserted the inability of machines to acquire feelings and thus (according to Ziff's logic) consciousness.

In response to Ziff's 1959 essay *The Feelings of Robots*, Hilary Putnam questioned the 'inhumanity' of inorganic life. However, he did not then posit the 'humanity' of robots. He instead concluded that 'there is no correct answer to the question: Is the robot conscious?' (Putnam, 1964: 690). The result of this unambiguously uncertain conclusion set off a torrent of articles asserting the exceptional character of human consciousness and claiming that no 'artificial' machine could ever do better than mimic that consciousness (Albritton, 1964; Clack, 1966; Gauld, 1966; Gunderson, 1968; Lucas, 1968; Puccetti, 1967; Rorty, 1972). Putnam's answer was taken as an attack on 'our' place in the chain of being.

While these arguments were not explicitly religious in content, they were uncharacteristically   for the analytic tradition from which they emerged   religious in tone. They were strikingly reverent. Their intensity is curious, given that the modern microchip had not yet been invented and at that time computers still filled rooms, yet had barely the computing power of today's cell phones. It seems that years of sci-fi films and comic books filled the imaginations of an otherwise *sober* lot of academics. Of the eight articles that

responded to Putnam, seven staunchly disagreed. The only person who agreed, Dennis Thompson, did so because it was not 'such a radical claim' (Thompson, 1965: 41). Thompson did not really see the point; *we were already machines* in his estimation.

For my purposes, Thompson misses the point entirely. Putnam's claim is not interesting because he sided with the 'machine theorists', but because he concluded that there may be no way to ever resolve the question. As Putnam says, 'The question calls for a decision not a discovery' (Putnam, 1964: 691 692). The instance of a decision confronts the otherwise purely rational enterprise with an ethical choice. Where his contemporaries buried the unknown possibilities of this new technology under centuries of tired arguments regarding mind/body dualism and humanist claims that 'we' are the sole possessor of consciousness and perception, Putnam *decided* the following:

> If we are to make a decision, it seems preferable to me to extend our concept so that robots *are* conscious for 'discrimination' based on the 'softness' or 'hardness' of the body parts of a synthetic 'organism' seems as silly as discriminatory treatment of humans on the basis of skin colour.
>
> (ibid.: 691 992)

Putnam's decision represents an atypical response in his community of philosophers perhaps even an *inhuman* response. As is shown by the work of Masahiro Mori and others, many people instinctively fear that robots will in some way challenge the human race. Putnam's response is different: in the flurry of attacks on even entertaining the possibility of artificial life, Putnam could not help but see a connection to the racial injustice that was present at the time of publication in 1964 and thus refuses to repeat the error.

Questions of political rights have never been divorced from biological or more specifically, species considerations; there is a biopolitics of citizenship of the polis but also of the species (Agamben, 1998: 160 164; Foucault, 2003: 246; 2007). Where classical politics could speak of the organization and governance of subjects, the advent of a theory of biological evolution that included humans introduced the possibility of governing the production of subjects. Not just in a legal or discursive sense citizenship, caste, class but in the 'fitness' or biological character of its subjects.

Race as a biological concept extends politics from demographic questions of reproduction and health (Foucault, 2007) to the intrinsic character of the babies born. The notion of the survival of the fittest lent the epistemic supremacy of science to earlier moral discussions of worker productivity or the spiritual origins of industriousness and laziness. Nascent theories of racial superiority and inferiority came under the purview of governmentality in the form of Malthusian public health initiatives: birth control for the poor, sterilization of and experimentation on 'incompetents' and racial minorities, in particular Native Americans. These practices did not end until the 1970s.[1]

In 1927, the US Supreme Court decided in *Buck v. Bell* that 'for the protection and health of the state', forced sterilization of imbeciles and other infirm or abnormal people was not a violation of fundamental constitutional rights. The official position of the courts has not changed. In 1981, the courts decided in *Poe v. Lynchburg Training School and Hospital* that the eight thousand women forcibly sterilized in the state of Virginia had not had their constitutional rights violated.

Yet more recently the Environmental Protection Agency has sought to adopt guidelines regarding testing of known environmental toxins. According to 70 FR 53857,

> the EPA proposes an extraordinary procedure applicable if scientifically sound but ethically deficient human research is found to be crucial to EPA's fulfilling its mission to protect public health. This procedure would also apply if a scientifically sound study covered by proposed {§} 26.221 or {§} 26.421   i.e., an intentional dosing study involving pregnant women or children as subjects   were found to be crucial to the protection of public health.[2]

The explanation and scope of this decision were focused on children who 'cannot be reasonably consulted' such as those that are mentally handicapped or orphaned newborns: these groups may be tested on without informed consent. It also stated that parental consent forms were not necessary for testing on children who have been neglected or abused. As with the original case of *Buck v. Bell*, being unwanted or otherwise downtrodden was made synonymous with being genetically deficient. To be included in the political community of constitutional rights one has to be   by this logic   capable of demonstrating an 'understanding' of those rights and one must be wanted by that community.

As the EPA's proposed guidelines demonstrate, the century-long effort to eradicate human variation has not in any way eliminated unwanted or "subhuman" individuals. Despite the best efforts of modern science   or because of the best efforts of modern science   public fear of mutation and the spectre of genetically engineered beings and artificial intelligence have joined the ranks of the abject and unwanted. There is a recurrent hostility towards forms of life that do not narrowly fit the definition of humanity   a kind of somatic fundamentalism which insists that the genetics, phenotype, and manner of expression all conform to a norm of what it is to be human. As Georges Canguilhem argues, norms require a certain abnormality or pathology in order to take on meaning (Canguilhem, 1991: 87). But the abnormal is not merely an index for the normal. It becomes a moralizing category for measuring and finally determining what *is* human.

In the case of mutation or variation   of either natural or artificial origins   deviating from the human image is what inspires revulsion. Robots and androids create the same feeling but through an inverse movement: they

intrude upon the species by transgressing into the proprietary capabilities of consciousness, language and other monopolies claimed by the human species. Japanese roboticist Masahiro Mori identified the phenomenon and proposed a hypothesis called 'the Uncanny Valley' (Mori, 1970: 33 35). The theory is that humans are fascinated, even attracted to robots as they gain human qualities   eyes, ears, and an identifiable face. Then, once robots become visibly or unmistakably like humans, the fascination and attraction turn to disgust. The human participant in the experiment becomes agitated and uncomfortable. In recent experiments the human respondents refused to allow the robot to stand or move behind them.[3] 'Movement is a sign of life' and as such seems 'wrong' writes Mori (ibid.: 33).

Although history is rife with the exploitation of other races, non-human animal species (the mechanization of animal husbandry and slaughter and animal experimentation) or subhumans (eugenic policies towards abnormal human development including the poor and the sick), artificial life is a newly emerging horizon. Even if not 'conscious', the existence and increasing importance of 'intelligent' machines confront us with the horror of the automaton while the genetically modified human presents us with something also 'not quite right'. The possibility of artificial life in all of its forms seems to provoke a response somewhere between atypical human bodies and inanimate objects. The possibility of artificial life treads in both the forbidden zone of challenging human superiority (in this case because it may exceed it, whereas mutations malign it) and the more traditional uncanny provocation of living objects. Therefore life that does not resemble the norm of human life thus far, whether artificially created or naturally variant, will be met with the same violence and ignorance that those differently abled have faced from eugenicists unless the narrow definitions of life and the fear and ressentiment that inspire those definitions can be altered

This, I argue, requires what Connolly calls cultivation. Connolly sees the 'visceral attachment to life' as a resource for deep pluralism, one that hopes to transform the fear and loathing of variation into the 'preliminary soil from which commitment to more generous identifications, responsibilities, and connections might be cultivated' (Connolly, 2002: 86). But I will add to this point that the 'Uncanny Valley' not only exists for all of those beings that stray from the normative boundaries of the species   whether biologically or synthetically divergent   but also represents a formidable obstacle to the cultivation of connections and generous identifications. This logic holds, in particular, if one's visceral attachment to life is an attachment to a 'human' life. Connolly's immanent naturalism actively resists the temptation to circumscribe generosity to human subjects. Throughout *Neuropolitics*, Connolly insists that gratitude and generosity find their inspiration in an 'attachment to the earth and care for a protean diversity of being' (ibid.: 196). To read this statement alongside earlier works such as *Identity/Difference* or *The Ethos of Pluralization*, one may wrongly assume that the 'protean diversity of being' refers to a human being. However, what is clear in Connolly's contestation of

the Nature/Culture opposition is that an 'attachment to the earth' complicates what Connolly means by *being*, as examples of communicative bacteria and participatory chimpanzees and crocodiles demonstrate (ibid.: 60 61).

From this standpoint, the danger of becoming trapped by an anthropological limit is apparent. Reading Connolly's deep pluralism only in the human terrain of traditional democratic theory obscures many of the sources of the gratitude and 'earthiness' that inspire the necessary ethos for a deep pluralism.

David Howarth's thorough and generous piece 'Ethos, Agonism, and Populism' is emblematic. While affirming Connolly's concept of an ethos of agonistic pluralism Howarth argues that agonistic pluralism, presupposes 'a common symbolic order' and a 'democratically organized public space' so that 'those who are "othered" [can] be cultivated, respected and brought into the public sphere' (Howarth, 2008: 188). As a result, Howarth's inclusion in his rendering of democratic politics of an ethos of agonism is actually an exclusion of the grounds for Connolly's ethos. What Howarth sees as a 'populist politics' in Connolly's theory circumscribes the depth of pluralism on the basis of those who can be brought into the public sphere. Non-linguistic forms of life or forms of life that simply cannot be 'cultivated' sufficiently to be recognizable in the public sphere represent a non-traversable limit as long as the population of a populist politics is underwritten by the image and norm of 'Man' assumed by Howarth's reading. The 'limits' of deep pluralism, the assumption that deep pluralism's agonism takes place in a human and narrowly linguistically driven public sphere, results from ignoring the expanding jurisdiction of Connolly's notion of life as becoming as it develops in *Neuropolitics* and later works that contest the hard distinction between nature and culture. Connolly insists in *Neuropolitics* that human culture is made up of 'essentially *embodied* beings' and that once theorists understand 'the corporeal layering of language, perception, and thinking in human life', the discrimination against non-humans or subhumans that currently underwrites the borders of the public sphere begin to break down.

The subsequent grounds of culture and politics can better be described as an assemblage of non-human, living, non-living, and human agents alike rather than in terms of 'individuals' or 'human rights' as Howarth does (Connolly, 1999: 60 61; Howarth, 2008: 183, 184). Thus, the agonism that Howarth describes as requiring the cultivation of others such that they can enter the public sphere takes place on a very different terrain in my reading of Connolly; one that neither resembles the strictly human public sphere presumed by most democratic theorists nor a theory of cultivation that is exclusively human or agent-driven. The complexity of human and non-human assemblages alters the expected provocateurs as well as tactics of cultivation necessary for participation. For Connolly, relying on an 'accordion theory of language' that constantly redefines communication and agency to suit the limits of anthropocentrism denigrates the 'nontheistic reverence for an abundance of being' that is necessary to inspire affirmation rather than cynicism

and *ressentiment* (Connolly, 1999: 77). For Connolly, agonistic respect and critical responsiveness require the nutrition of such an ethos of abundance, which is much more than a traditional democratic ethos that would be defined by Howarth as 'a respect for the common rules of the game' and the requirement of 'a common symbolic order' (Howarth, 2008: 187). This understanding of ethos is certainly necessary but not sufficient. What counts as 'the game' as well as 'playing' must be inflected with a gratitude and openness to other forms of life and participation that are not quite so dependent on the commonality of communication and public space.

Reading Connolly this way suggests that while Howarth is right that cultivation and respect will be needed, by Connolly's account, neither ought to be limited to or require a 'common symbolic order'. Therefore, evaluations of Connolly's concepts of critical responsiveness and agonistic respect will necessitate an account of publics, agency, and language that do not take for granted the often assumed anthropocentrism of the democratic theoretical landscape. Otherwise efforts to increase 'inclusion' and respect in the 'public sphere' and the 'symbolic order' will fail to attend to the inhuman, the sub-human, or the insistence of *things* that exceed their status as objects because those efforts will focus as Howarth has, on subjects that can negotiate or be represented in a public sphere. My fear is that Howarth's commitment to 'foster and encourage' 'the emergence of new identities' will be confounded by norms of 'negotiation' and 'representation' which are not available for contestation when the 'plurality and heterogeneity' of the public sphere is defined by a 'common symbolic order' (ibid.: 189). The source of the ethos that Howarth and Connolly agree must animate politics will not be found in Howarth's account. Democratic theory must go deeper beyond the multi-layered experience of 'humans' to the multi-layered experience of life more broadly as an 'attachment to earth and the protean diversity of being', the creative machine of abundance that far exceeds the provincialism of humankind.

## The Habermasian solution or the poverty of speciesism

Habermas is also concerned with the eugenic impulse and with robots, but in *The Future of Human Nature* he focuses on the distinction between humans who are 'naturally' born and humans who are the product of scientific intervention. The distinction between artificial and natural is the basis for Habermas's defence of the human as a species. The goal of insisting on this difference is to guard against the invasion of science by declaring artificially modified humans not human at all and thus moralizing the results of any scientific intervention into life. For him, the concept of the human being as god-given and unalterable    something that he transmutes into a biological fact rather than a religious one    is being disgraced by the next phase of eugenics, genetic intervention, and by research aimed at producing artificial intelligence. Habermas argues that posthumanism and 'self-styled Nietzscheanism'

threaten to turn humans into objects, so that we no longer have bodies and instead are bodies. Echoing Adorno, Habermas warns against the instrumentalization of human beings and a permanently damaged life.

Habermas rejects the religious image of humans as sacred, and seeks instead a post-metaphysical means to ground his challenge to the objectification of human life. He proposes a species ethic: the hope is to understand humans as a species constrained by particular guidelines to produce morally appropriate laws regarding interventions into life. For Habermas, beings can only be human if they enter life 'as members of a species, as specimens of a community of procreation' and only if they participate in 'the public sphere of a linguistic community'. If these two requirements are met, then and only then is it possible to 'develop into both an individual and a person endowed with reason' (Habermas, 2003: 35). Moreover, and inversely, both requirements are important to his argument: species membership is a prerequisite to participation in the linguistic community. However, the common presumption that humans alone possess language is not the basis for Habermas's position. Rather, he is concerned with the basis of human responsibility and distinguishes between those *homo sapiens* of natural birth (who 'owe' no one for their traits) and beings who result from human intervention (whose 'abilities' are not their own but caused by a scientist). Genetically altered humans cannot answer for their actions or capabilities because they are 'determined' from the outset (ibid.: 34, 64) and genetic engineering may become a means for instituting determinism writ large.

The irony of this position is that it misunderstands the determining power of genetics and, in addition, clings to Enlightenment concepts of freedom and autonomy that Habermas's fears seem to invalidate. If it is possible to determine human behaviour and freedom via genetics, is it not the case that we were always already determined? In this regard, Habermas's terror regarding the loss of autonomy reflects his own lack of faith in its existence and he transmutes that very insecurity into the instrumentalizing intentions of genetic scientists. The apocalyptic tone reaches an apex when he concludes that genetic intervention would result in a new species of life that existed in 'a moral void, a life not worth living' (ibid.: 94).

Habermas's other concern is more paternalistic. While he believes the new beings would not be properly human, he also fears for the treatment of the damned, the mutated subhumans. Where Mori sees in the 'Uncanny Valley' a social phenomenon that can be overcome, Habermas tends to render the hatred of difference natural and inevitable. He even points to this (naturalized) reaction as proof of the 'immoral' existence of altered beings:

> Symptomatically, it is the revulsion we feel when confronted with the chimera that bears witness to a violation of the species boundaries that we had naively assumed to be unalterable. This 'ethical virgin soil', rightly termed such by Otfried Hoffe, consists of the very uncertainty of the species.
>
> (ibid.: 39)

Contrary to Habermas's goal to prevent a new era of eugenics, this is the very logic that animates both the antagonism towards robots and the eugenic response toward human variation. Is it not the fact that they fall outside, and even offend the boundaries of the species, that first defines their sub-human status?

Despite the hope of providing a rational ground to protect the human, the affective charge of sacredness betrays Habermas's 'so-called postmetaphysical disposition'. In several places he refers to artificial insemination as 'perverse'. He describes those who entertain the possibility that machines could possess anything approximating humanity as 'engineers intoxicated by science fiction', agents of 'adolescent speculation' and 'self-styled Nietzscheans' (ibid.: 22). Habermas is attached to a concept of the human outside of evolutionary time. He can imagine historical change but cannot conceive of a biological (or, in the case of cybernetics, non-biological) becoming, defined by alteration. For Habermas, the human is transcendent and timeless, even if not religiously sacred. However, there is no reason to believe that human 'nature' is not just as contingent upon genetic variation and selection as, say, the behaviour of an antelope. Habermas's 'humanity' is not something *categorical* or *intrinsic* for which he can make universal determinations of value or equality. Humans continuously change over time (De Landa, 2000; Dennett, 1986).

The problem is that Habermas's conception requires a static and valorised concept of the human that is consonant with the very animus toward differ- ence that motivates eugenics. How could strengthening and clarifying our definition of the species *not* exclude those at the margins of biological and social intelligibility? This is further compounded by the purely linguistic approach Habermas takes to participation in the species. What redoubles the logic of *Buck v. Bell* are the countless lives that can participate in neither the linguistic construction nor the procreative construction of the species. Many people who are categorized as autistic would not be part of the species by the linguistic definition, and those who are not heteronormative or fertile could not participate procreatively. This is not to say they cannot reproduce. After all, a new method of extracting stem cells from bone marrow and inserting them into artificial sperm seems to enable lesbian couples to have children without male participants.[4] Other obstacles to reproduction such as infertility or genetic variation like hermaphrodism can be overcome using other tech- nological methods. But these methods are by Habermas's definition perverse or at least insufficient and thus not constitutive of the human species: the offspring would not be equal in birth to the rest of the human race and would lack the foundation for moral freedom and autonomy.

It is thus not surprising that Habermas would favour one exception to his opposition to human modification and that is 'therapeutic' gene elimination for monogenetic conditions such as Down's syndrome. The distinction between artificial modification and therapeutic genetic intervention is made possible by a normative image of what it is to be human to which the child will be 'restored'. This is the very core of the eugenic spirit. It is a desire not

for the improvement or evolution of the human race (this is what the 'post-humanists' and 'Nietzscheans' are accused of) but for the purity and main-tenance of an already superior strain of humanity.

It would be easy to follow this critique with the accusation that Habermas's use of species carries a racist tone. One could note that species membership was the backbone of European colonialism and race-science up to and including the Nazis. But this critique, which celebrates multiculturalism, merely shifts the line between what is and is not a moral being deserving of the full rights and duties of a political subject. The more interesting ethical question comes after one partially grants the premise of Habermas's argu-ment. What if a radical difference does exist? What if the entity that confronts the human species, however defined, exceeds a certain kind of moral or mir-rored intelligibility? What is just on the other side of the mimetic divide of species membership? This is the question that drives this chapter. The first act of drawing the boundary of the human raises the second question of *why* 'we' treat those that fall outside that boundary so badly. In this respect the ques-tion is not why do we treat previously effaced subjects like objects, but why do we treat objects or quasi-subjects so terribly?

## What else could a species be? The human refrain and the politics of becoming

> I believe robots have the Buddha nature within them    that is, the potential for attaining Buddhahood.
>
> (Mori, 1999: 173)

> The point is to discover and restore belief in the world, before or beyond words. What is certain is that believing is no longer believing in another world, or in a transformed world. It is only, it is simply believing in the body.
>
> (Deleuze, 1995a: 172  173)

The rejection of Habermas's regulative ideal of the human species should not be interpreted as a wholesale endorsement of genetic engineering or of attempts to create artificial intelligence. Instead I will use Connolly's concept of critical responsiveness, and more generally the ethos of immanent nat-uralism that attends to life as becoming, as a means for thinking through the motivation for eugenics and robot paranoia. Connolly speaks of a *politics of becoming* as 'the paradoxical politics by which new and unforeseen things surge into being' (Connolly, 2005: 121) and *critical responsiveness* as 'the form of careful listening and presumptive generosity to constituencies struggling to move from an obscure or degraded subsistence below the field of recognition, justice, obligation, rights, or legitimacy to a place on one or more of those registers' (ibid.: 126). These, he insists, require the cultivation of creativity and the infusion of generosity such that 'principles are not doled out in a stingy or punitive way' (Connolly, 1999: 54).

Where Habermas believes that the current trajectory of scientific develop-ment can be arrested, or even regulated, to the point of being abolished, Connolly sees in this desire to slow things down a kind of *ressentiment*  one not that different from the hatred of the world that prompts Habermas's reaction in the first place. In his criticism of Sheldon Wolin, Connolly argues that it may in fact be:

> A quick tempo of life, to put it bluntly, that sets a crucial condition of possibility for the vibrant practice of democratic pluralism. [Connolly's] wager is that it is more possible to negotiate a democratic ethos con-gruent with the accelerated tempo of modern life than it is either to slow the world down or to insulate the majority of people from the effects of speed.
>
> (Connolly, 2002: 162)

Slowing down the world will come at a cost. The nostalgia for a simpler or slower life often inspires a rogues gallery of enemies and scapegoats to blame for the failure of restoration movements (ibid.: 162). In part, this is because the pace of life is not solely under the dominion of human control. Life has a life of its own. But failure to constrain life's unpredictability and acceleration leads to the redirection of energies of *ressentiment* to the vilification of those identified with the acceleration of life. Across the political landscape one can observe the Right blaming queer lives for the breakdown of 'stable' families and from the Left the scapegoating of technophiles and scientists for destroying nature and human authenticity.

This seems true of Habermas who, from his chosen perspective of the 'Future Present', can consider evolution and change only in apocalyptic terms. The fear of change and of the unpredictable expresses a kind of revul-sion toward life. And life is nothing if not mutable and aleatory. Connolly's political theorist as seer also attempts to peer into the future, but the seer looks for incipient *possibilities* not catastrophic certainties. Instead the political theorist as seer 'reviews forking moments, not apparent to most participants when things are still open' (Connolly, forthcoming: 9).

This distinction between Habermas and Connolly as fortune tellers is not as simple as optimism versus pessimism. Connolly is also sceptical of the acceleration of life and even experimentation with life. But he is also open to the possibilities of new conditions for action created by the alteration of the world. He holds no nostalgia for a static human species that never really existed in the first place. Connolly is concerned with *what* 'holds things toge-ther' but not *in holding* things together. Connolly's non-providential, immanent naturalism engenders faith in a world not limited to the human and can sustain that faith without the species concept that Habermas is terrified of losing.

A sense of gratitude for the abundance of life entails a gratitude for the unhuman or for what resembles life but is not quite human. As Deleuze argued in a discussion with Negri, 'Becoming isn't part of history; history

amounts only to the set of preconditions, however recent, that one leaves behind in order to "become" that is, to create something new' (Deleuze, 1995b: 170 171). I contend without a sense of drama or pessimism that the image of man held to so tightly by Habermas may be that bit of history left behind in order to become. And if gratitude requires belief in this world not 'another world, or in a transformed world', as Deleuze says then it is necessary to search beyond the current confines of community. After all, a belief in elsewhere would pit us against the world that we have.

It is hard not to see *ressentiment* or hatred as what animates the affective charge in Habermas's outright dismissal of new forms of life whether they are conscious life, non-human animals or even the man-made humans of assisted reproduction. Habermas cannot help but use terms like perverse and narcissistic to describe these interventions because they disrupt the image of Man on which all his values rest. But Connolly's sense of gratitude does not require the meagre subsistence of a species in order to find fulfilment or satisfaction in the vital becomings that precede and exceed the parochial limits of Man.

In this way Connolly's invocation of abundance and gratitude may illuminate the possibilities of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'the refrain'. The refrain is already latent in Connolly's situating of abundance and gratitude within an understanding of a non-providential Chaos such as that theorized by Ilya Prigogine in the sciences and Nietzsche in philosophy. A return to the refrain further illuminates what is at stake in amplifying the attention to the assemblages or interface with other species such that the coherence of the species is only loosely present and can give way or itself participate in relays with other forms of life.[5]

Deleuze and Guattari 'call a refrain any aggregate of matters of expression that draws a territory and develops into territorial motifs and landscapes' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 323). They identify the means by which musical birds can mark territory with song. The mobile assemblage of bird songs requires not just one singer but corresponding rhythms of multiple birds' songs. The territory takes on a sonorous shape: a shape in sound. A territory defines the species and it is also a sonorous species that holds together the territory. But this is not reducible to a species ethic or a fixed identity:

> Territorialization is precisely such a factor that lodges on the margins of the code of a single species and gives the separate representatives of that species the possibility of differentiating. It is because there is a disjunction between the territory and the code that the territory can indirectly induce new species.
>
> (ibid.: 322)

Differentiating possibilities promote variation. As Deleuze and Guattari write: 'One launches forth, hazards an improvisation. But to improvise is to join with the World' (ibid.: 311). And so a territory can be held together with different refrains: aggressive, violent, refrains of security, order, purity; or with

rhythms of grace, generosity, and gratitude. We are not wholly in charge of our rhythm, much less the refrain, but there is room for amplification and addition or subtraction of sounds. This is the cultivation undertaken by an immanent naturalist. According to Deleuze and Guattari, territorialization is both creative and destructive:

> The rhythm itself is now the character in its entirety; as such, it may remain constant, or it may be augmented or diminished by the addition or subtraction of sounds or always increasing or decreasing durations, and by an amplification or elimination bringing death or resuscitation, appearance or disappearance.
>
> (ibid.: 318)

Connolly's amplified rhythms are gratitude, experimentation, and, the style in which he reads these terms emphasizes the necessity to proceed 'thoughtfully, modestly, experimentally' (Connolly, 2002: 162). Connolly is not modest in the sense of being timid or cautious or apprehensive about the world. Instead he is careful in the sense of *caritas*; he applies care to his investigations to look for those as yet unheard or unrecognized voices. This is where he parts ways with Deleuze's and Guattari's ambivalence or near indifference to the cutting edges of change that can be violent and dismissive of the suffering of others and yet he affirms the becoming that punctuates life chaotically.[6] We have a paradox and a danger   neither of which it seems Connolly would want to avoid.

Through Connolly's attention to the unthought   in our experience with time, politics, and the suffering of becoming   we are reminded that, like the birds Deleuze and Guattari speak of, an ethos or theoretical disposition can be either musical or non-musical. Connolly's disposition is musical; Habermas's is not. Or rather, Habermas moves to the meter   consistent staccato of a Kantian march. According to Deleuze and Guattari, 'Meter is dogmatic, but rhythm is critical' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 313). Evolutionary biologist Brian Goodwin identifies the critical edge of rhythm with a new form of biological science:

> Relationships are primary in understanding the type of order that can emerge, whether … cascades of symmetry-breaking processes that give rise to biological form in developing organisms, rhythmic activity … that both engender and depend on the creative activities of persons … A science of qualities is a science of holistic emergent order that in no sense ignores quantities, but sees them as conditioning rather than as determining aspects of emergent process.
>
> (Goodwin, 1994: 206)

According to Goodwin, it is this concept of assemblage and shifting connections that best defends against the atomistic view of species and thus the

'biology of parts' becoming a 'medicine of spare parts … organisms becom
[ing] aggregates of genetic and molecular bits with which we can tinker as we
please' (ibid.: 232).

A science of qualities animated by Connolly's spirit of generosity and gra-
titude is necessary if we wish to listen to the emergent life before us. *It* will not
march well enough to stay in line with Habermas's species' meter; in fact, in
some cases *they* (maybe a community of *its*) will lack the legs to do so. And
those of us already included will grasp for pronouns to describe them. But
critical responsiveness and the ethos of an immanent naturalist can listen for
the not-yet-audible or see the legible emergence of the songs of the legless,
soulless, those who have not yet learned even to hum but merely whir as they
plod through the jobs designed for them by humans. The forms of life that
confront us on the fringe of our species will need rhythm, not meter, lest they
face the violence inflicted by those who especially hate objects. Robots,
cyborgs, hermaphrodites, mutants    all categories otherwise than normatively
human will require the work of musicians, not marching band leaders, who
judge those not yet issued the uniforms of the human species as examples of a
'life not worth living' (Habermas, 2003: 94).

If there is something deserving of reverence about the anthropological
moment in the vastness of *universal history*, it is not to be found in our rules
or morals. It is even less likely to be found as some sacred or permanent
configuration of our bodies as if they were already baked loaves of bread. If
there is something to affirm and extend, it must be wrested from the newly
discovered ethos from which we define our relationship to the world and
ourselves    something that (while impermanent) is nonetheless persistent in
the continuous alterations that will define, reinvent, and at times disprove the
grounds from which we proclaim the rights of Man. This is the insistence of
becoming; becoming not as a deterministic pessimism, but becoming that
affirms that compassion, generosity, and care are not under the exclusive
dominion of *homo ratio*. Such virtues can exceed the interior relations of the
*human subject* and the human species. The crisis is not the future of humanity,
it is the necessity    which has always existed    to engage in profound acts of
courage that defy the crass politics of survival (species or otherwise) and
affirm instead the dissonant harmonies and plural agonisms of life.

Whether we feel the warmth of care in what many have called dark or
damaged times is not dependent on the ability to distinguish or define species-
being, but to cultivate new ears to listen for the insistent moments of reso-
nance across the lines of kingdom, phylum, genus, species, culture. Objects
and patterns of life, geological shifts, architecture all affect the evolution of
organisms; they are like an exo-genetic helix, externally and collectively
ontogenetic in contrast to the individuality of one's own DNA strand. Thus
how we pattern the world will become its heritage even if it is not directly,
genetically inherited from us.

Habermas finds this entire line of analysis absurd: 'In everyday living, we
don't think twice before distinguishing between inorganic and organic nature,

plants and animals, and, again animal nature and the reasoning and social nature of man' (Habermas, 2003: 44). In part, he is right. Those ordinary category distinctions mark differences. But upon closer inspection at the boundary of any of these categories, the choice between them appears arbitrary, or at best, a compromise of pragmatic necessity. Contrary to Habermas's common sense, we can observe in contemporary debates over the initial transition from geological formation to evolutionary biology the breakdown of the distinction between organic and inorganic. Attempts to theorize the emergence of the first living cell (chemical evolution) and resolving the leap from structure to content (phenotype to genotype) have foundered on this sharp categorical difference between cause and effect and elided the degree to which each theory has attempted to explain the transition or event of life as internal to a single organism    the individual    ignoring the inorganic milieu from which life emerged.

A.G. Cairns-Smith eschewed the focus on the production of a particular gene sequence in hopes of discerning a more complex relationship between structure and its generative cause DNA. In political theory terms he thumbed his nose at identity, breaking out of what Brian Goodwin calls the 'genocentric' biological model. Cairns-Smith sought to identify the interface between, rather than the ontological divide of, organic and inorganic existence. The idea of this divide forms a proverbial and the primordial chicken/egg problematic. It presupposes that for something to develop in evolutionary terms it must have a means of passing on the information (DNA) of its more competitive or innovative structures. However, to develop such structures, it must have had some means for recording them. Despite evidence of their mutual interdependence, the prevailing assumption has been that DNA must have preceded the structure so that the structure would have a record on which to base its developments and a mechanism for recording subsequent changes. The problem with this model is that it has no way of explaining the cause of the DNA itself, which also would have needed some prior recording mechanism. Life needed to precede itself (Cairns-Smith, 1982: 79 80). Cairns-Smith took a different line of thought: what if the content was the structure? After all, the distinction between content and structure elided the materiality of the process being described. Genetic information is not like spirit; it is a molecular structure. Thus what he calls 'naked genes' (genetic information without a wrapper or organism) may have had particular structures that allowed them to survive and replicate simply because of their shape and organization (ibid.: 81).

This means that there is no longer a need to distinguish sharply between phenotype (structure) and genotype (content) but does not obviate the need for a cause of the initial naked gene. Cairns-Smith thus looked beyond biology and organic chemistry and found an explanation in an encounter between organic and inorganic material. The initial organization (the phenotype) of the genetic information    the assembly of basic molecules into more complex structures like peptide bonds and nucleic acids which together form RNA or a

single strand of DNA   came together as a result of chemistry enabled by an otherwise inert or unreactive substance: clay. Cairns-Smith writes: 'Often clay minerals that are produced from weathering solutions seem to organize themselves fortuitously, in a rough and ready way, into the kinds of things that might be needed for primitive organisms' (ibid.: 4 5). The crystalline structure of clay was the catalyst, a pattern for which the otherwise simple components could assemble into something more complex. The engine that drove development against the grain of entropy was not vital in the sense of active or dynamic. It was crystalline, a pattern for life.

The search for the fundamental component of life (water, carbon, etc.) was misguided. No one component, or even combination of components derived from breaking apart and analyzing the current composition of the human, was capable of explaining the transition from non-life to life. It required an event, an encounter, an interface between organic (carbon based) and the definitively inorganic (the silica crystals of clay) for life to emerge. The point of each of these digressions into the zones of indistinguishability is not to dismiss the categories of human, conscious, living, or organic: it is to loosen 'our' grip, disrupt the certainty that dismisses the emergent, or the as yet unclassified identities, entities, and other new patterns between life/nonlife, sensory/inert, conscious/unconscious, linguistic/autistic, as insignificant because inhuman.

## Conclusion

As an alternative to the panic represented by Habermas and other somatic fundamentalists, the politics of becoming suggests an enhanced attentiveness to materiality and the chaos of becoming. Connolly and Bennett suggest the need to experiment with experience in ways that draw attention to the world as it is rather than the world as we want it to be (Bennett and Connolly, 2002). We do not have enough experience with being-uncertain or its more radical possibility being-thing   at least not in ways that are not negative or violent. *Thingness* need not be characterized by stasis or the inanimate (Bennett, 2004: 354 355). Instead we can acknowledge moments that continue of their own accord, irreducible to a subject-centred consciousness. Try, for instance, giving up and allowing the cross-current of the ocean to drag you downshore, pay attention to the moment just before you fall asleep and wake up when your body is too heavy to move, enjoy the thrill of falling when you cease to be afraid of hitting the water, allow yourself to be touched rather than always touching. Ruminate on those moments when muscle memory takes over and you cannot miss a jump shot or fail to hit the right note.

These all seem essential experiences   whether it is an actual bodily experience or just an encounter with a scientific debate that disrupts basic 'common sense'   toward becoming material and thus learning to listen to the unexpected forms of life that continue to emerge. The terror of becoming-thing or being not *all* human cannot help but contribute to the animus felt

towards objects or emergent forms of new subjectivity. Each of these entities questions our monopoly over the experience of being an active and free agent. Thus, the moral or good life   in Habermas's case, the species ethic   has wrought as much fear, resentment, and retribution as positive grounds for justice. A species ethic provides little sustenance to a life in flux, in the face of eroding boundaries in which what we value most about the human moment in time seems to be giving way to something else. Restoring belief in the world necessitates a certain attunement towards mutation, to the possibilities of other forms of life, and so generosity and faith need not end with the particular arrangement of patterns and structures currently called the human. The politics of becoming can instead be animated by the ways such a refrain can continue, or hold new patterns together. The ethical space of becoming may consist in acts of generosity and belief that animate other becomings and forms of life. To give up on strict or tightly defined nature/culture and inheritance/heritage binaries can help us learn how to pass on certain refrains without the supposed prerequisites of human nature or human genomics (Bennett and Connolly, 2002: 160 161).

It is possible to pause and listen to the various relays with the world, and to practice what Connolly calls a 'double entry orientation to interpretation, oscillating as a matter of principle between critiques of consolidated interpretations and the production of positive accounts that connect cultural life robustly to the domains of biology, neuroscience, climatology and evolution' (Connolly, 2008: 73). How to affirm the more 'volatile image of being' is, according to Deleuze and Guattari, the vital task:

> It is no longer a question of imposing a form upon a matter but of elaborating an increasingly rich and consistent material, the better to tap increasingly intense forces. What makes a material increasingly rich is the same as what holds heterogeneities together without their ceasing to be heterogeneous.
>
> (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 329)

After all, the lessons of evolution and becoming are that we may not make it as we are. The Human Qua Human may face literally what Foucault may have written figuratively 'The wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea' (Foucault, 1994: 387).

Towards this end, Putnam's conclusion about robots is helpful: science can challenge our ways of thinking, but in the realm of ethics we are confronted by decisions not discoveries. I contend that Putnam's generosity required a particular intimacy with uncertainty such that he could welcome the uncanny rather than suppress it. Likewise, those of us looking to practice critical responsiveness need an uncertain and curious orientation to seek out the locations to listen to most closely. As Connolly says of Deleuze, the generosity of an immanent naturalist requires a 'fugitive disposition on the visceral register susceptible to further cultivation' (Connolly, 2002: 106). Organic life

was given shape and existence lapping over and over on beaches of inorganic clay. The pattern or refrain of inorganic material, the crystalline structure of clay, in turn gave form and organization to organic life. We still bear that pattern even though we contain no actual clay in our content. The same could become true for the human refrain.

One can only hope that the human face drawn in the sand irreversibly alters the pattern on the beach. What is unknown is which refrain, which catalyst, we will leave behind. Heritage need not be instrumentalized by the somatic fundamentalists; it need not be inheritance in the genetic sense. Values such as courage, generosity, belief, and gratitude for the abundance of life   even if not wholly human   can be continued even if *we* do not persist. Put another way, why settle for a species ethic when a particular human refrain can return with a rhythm that gives new life the characteristics we now recognize as worth saving? I believe this is what Connolly means when he says 'immanent naturalists pursue an orientation to ethics that resists entangling it form the outset in simplification and cruelty' (Connolly, 2002: 104).

## Notes

1 Beginning in the late 1950s, MIT scientists in coordination with the US govern ment and Quaker Oats fed institutionalized children classified as "morons" radio active oatmeal so that they could study the effects of radiation. The term was developed in the early twentieth century by Henry Goddard as part of the voca bulary for the eugenics movement. Those children who have not yet died of cancer were awarded {$}US 60,000 each. However, the survivors are still petitioning the state of Massachusetts to have the label 'moron' removed from their permanent record. Many of the survivors continue to face discrimination because of this label. See Mehren (2004).

2 http://www.epa.gov/fedrgstr/EPA GENERAL/2005/September/Day 12/g18010.htm (accessed Friday, 27 January 2006). See also Public Information and Records Integrity Branch (PIRIB), Office of Pesticide Programs, U.S. Environmental Pro tection Agency, Mail, Code: 7502C, 1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, DC, 20460 0001, Attention: Docket ID Number OPP 2003 0132.

3 'Scientists Study Robot Human Interactions', Hatfield, England (UPI), 30 August 2006 Online. Available at: http://www.spacedaily.com/reports/Scientists Study Robot Human Interactions 999.html

4 Story from BBC News: http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/ /2/hi/health/6547675.stm

5 Recent research in evolutionary biology is attempting to revise or even scrap the concept of species after learning that many mutations and evolutionary shifts involved sex between two different species, what is termed 'species jumping', which invalidates the very definition of species (i.e. two members of a population that can produce fertile offspring). See Owen (2007).

6 The end of the refrain speaks coldly of the cutting edges of machines when they alter the arrangement of an assemblage. See Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 332 333).

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# 11 Time, politics and contingency

## *Jeremy Valentine*

### Introduction: constitutive failure

One of the most distinctive aspects of the work of William Connolly is his attempt to integrate the closely related themes of time and contingency into political thought and to develop the consequences of doing so for political activity. He does this not by defining political terms independently and then applying them but by describing and developing the logic of their presence and their effects upon the ways in which politics is thought and acted. This approach was established in Connolly's breakthrough work, *The Terms of Political Discourse* ([1974] 1993a). Using Gallie's somewhat oxymoronic notion of 'essential contestability', Connolly demonstrated that political discourse could not be reduced to logically definable categories and concepts that could be applied and measured independently of the differing, and in many cases opposed, political projects within which they make sense. Indeed, for Connolly, logical reductionism was itself bound up with political projects of a generally technocratic and non-democratic kind.

Introducing a different approach into political science, Connolly contributed to the larger interpretive fightback against the dominance of positivism, behaviourism and empiricism in the social sciences more widely. Since then, a characteristic of Connolly's approach has been to find contestation in both politics and in those discourses that would name, conceptualise and represent it, and which are, therefore, themselves political (as well as about politics). That goes for Connolly's political thought as well. His work is antagonistic, seeking to persuade those who encounter it of the good sense of conceiving of political discourse as an agonistic activity in order to make its political character more visible.

Connolly developed this approach to political discourse in a series of subsequent works. Not all of those address the issue of the political dimension of time and contingency but one that does is a critical account of the double-coded relation to time that Connolly argued characterises the dynamics of modern political thought (Connolly, 1988). This claim rested on the observation that modernity categorises a historical period, an epoch, and so takes place in historical time, yet at the same time modernity proposes the idea that

time and history are subject to human intervention in order to break with the past and determine a future in the moment of the here and now made by the break itself. Modernity occurs in time and at the same time makes time. Hence two codes operate within modernity: the time in which it occurs and the time which it makes. Logically the simultaneity of both codes is contradictory and impossible but that does not prevent its existence and its effects one of which can be summarised by characterising modernity as a constant process of modernisation and as such 'an eternal coming into being' (ibid.: 3) in order to prevent the code of making slipping back into the code of occurrence. From simply meaning 'that which is new', modern comes to refer to 'that which will always be new' and the social, political and economic forces that will sustain it. Connolly calls the simultaneity of both these codes 'the modern frame' (ibid.: 1) and by describing the logics of their co-existence demonstrates the core of contestation around which modernity revolves.

Connolly's argument is not a rejection of modern political thought but neither is it a straightforward celebration of it. In certain respects, it can be viewed as an attempt to be more modern still, to shatter what has become sclerotic about modernity and re-activate its energy. After all, to break with modernity would be a continuation of it, not simply because the idea of the break is a modern one, but also with respect to the fact that even the attempt to frame modernity, to relativise and objectify it, is itself 'a paradigmatic idea of the modern age' (ibid.: 3). Instead, by way of the Heideggerian notion of 'enframing', Connolly seeks to uncover the processes by which the modern frame is established, and which are unthought in the sense that they do not appear as systematic propositions that construct positive knowledge but as symptoms of the attempt to do so. Thus, the frame is both ungrounded, precisely because of its unthought dimension, and excessive, because the unthought dimension is not contained by the truth criteria it seeks to establish in rendering an account and justification of itself through the formulation of propositions of positive knowledge. The unthought dimension is not exhausted by the dominance of the double-coded here and now because it is its condition, and cannot be reduced to either the time of making or the time of occurrence. Arguably the unthought element is that which prevents the simultaneity of both codes dissolving in contradiction or, to say the same thing differently, enables something that is logically impossible to be possible.

Instead of breaking with modernity, then, Connolly continues its project by way of other means that the analysis of its enframing provides, making the unthought aspects of modernity thinkable but not as propositions that would resolve the contradictions of its double coding. This is achieved by describing processes of enframing in the borders or margins of those thinkers who establish the modern frame (for Connolly, Hobbes, Rousseau and Hegel are exemplary here) and in those who are happy to push at the boundaries from within (such as de Sade and Nietzsche). This provides a critical resource for Connolly's project of establishing a 'reconstituted, radicalized liberalism' (ibid.: 174), deepening the logic of the unthought dimension of modernity so

that the notion of a break is replaced with that of critical opening, and the dominance of the here and now is replaced by relations of 'antagonistic indebtedness' (ibid.: 175).

These ideas stem from an additional achievement of Connolly's analysis to bring the self-completion of modernity into question, both with respect to the double-coding of its temporal aspect, but also with respect to its limits or borders, such that the question of the interiority and exteriority of modernity remains as a question. For that reason Connolly's fidelity to modernity is to its constitutive failure which the analysis of enframing reveals, its unthought presence in the occurrence of the impossibility of breaking into time at the same time as occupying the space created by such an action.

One of the main unthought elements that Connolly's analysis makes thinkable, and which perhaps provides the deepest link between Connolly's political thought and modernity, is the notion of contingency. Simply put, contingency is the idea that something could as equally exist as not exist or, put differently, that the reason that something exists is not 'necessary'    a concept to which contingency is normally opposed in order to be defined. Contingency is not subsumed within reason as whatever counts as reason is subsequent to it. In that respect, contingency is both the ground of the modern idea of radical intervention and the condition of its failure. That is to say, the break is contingent in that no necessary cause conditions or grounds it, and therefore no necessary cause or ground sustains what the break seeks to establish, and in seeking to establish a ground for itself, modernity erases its own contingency and ceases to be itself, which in turn gives rise to the constant process of modernisation to which Connolly refers.

In much of Connolly's later work, contingency and its consequences have become an explicit object or theme of political reflection. However, in contrast to other thinkers who have recognised the importance of contingency, for instance, the Panglossian approach of Rorty or the decisionism of Laclau and Mouffe, Connolly continues to think through and deepen the radical consequences of the notion. In this respect, Connolly's thought continues to push at the limits of the modern frame and invents the political consequences of the space that doing so creates. These challenge the extent to which contingency is thinkable as a political category within conditions in which politics is, with respect to the full ambivalence the term now acquires, unthinkable without it.

Connolly does not simply announce the fact of contingency, to be celebrated or denounced, but attempts to render it as a political category. This chapter will examine two of the ways in which this is done: through the introduction of the political significance of ontology as the terrain on which to pose the question of contingency, time and politics; and through a confrontation with the ethical question of the subjective and enunciative nature of political action, including the action which is called thinking politically, insofar as that is conceived within the temporal dimension of ontology in the light of contingency. The chapter will attempt to show that insofar as this

succeeds it is at a considerable cost that not everyone will be able to afford. Connolly's political thought is not universalisable or deontological, but as it considers itself as taking place in the ruins of those requirements (which are themselves neither universalisable nor deontological), then that characteristic is not necessarily the basis of an objection to it. However, an absence of universalisable criteria does not entail that Connolly's thought exists in a particular category of its own that prevents it from being discussed critically. This is not simply because other notable post-foundationalist political thinkers hold similar views but also because the themes of time, contingency, politics, ontology, and so on are not Connolly's own. Therefore, in order to get a sense of Connolly's appropriation of these themes, the chapter begins with a more general discussion of some of the problems associated with them, showing some of the tensions and points of contestation, the agonism, within Connolly's political thought. It does so with the hope of demonstrating Connolly's fidelity to modernity, which is to say to modernity's constitutive failure, to its impossibility, and thus the viability of the project that is built on it and on which its political aspect depends. The stakes of that project are shown at the end of the chapter through a discussion of Connolly's consideration of the costs of contingency for those who are unable to absorb them for reasons that are not entirely contingent.

## Contingency in the problematic of time and politics

Strictly speaking, contingency is neither a temporal or political notion (although it may be a theological one in the Christian tradition) and it is hardly governed by the conventions of abstract logic. If contingency simply means that something equally will or will not exist, then it also means something more difficult as well    that there is no rational basis for explaining or deciding whatever is the case. Here existence generally refers to the temporal dimension of event and related terms, such as moment, as well as to notions such as chance or opportunity, and less positive ones such as disaster and risk. There is not much sense of temporal continuity with the notion of contingency as it is a term used to refer to disruption or dislocation (although of course the persistence and duration of something could also be considered contingent). Contingency is also related, but not equivalent, to terms such as possibility, probability, and accident. The importance of this difference can be grasped when considering time from a political perspective.

Political time refers to the possibility of establishing a distribution of time which exercises power in determining when and what things happen, who does them and who they are done to; and at the same time attempts to contest or destroy an established temporal regime in order to re-distribute relations of power or establish new ones on an entirely new basis. Political time saturates a polity, the principles, real or imagined, on which power is established and maintained, from mundane filibustering to revolutionary transformation. Within that time, accidents, probabilities and the like can be anticipated and

evaluated but contingency cannot. If both establishing and contesting a temporal regime are equally possible and impossible, then contingency comprehends that state of affairs irrespective of the weighting and balance of forces that may exist in practice.

Contingency, then, acquires its political status as an index of the simultaneity of the possibility and impossibility 'at the same time' of a political regime. It is real and acquires political significance to the extent that events occur that cannot be reduced to the codes of a temporal regime and which therefore mark the limit of a regime's capacity to control and make sense of the time that it has established.

Contingency acquires political value through the ways in which that limit is present within a temporal regime. Perhaps for that reason it is customary to think of contingency in terms of the figure of a break or interruption of something radically other and exterior to a political regime as, for example, in Machiavelli's notion of *fortuna* in which an outcome or a consequence is unexpected (although the notion of contingency may not explain such an occurrence as it refers to the moment in which actions and events take place with respect to a temporal regime). In this respect contingency is a term that condenses the constitutive failure of any temporal regime and may explain the familiar paradoxical relation between politics and time where the latter is usually understood as both a condition and constraint on the former, or as a condition of possibility and impossibility.[1] The relation between contingency and a temporal regime is the condition of that paradox and one question it raises concerns the extent to which the customary approach enables the political dimension of contingency to be grasped. A discussion of a more formal account may help to clarify some of the problems encountered in attempting to answer this.

In a deep and systematic analysis of Weber's lecture 'Politics as a Vocation' (Weber, [1921] 1991), Kari Palonen locates the significance of contingency within a specific account of the terms of the paradox of time and politics which derives from the emphasis Weber laid on chance as the basis of political activity orientated to maintaining or changing an existing state of affairs. A summary of Palonen's argument is condensed in the following statement of principle:

> To consider the times of politics is to conceptualize the contingent, fluid and disorderly, and to do so in a manner that does not *a priori* reduce the contingency of politics through the very act of conceptualizing. Here, time constitutes the very activity of politics: it is a medium through which to render a fluid activity intelligible as politics.
>
> (Palonen, 2003: 172)

On this account, the paradox exists at the conceptual and practical levels in such a way that the distinction tends to dissolve since for Palonen conceptualising is a political act. Yet even the way that Palonen explains the issue

is paradoxical, and perhaps impossible. The first sentence introduces a methodological rule of non-reduction which sets limits to the conceptualisation of contingency while at the same time affirming that its conceptualisation is necessary in order to understand the times of politics. Conceptualising contingency too much will reduce the contingency of politics, the possibility of politics. That suggests that the paradox cannot be conceptualised without the risk of some distortion and the rule amounts to saying that contingency is a concept which cannot be conceptualised. Somehow the limit of conceptualisation comes with the concept of contingency. Yet at the same time Palonen indicates the terms through which contingency is conceptualisable. Consistent with the customary approach to the matter outlined above, contingency is associated with fluidity and disorder. By implication, contingency is conceptualised within the scope of a conceptual and political opposition to time, stability and order    the necessary characteristics of a sound temporal regime.

If that is the case, then Palonen provides a useful formalisation of the customary approach to the relation between politics, contingency and time and also provides the principles with which that relation is maintained. Because political activity is a rendering of contingency as time in order to make that activity intelligible as political, it is therefore at the same time the production of time in order to eliminate contingency, where time is a political effect that constitutes a temporal regime. Here we can see a more general case of the double-coding that for Connolly characterised modernity or, perhaps, a generalisation of its impossibility. Even if contingency is the condition of politics, it is opposed to, or at least in tension with, political activity as rendering or making geared towards making politics intelligible, and thus conceptualisable. In other words, political action concerns the production of necessity and, we might add, its contestation, through producing contingency as time. Palonen's claim seems to deepen the sense of paradox which might be summarised in the following way: politics is a rendering or making of time, a production or invention, which overcomes a relation to its condition, namely contingency, by distorting it and distorting itself by appearing as necessary, ordered and stable.

What Palonen's claim seems to show is that, within the customary approach, politics necessarily retains to a greater or lesser extent an unmade, unproduced or uninvented relation to itself determined by the limits of the concept and activity of time it is able to produce, and which appears as the presence of contingency within it. If that relation is eliminated, then politics is eliminated too. So, politics takes place around that impossible relation or constitutive failure. Too much time eliminates contingency which is, at the same time, the condition of making time. Yet the presence of contingency within a temporal regime shows both that not enough time has been made and, importantly, that contingency is the condition of making time in order to eliminate it. It is as if the failure of a temporal regime shows the conditions of its success. Of course, everything hangs on the characteristics of the un-made

or un-invented element and the extent to which they describe contingency. In order to preserve Palonen's rule of non-reduction those characteristics cannot be described in terms like nature or *physis* or 'way of the world' which are both the conventional opposites of making and invention and customary grounds of necessity. In fact, if strictly applied the rule may prohibit any recourse to the customary conceptual and political opposition between contingency and time, between fluidity and stability, disorder and order. That does not mean that the opposition can be abandoned easily, and it may be even harder to provide an alternative, but perhaps it might be possible to suggest a non-reductive approach from within the terms of the customary relation itself. To do that, and in keeping with Palonen's rule, one might revise his claim by saying that actually, and within it as an index of its intelligibility, the dimension of the unmade and uninvented is itself made in the making of time, rather than being a ground or a condition of time which is subsequently erased, and it is made in the sense that contingency is something that is produced by political time as its limit. If anything, it is the making of contingency and the relation of made time to it that is erased, or mastered politically, and not contingency as such. It is only on that basis that one may speak of 'contingent events' as they are only so with respect to a specific making of time. Otherwise, how could anyone tell?

To follow Palonen's rule, one way of preventing the complete reduction of contingency to a concept and the customary manner in which it makes sense is by recognising that there is no contingency 'in itself' or 'as such', but only with respect to specific politically made time. Contingency is not prior to a temporal regime, as a ground or condition, but is produced by it. What may be completely unexpected for one may be totally possible or predictable for another and it may be that one of the ways that power is produced and distributed within a temporal regime is through the allocation of the unexpected and the predictable which the contestation of a regime may seek to alter, reverse or eliminate. The production of time is co-extensive with the production of contingency, 'at the same time'. If that is the case, then one of the questions that revision of Palonen's argument raises concerns the extent to which the political production of contingency as unproduced can be rendered politically, whether through concepts or actions or both (assuming the validity of this distinction).

One answer to that question might be that, contrary to the customary account, it is through the production of contingency as unproduced that the production of contingency is erased, whether through its reduction to nature or to the inscrutable actions of an entity beyond ordinary mortal comprehension. Not only is the production of contingency erased through this but so too is the production of a temporal regime. This suggestion remains within the customary account but rests on an alteration in the hierarchy of its elements. The notion of production and related terms such as making, rendering, inventing, and so on are privileged over both time and contingency in order to draw attention to an unstated assumption in the customary account

which concerns production itself. It is not so much that either time or contingency is erased politically, which may well be the case, but that their production is, and that both production and its erasure or distortion are political insofar as the term comprehends both establishing and opposing a regime. The erasure of production amounts to the erasure of the political. That view, which may sound harsh and dogmatic, is itself a consequence of the modern frame, where the unthought element of the political is its agonistic character. Indeed, it might be possible to establish a functional equivalence between contingency and the break, on the one hand, and time and occurrence on the other, where the political refers to that which prevents the two codes merging into one. But pursuing that would take the discussion in the direction of an account of the modern political imaginary and beyond the frame of this chapter. For the time being we shall attempt only to establish the problem of accounting for the simultaneous production of contingency and time.

## The political production of time and contingency

An important characteristic of the customary relation between politics, time and contingency is the assumption that contingency precedes time as a condition of politics but is not in itself a political category. Contingency is simply something that has political effects but is itself neither political nor produced. The discussion of Palonen drew attention to the reductiveness of that sort of explanation as it enables contingency to be thought in a-political terms such as nature or as something simply other. But we also drew attention to the performative contradiction in the customary relation because insofar as contingency is conceptualised, then it is produced. It was argued that there is no contingency in itself before or exterior to a production of a relation of time and politics. Contingency only acquires political value within a temporal regime    the former is the condition of the latter. Examining the production of the customary relation itself entails an examination of the production of its constituent categories in their difference, or indeed opposition, as there is no common element or essence that links them outside of a political regime in which they exist. A political relation to contingency would therefore derive from a political relation to the production of the relation between contingency and time as a relation of before and after, ground and appearance, and so on, insofar as each term is opposed to the other or carries a relation of marked to unmarked and in which the production of the distinction between each term as an opposition is erased.

By proposing a notion of 'invisible time' which is 'as opaque as the reality of the capitalist production process itself' (Althusser and Balibar, 1970: 101), Althusser provides some resources with which to try and think through a political relation to the production of time and contingency by problematising political time. For Althusser, the political value of 'invisible time' is its very obviousness which in turn is the key to its ideological dimension. The invisibility of time is ideological because it erases the fact of domination on behalf

of the appearance of homogeneity through which differential times are articulated and reduced to the level of the obvious in the sense of that which is taken-for-granted or goes-without-saying. 'Invisible time' does not simply subordinate temporal difference to homogeneity but erases the production of that subordination so that it appears as obvious or natural.

For Althusser, the key distinction is between homogeneous and differential time. Yet the latter does not exist except with respect to the former as a dominated aspect of it in a relation which is, in terms that Althusser borrows from Freud and introduces hesitatingly and reluctantly, 'overdetermined'. Against 'the historians and their practice', Althusser rejects the notion of a unified linear history in favour of structures of historicity which are only accessible from within the social formations that they constitute.[2] That goes for the temporality of the dominated as much as the dominant. It is from within these overdetermined structures that continuity is established with a historical past that is therefore not exterior to them but is part of their ideological functioning. To use a typical Althusserian phrase, temporality is 'always already' overdetermined. There is no before or after except from within a temporal regime.

Although Althusser gives a theoretical account of political time as overdetermined 'invisible time', not much is said about how that is done. Althusser does not argue that 'invisible time' is some sort of illusion and that what is experienced as necessary from within it is in reality false. On the contrary, 'invisible time' is part of reality. Therefore he does not propose the idea of a privileged relation to the truth of existence outside of overdetermination. Yet a notion of contingency is absent from the theorisation of 'invisible time' and thus of overdetermination itself. For whatever reason that might be, it presents quite obvious problems for Althusser's account of politics.[3] As an advocate of the revolutionary Communist redistribution of power, and perhaps on an entirely new basis, Althusser requires a point at which action is radically exterior to overdetermined 'invisible time', discontinuous from it, a necessity consistent with the double coding of the modern frame. Yet these criteria are impossible to meet since they require an action radically exterior to its overdetermined conditions in the same way as Althusser's theory of ideology both requires and prohibits a subject radically exterior to its interpellation.[4] That is not to say that Althusser does not attempt to think the reality of such an impossibility. One of the many limits Althusser reached is present in the oxymoronic notion of a revolutionary 'ruptural unity' which depends on a situation where a social formation is so overdetermined that at a particular moment, when the time is right and characterised by 'an accumulation of contradictions', it morphs into its equally overdetermined negation without leaving any trace of the former (Althusser, [1965] 1977). The elimination of the structure is a moment of necessity within it which Althusser thought in terms of internal (non-Hegelian) contradiction predicated on an over-arching necessity    the 'last instance' of the economy. However, as Althusser, following Engels, accepted that this 'last instance' 'never comes',

then the theoretical and political, not to speak of economic, problems remain, not least because in the absence of the economy 'as such' its effectivity is 'always already' overdetermined. One might say that Althusser imagines a place for contingency without theorising its political character, and does so in a modern way in terms of the break.

Fortunately Althusser's work is not as structurally self-determined as the account of social formations it provides. Some of Althusser's posthumous publications (e.g. Althusser, 2000, 2006) show, in their fragmentary existence, how what had been referred to in *Reading Capital* as 'the subterranean materialist tradition' of Epicurus, Lucretius, Machiavelli, Spinoza and Marx became an attempt to think an 'aleatory materialism', a political practice organised around time figured as a swerve or *clinamen*. Here, in emphasising an Althusserianism of the conjuncture against an Althusserianism of the structure, to use Balibar's helpful distinction (Balibar, 1993), Althusser affirms 'a kind of transcendental contingency of the world' (Althusser, 2006: 170) as the basis for the fact that encounters may or may not take place and around which politics is organised. In this case Althusser recognises the political significance of contingency but on the condition that the term is understood as a philosophical or metaphysical category. It is not produced through the political production of time as a temporal regime but exists eternally as prior to any political production. Contingency is not overdetermined. If that is so, then Althusser reproduces a customary relation between politics, contingency and time. That is to say, Althusser reproduces the obviousness of contingency as obvious within 'invisible time', as that which goes without saying. Contingency is simply the effect of something from somewhere else.

It is doubtful if much is gained by elevating contingency to a metaphysical level except as evidence of the enclosure of the metaphysical assumptions of the customary relation within an overdetermined structure. That is to say, the customary relation between politics, time and contingency is an over-determined political effect, including the notion that time is somehow produced and contingency is not because it comes from somewhere else. If it is not possible to think of a point exterior to overdetermination, as that is an overdetermined effect, and so on interminably, then to what extent is it possible to establish a political relation to politics, time and contingency from within the overdetermined manner in which the terms are thought and related that is to say, from within the customary relation?

Posing the issue in this way returns the argument to Connolly's approach to political discourse (summarised at the beginning of the chapter). By virtue of their overdetermined character, the terms of the customary relation between politics, time and contingency cannot simply be defined and applied independently of their existence within political discourse as that activity is itself overdetermined. Instead, one can identify how the customary relation is framed in order to push at its borders and margins from within by making its unthought and invisible aspects thinkable and visible. This would include the distribution of that which is produced and unproduced, or political and

non-political. Here we consider the extent to which Connolly succeeds in doing just that.

## Ontologising contingency

One criticism of Connolly's work amounts to the claim that the political values it proposes, especially in relation to agonism and related concepts, are in effect subsumed within 'invisible time' and the temporal regime that constitutes it. Here we refer to Chambers's remark that Connolly's 'analytic of 'identity/difference'' (Connolly, 1991) is, despite its affirmation of paradox, too timely for the radical democratic purposes it seeks to achieve because both of its terms are understood in terms of the fact of their being, and is consequently subsumed within 'the hopes of a liberal individualism that Connolly himself eschews' (Chambers, 2003: 28). In other words, Connolly's agonistic ethos of identity and difference fits too neatly with a dominant liberalism and its relation to time or, to say the same thing differently, liberalism's mastery of time through its reduction of its elements to the *fort-da* space of repetition where identity tends to the category of necessity everyone has one, that is what everyone is, it is different from everyone else's and is a particular property of individuals. Against that, Chambers affirms a '*self-conscious* conception of untimeliness' in political theory (ibid.: 2, original emphasis), derived in large measure from the Derridean thesis of time-out-of-joint (Derrida, 1994).[5] The purpose of this is to establish an oppositional politics predicated on some of the things that don't fit with an established temporal regime but take place within it, incompleting its temporal distribution (although in its stricter Derridean formulation the political dimension is to do with an emphasis on an ethical responsibility to an unknowable future). In any event, the notion of untimeliness demonstrates that the overdetermined character of 'invisible time' is never complete. This could perhaps be understood as a shift from Althusser's 'never comes' to Derrida's notion of 'to come'.

If that is the case, then two things follow. First, insofar as it implies completion, then the notion of 'invisible time', as Althusser conceives it, is ideological, in the way that Althusser conceives that. Second, incompletion entails that a relation between interiority and exteriority through which one might be able to distinguish between, for example, liberalism and not-liberalism, can only be established with respect to an internal limit which, in Derridean terms, is constitutively undecidable. Here we return to the notion of constitutive failure as it allows a precise response to Chambers's criticism of Connolly. If Connolly appeared to be opposed to but was in reality supportive of a completed liberalism, then Chambers's criticism would stick. But in reality Connolly demonstrates the incomplete character of liberalism as the basis for its radicalisation. Whether liberalism is defensible, even in its failure, or worth radicalising, is another matter, but Connolly's political thought is about doing those things. Thus Connolly is against an ideological version of liberalism in political thought and practice, and therefore liberalism's

temporal regime. The opposition takes place from within liberalism's constitutive failure along the axis of time and contingency.

We can see how that pans out by examining one of Connolly's responses to liberalism at its most ideological    its justification of itself in terms of its approach to the management of toleration through law. Connolly's argument, particularly evident in *The Ethos of Pluralization* (Connolly, 1995), is based on a critique of the dominant liberal exclusion of metaphysics from political thought and practice. By excluding metaphysics liberalism disavows its own metaphysical assumptions. The hegemony of Rawls's postmodern liberalism is the obvious but unidentified target of that critique, and in particular its slogan 'justice as fairness, political not metaphysical' (Rawls, 1985). Rawls's aim was to provide a justification for excluding apparently rival and incommensurate metaphysical positions from matters of justice as these gave rise to irresolvable political conflicts because each sought to uphold its position at the expense of the other. Against that, Connolly argues that a plural and incommensurable space of metaphysical positions is the ground of a valuable ethos of agonistic respect for difference, unthought, but perhaps not unthinkable, within dominant liberalism.[6] That is because for Connolly a plurality of metaphysical positions is not exterior to metaphysics, and therefore liberalism, insofar as it identifies such plurality, is also not exterior to metaphysics. But in that case Connolly is talking about a metaphysics which is very different from the plurality of metaphysical positions allegedly different from and incommensurable with each other within liberalism. For Connolly, the existence of a plurality of metaphysical perspectives is a verification of an underlying metaphysics understood as the ontological priority of the movement of becoming over sedentary being which is unthought within liberalism, or at least marginal to it.

If that is the case, then what are the consequences of Connolly's argument for thinking the political dimension of liberalism as a temporal regime incompleted by its own metaphysical assumptions? There are two aspects to note about that here. First, becoming enables a plurality of positions and their conflicts. Second, the difference between the plurality of metaphysical positions and a metaphysics of becoming determines a much more incommensurable conflict than the one between different metaphysical perspectives within liberalism. Because none of them recognise the priority of becoming and because they are unable to recognise their perspectives as effects of the temporal movement of becoming, they misrecognise them as the stability of being. Recognition of becoming would entail recognition of the contingency of existence which would in turn spell ruin. Such liberalisms, then, might be metaphysical but it's the wrong metaphysics and in attempting to manage that mistake liberalism institutes being and stabilises itself as the plurality of beings.

Connolly labels this conflict politically as the one between democracy and fundamentalism, but it boils down to a conflict between becoming and being itself, or time and space.[7] Fundamentalism is the refusal, or perhaps inability,

to acknowledge the contingency of one's position within the movement of becoming and the violent assertion of the protection of this refusal as a right. In other words, fundamentalism is the production of being and necessity. Democracy is the opposite and the cause of an antagonism distinct from the clash of rival fundamentalisms because its specific difference is expressed as the aim of exposing the contingency that inhabits every fundamentalism through asserting its own 'ontopolitical interpretation' of the priority of contingency, and thus becoming, against fundamentalism's refusal to do so. Democracy's positive relation to contingency is thus privileged because it is closer to the way things really are (as distinct from fundamentalism's ideological distortions) which is that things are becoming, and they are becoming different from what they were whatever that was or will become by virtue of the effects of contingency on being. Fundamentalism is the denial of this.

Of course, a fundamentalist that fitted Connolly's description could respond that Connolly's democrats are in fact the real fundamentalists because for them democracy rests on becoming as its ontological ground, as if there was a necessary relation between political value and metaphysics. There's a symptom of that difficulty in the ambivalent title of one of the chapters in *The Ethos of Pluralization*, 'Nothing is fundamental'. This could mean either that fundamentalism is an ideological distortion, or that nothing is the foundation of everything, or possibly both.[8] That links to a more interesting question concerning the priority Connolly gives to ontology. The 'ontopolitical interpretation' Connolly affirms rests on an equivalence between becoming and contingency which is novel to say the least. Becoming is usually understood in terms of immanence and implies some sort of movement not entirely incompatible with *physis*. One might say that to affirm that something is becoming is to say that what something is changes but it does not follow that change is contingent because it is not the case that just because something is it is contingent if the fact that something is, is predicated on becoming. To affirm that something is contingent is to say that *what* something is and *that* something is, are both equally indeterminate. At least, that is how it would probably look from within the Western 'metaphysical tradition' where the introduction of the thought of contingency smashes apart any ideas about a necessary relation between essence and existence.[9] Strictly speaking, contingency is not an ontological category and its relation to becoming or being, and to each as positive or negative, existing or not existing, is a matter of indifference. But Connolly produces a relation in that an equivalence between contingency and becoming becomes possible insofar as what has and will become is unknown and unnecessary, as far as we know, and is thus something that could or could not be. Yet, in that case, becoming is subordinate to being in the sense that *what* something is, is contingent but *that* something is, is not. Being is contingent, becoming is not because it's the real essence of that which is and contingency is simply the negative name for being's experience of becoming. Being simply doesn't see becoming coming and disavows it when it arrives.

The stakes raised by this impossible 'ontopolitical interpretation' concern the possibility of a defence of the priority of becoming as contingency which at the same time affirms both contingency understood in terms of being and not-being and an investment in the necessary or essential nature of becoming. For Connolly, becoming and contingency are unproduced. Being is produced as a sort of corruption of becoming. In which case Connolly remains within the order of the customary relation between politics, time and contingency.

At this point Connolly's confrontation with ontology, which exposes the ideological nature of a metaphysics of being and affirms the realism of a metaphysics of becoming, reaches an internal limit. That limit is structured by the priority of the ontological over the political and is an expression of the overdetermined relation between becoming and being or, indeed, of metaphysics itself. Fortunately, that limit is present as is the impossibility of Connolly's enunciation in its attempt to confront the temporally overdetermined nature of its position. Connolly's 'ontopolitical interpretation' is dependent on epochality and a specific epoch in particular with its own relation to time, and it is from this relation that the timeliness of the 'ontopolitical interpretation' derives. For Connolly, the opposition between fundamentalism and democracy is internal to modernity as a consequence of 'the globalization of contingency' (Connolly, 1995: 22). Thus liberal pluralism and its fundamentalisms constitute the polity through which globalisation is managed. Liberal pluralism is itself a fundamentalism, and perhaps the condition for the others by virtue of its political dominance, in that it disavows its own contingency and the becoming-contingent of itself as the dynamic through which it is produced, the ontological dimension of incoherency and incompletion through which it becomes something other. Connolly calls this process of something becoming something other than what is, or disidentification, *pluralisation*. It is a dynamic of conflict and antagonism which disrupts established identities, and thus differences also, and above all lacks a stable position to be. It is a dynamic of becoming new, a 'politics of disturbance' that is purely modern. Here Connolly endorses an ethico-ontological equivalence as *pluralisation* gives rise to an ethos of 'critical repsonsiveness' that 'draws sustenance from an almost always operative attachment to life as a protean set of energies and possibilities exceeding the terms of any identity or cultural horizon into which it is set' (ibid.: 28). It is hard to see how such a formulation is other than a naturalisation of globalisation through ontology as an ethical imperative.

## Feeling magnanimous

In order to reverse the priority of the onto over the political one could argue that globalisation overdetermines ontology as becoming. Connolly does not go quite that far. Instead, Connolly politicises the 'ontopolitical interpretation' that renders an impossible enunciation possible or, to say the same thing differently, deepens its impossibility. As with the double coding of modernity,

Connolly is vigilant with regard to the possibility of becoming settling into the comforting power of being. Thus: 'The most persistent issue facing critical interpretation today is the ironic relation it assumes to its own ontopolitical projections' (ibid.: 38). A casualty of this critique is the equivalence between becoming, contingency and democracy and their antagonism that the notion of pluralisation condenses. However, Connolly neither simply re-arranges the terms of the problem nor abandons it. Rather, the problem is taken to a more radical limit in order to undermine the obvious syllogism that if becoming is a good thing, and if globalisation is evidence for it, then that makes globalisation a good thing. After all, if the democratic opposition to fundamentalism boils down to the fact that it is so untimely, hanging on to outdated conceptions of the being of the world which are little more than fantasies when it should be getting up to speed with becoming, where the action really is, the argument is asymmetrical, to say the least. To overcome that, Connolly pluralises the impossibility of the equivalence between modernity, becoming and contingency and the identity of time predicated upon it.

For example, in the provocatively entitled *Why I Am Not a Secularist* (Connolly, 1999) Connolly retreats a little bit from the position staked out in the pluralisation book by addressing the predicament of those dislocated by the speed of global becoming and who, through no fault of their own, cling to and defend any scraps of security they have left in order to preserve some measure of dignity.[10] In this case Connolly argues from the impact of becoming on being, on those who are profaned and melt into air without the advantages that brings. It is understandable that anyone in such a predicament would hang on to a faith in being decorated by religion, as this provides reasonable expectations of the future and a common sense of belonging. Connolly does not provide a defence of the content of those expectations but simply explains them in liberal terms in order to draw the attention of liberals to the feelings of resentment they stoke in others insofar as they are understood as dominating them. Connolly does not suggest for one moment that those on the wrong end of globalisation are really right and neither is it proposed that liberalism be replaced with something else. Instead Connolly proposes developing a pragmatist 'ethos of engagement' predicated on the recognition that no one element of the world can provide an infallible account of itself and the world and that therefore a space for give and take, for forbearance, is created. Yet, although this is compatible with incompleted liberalism there is a sense in which it is not reducible to it and in fact marks the effects of something else upon it.

What that is, is announced by the title of a subsequent book, *Pluralism* (Connolly, 2005), which, although conceptualised by the American pragmatist tradition, names a phenomenon that arises as a disturbance or dislocation of faith, including its non-theistic version    the impact of contingency on being. Insofar as that can be traced to the process of the becoming of the world, Connolly's consistently modern aim remains to emphasise the positive possibilities of such experiences as a basis for imagining collective living

committed to a 'fidelity to the world' (ibid.: 10). Not only is that world comprised of becomings and beings, but also, following Bergson and Merleau-Ponty, the intersection of memory and anticipation in 'duration' which works as an antidote to the punctual time of the here and now but is not exterior to it. That is because becoming is always plural and newness happens, in terms reminiscent of Althusser's notion of the *clinamen*, through the collisions and swerves of 'separate trajectories of becoming, set on different scales of clock time' in which, 'for good or ill', the outcomes are unpredictable (ibid.: 103). As Connolly clarifies his position: 'I do not seek to *replace* a punctual image of time with time as creative evolution. I seek, rather, to complicate the experience of time, drawing upon each modality at different moments' (ibid.: 129).

Of course, there is an asymmetry contained in that imperative. Those within a failed modernity are probably more likely to accept it than those who are affected by the consequences of modernist perfectionism. The duration of these 'out-of-joint' situations can be traumatic and struggles to make sense of them can be reactive and even retroactive, a means to confirm a long-held fear or prejudice. Connolly concedes an element of 'performative contradiction' in the argument by admitting its implication is that things get better through time, therefore time is linear and progressive as long as deep pluralism gets embedded deeper in it (ibid.: 128). His response is to deepen the implications of contingency. As contingency cannot be tied to a deontological chain of imperatives by order of nature or reason, appropriate responses to it have to be invented, cultivated and learnt by the self as part of the process of its fabrication, including the human body as the place where duration takes place. Through a sort of ethical gymnastics Connolly stresses the importance of moulding bodily responses to dislocation as a way to learn to become better at feeling difference. Thus, he writes that, 'To cultivate an ethical disposition of connectedness across difference is to refine our capacities of feeling' (ibid.:92). Here, without wishing to sound perverse, Connolly seems to be democratising a Nietzschean aristocratism, the sense that nobility and *virtu* are measured by one's work on the self as a rendering or self-making within whatever contingency throws at you, 'for good or ill'. In that sense one could suggest that production remains and the political is the encounter with whatever limits self-rendering, including its overdetermined character. After all, it is not as if there is a real self to fall back on. It doesn't really matter if that can be understood in terms of the strong thesis of modernity that as the self itself, liberal, individual, whatever, is itself contingent and made up, then what reason is there to 'hang on to yourself', in Bowie's memorable phrase?

This is why pluralism is not 'a philosophy for wimps, for those whose beliefs are too saturated with uncertainty and ambivalence to take definitive action' (ibid.: 3). If one is not strong enough to do it, in Nietzsche's sense of 'we should protect the strong from the weak', then one has no right to criticise or take advantage of those who are subjected to subjective dislocation and this judgement functions as a practical test of equality. So, Connolly's

solution to the problem of a self-defeating dialectic of antagonistic transference and resentful sublimation is not to say either that everyone should just try and get along or that everyone should unite and fight against a common oppressor. It is not that Connolly does not agree with those things. It's just that the fact of becoming and contingency renders such responses temporary and any political imaginary ought to try and take that into account. The defining masterstroke of Connolly's position is to ask not 'how can we modern liberals make those others more like us?' but 'how can we modern liberals become more like ourselves by becoming other than what we are?' That is to say, Connolly folds the constitutive failure of modernity into the constitution of the modern self and its ethics. And because of the risks entailed, including the unlikely occurrence of reciprocity, it is not an ethics that can be explained away by utility maximisation or the self-interested rational choice of politicking. Nor is it dependent on an investment in the radical transformations of politicisation. Of course those who live off politicking will stab you in the back, most likely the ones that you trust the most. And in the midst of revolutionary passion those who live for politics will be the first to denounce you as a traitor, and probably from both sides of the 'internal frontier'. The big events can look after themselves when they happen   or not as the case may be. Pluralism is about what to do if they do.

## Notes

1 See Ricoeur (1965) for a similar point made in very different terms.
2 The radical status of Althusser's critique of history has recently been questioned by Hindess (2007) who reconciles it with Hegel, the thinker that Althusser was con cerned to get most distance from. Although Hindess does not address the question of 'invisible time', Althusser's notion of differential times is equated with the Leninist notion of combined and uneven development which is critiqued for the assumptions of linear historical progression on which it is claimed to rest. Hin dess's argument is interesting because it attempts to place historically the terms in which a phrase such as 'the time in which' becomes possible, which bears some resemblance to the notion of modernity as 'the here and now'. For Hindess, all that can be explained 'as an early product of modern imperialism' (ibid.: 16) although an argument to support the claim is not made. For an approach to history after Althusser that actually engages the question of 'the historians and their practice', see Rancière (1994).
3 As is probably well known, one of the major achievements of Laclau and Mouffe was to address that deficiency.
4 Recall Althusser's abysmal claim in the ISAs essay that:

> In order to grasp what follows, it is essential to realise that both he who is writing these lines and the reader who reads them are themselves subjects, and therefore ideological subjects (a tautological proposition), i.e. that the author and the reader of these lines both live 'spontaneously' or 'naturally' in ideology in the sense in which I have said that 'man is an ideological animal by nature.
>
> That the author, insofar as he writes the lines of a discourse which claims to be scientific, is completely absent as a 'subject' from 'his' scientific discourse (for all scientific discourse is by definition a subject less discourse, there is no

'Subject of science' except in an ideology of science) is a different question which I shall leave on one side for a moment.

<div align="right">(Althusser, [1971] 2001: 116)</div>

What follows is a critique of obviousness.

5 See Chambers's (1999) critique of Issac (1995) which links Derridean untimeliness to the historicity of history.

6 Here I reiterate and correct the discussion in Arditi and Valentine (1999).

7 One might say that the force of what White (2000) calls 'weak ontology' in Connolly's political thought is very strong here.

8 I owe this observation to Mick Dillon.

9 This point is just one of Blumenberg's (1985) arguments in *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, a book that Connolly knows well.

10 In what follows, I draw on Valentine (2007).

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# 12  A world of becoming

*William E. Connolly*

## Introduction

I am, by turns, honored, gratified, challenged and inspired by this rich set of essays   as I was by the conference organized by Sam Chambers and Alan Finlayson on my work at Swansea University in the Spring of 2007. Alan Finlayson's generous and far-ranging introduction brings me back to early provocations from which my work has proceeded, as it also points to issues that call for attention now. It is true that my youth, in a factory family in Flint, Michigan, both provoked my later involvements in economic egalitarianism, civil rights, feminism, anti-war movements, gay rights, and the issue of pluralism and also "opened a wound" in my thinking as the latter movements, noble as they were, fomented resentment in white working-class families neglected by them   a wound that set into motion thinking about ontology, ethics, pluralist politics, capitalism, global machines, and a new cosmopolitanism. It is true, too, that my dissertation on political science and ideology was activated by the gap between the way several of my professors thought about politics and the experiences of constituencies I knew best. I worried soon after that about how new movements that I now embraced were helping to foment resentments that later morphed into support for the evangelical-capitalist resonance machine.

But a wound is not enough, as Finlayson knows well. Productive political thinking grows out of wounds, attachments and hopes folding into each other. Can one's thinking rise above its early sources, address new issues and identifications, and then circle back to engage the initial sources and constituencies again in new ways? It is a challenge and privilege to be a political theorist. One aspires to link the privilege to social responsibility.

The essays in this collection activate my thinking because they are so alive and exploratory. Experience tells me, however, that when an author writes a "Reply to My Critics" it seldom does justice to the rich insights and challenges posed to him or her. Some readers, if they are like me, may even skip some of the essays to get to the "debate" at the end. And the reply tends to take on a defensive tone as it points to portions or themes in one's work that this or that writer has "neglected".

I want to temper that tendency while still presenting my work as best I can. I am enlivened by these explorations of the complexity of interpretation, the advantages of a positive ethos of engagement, the role of mystical dwelling in political thought, cinematic dimensions of creative writing, the complexity of cultural time, the role of resentment in positive political movements, the potential of transcendence in relation to immanence, the strategic powers of situationism, the need for liberals to become other than what they are, the limits of presumptive generosity, and the contemporary crisis of the left. In most instances I will digest the contribution slowly, seeing how I respond the next time that issue moves front and center at a poignant political moment. Today I will discuss how my recent work relates to projects now underway. If on one or two occasions you detect a debt or the whisper of a reply, so be it. The hope is that a relation of agonistic responsiveness will help to carry thinking forward.

## Complexity theory and becoming

There has been a tendency in political theory to run from work in biology and neuroscience, even though we humans have evolved and now come equipped with genes, blood, hearts, muscles, brains, sexual organs, and feet as well as hands for typing, a practice that depends upon unconscious habits wired into the body/brain system through training and repetition (no one I know can recite the order of the alphabet as it appears on the key pad they use so efficiently). What are the sources of this resistance? The reductionism of those sciences has been one. The difficulty of engaging them from the out-side another. A desire to found cultural theory on its own unique foundations a third. And, perhaps, the desire to protect a theology of transcendence a fourth. These disparate pressures push in the same direction. But they have issued in modes of cultural theory that do not come to terms closely enough with the biocultural organization of perception, the layered complexity of thought, multiple modes and degrees of agency in the world, intersections between natural force-fields and cultural life, the role of cultivation in ethics, the connections between natural and cultural time, and other issues besides.

The arrival of complexity theory places these reasons and excuses under pressure. Complexity theory, as I receive it, moves natural science closer to the concerns of cultural theory as it demands attention from it. It advances several distinctive themes. First, because of periodic confluences between novel changes in the environment and "preadaptations" that cannot be iden-tified in advance, much of biological evolution cannot be predicted. Second, because of "Poincare resonances" that may come into play when a stable system is thrown into disequilibrium, there seem to be powers of self-organization in some natural systems that also exceed our powers of prediction. Third, because all open systems maintain essential relations with some others all the time    and could do so with almost any other at some times    another source of possible disequilibrium haunts stable systems. And fifth, because the

layered, creative modes of human thinking, perception and communication explored by theorists such as William James, Henri Bergson, and Merleau-Ponty may require quantum brains to be possible, a movement in complexity theory to so conceive the human brain is highly pertinent. This last development does not mean (to me) that you can drop self-interpretation and phenomenology to move unilaterally to subtle modes of brain observation; rather, it opens doors of reciprocal exchange between self-interpretation, subtle observation of brain processes, experimental techniques of action upon brain networks, and creative thinking. It is through these interchanges that we can better understand how micropolitics work    that interplay between image, rhythm, words and perception on the media and elsewhere which plays an indispensable role in politics writ large.

So five key themes in complexity theory combine to foment new modes of exchange between science and cultural theory. I note two possibilities opened up by such a dialogue. First, as complexity theorists rethink evolution, causality, the role of resonance, the limits of predictive power, and the human brain as a complex system at the edge of instability involved in convoluted cultural exchanges, they combine with political theory to put the squeeze on blunt modes of logical empiricism and rational choice theory. For if there is resonance, real uncertainty, unstateable pre-adaptations and creativity in biology and neurological processes, it seems unlikely that such elements would be absent from politics. It is not that complexity theory erases the difference between nature and human culture. It is, rather, that a difference which had tended to be construed in dichotomous terms now becomes more distributed and multiple. We are encouraged, for instance, to think about multiple sites and degrees of agency in the world, resisting the urge to define a deterministic nature overseen by human carriers of the "anthropic exception" and this multiplies the kind of relations between nature and culture to explore. Second, complexity theory helps us to think positively about open systems in politics, about their multiple connections to different zones of nature, and about how the universe itself may be an open cosmos composed of multiple, interdependent, moving systems of numerous types; how, that is, politics participates in a world of becoming that calls into question closures of both cultural theory and previous conceptions of time.

During the heyday of Augustinian Christianity, the idea of purposive or providential time received authoritative sanction. During the prime of the Kant Newton conjunction, the idea of linear time, typically linked to a theme of indefinite progress, flowed into cultural theory. Kant even warned that our "necessary" concept of morality itself would unravel if we ditched the postulate of progressive time. Complexity theory, however, opens the door to think time as becoming, not just with respect to social life but with respect to a large variety of partially interdependent force-fields of different types. Indeed, you probably cannot think cultural time as becoming unless the idea encompasses the bumpy relations between cosmic, natural and cultural processes. So complexity theory opens the door to communication between it and

philosophers of-time-as becoming as diverse as Friedrich Nietzsche, Henri Bergson, William James, Alfred North Whitehead and Gilles Deleuze. It is the interchange between them and complexity scientists that are promising, with Ilya Prigogine, Stuart Kauffman, Brian Goodwin, Giacamo Rizzolatti, V.S. Ramachandran, and Antonio Damasio providing shining points of possible exchange.

Through such exchanges, thinking about ethics, politics, micropolitics, immanence, transcendence, democracy, pluralism, identity and capitalism might be illuminated.

## Politics and becoming

What is a world of becoming? In a world of becoming, the emergence of new formations is irreducible to patterns of efficient causality, purposive time, simple probability, or long cycles of recurrence. The changes occur in part through periodic intersections between different force-fields, as neural, viral, bacterial, geological, climatic, species, asteroid, cosmic ray, and civilizational force-fields set on different tiers of chrono-time infect (or disrupt, spark, invade, etc.) each other, in part through the emergence of new and surprising capacities for *auto-poeisis* after such intersections occur, and in part through patterns of reverberation between the intrusions into a system and the auto-poeisis it unleashes within it during the period of heightened disequilibrium in one system. I mean here to distinguish chrono  or clock  time (the difference measured by a clock between, say, the length of a human life and that of a hurricane) from durational time, as (often) short periods of phase transition when reverberations between two open systems set on different tiers of clock time change something profoundly in one or both. Some biologists think that the momentous phase transition from non-life to life was rather short in clock time but intense in what might be called durational time. Some even suggest that specific elements in the mix may have come from outer space: 'It may be that myriad small organized molecules and even more complex molecules, fell onto the young earth to supply some preconditions that then mixed with the electrical force fields and soupy stuff on early earth' (Kauffman, 2008: 48).

There *are* periods, it must be emphasized, of relative stability or equilibrium in each temporal zone or force-field: a human life endures, a geological formation persists, a climate pattern stays, a civilization remains, a biological species survives, a faith evolves slowly. But, particularly when one mode of endurance is touched, infected, electrically charged or battered by a force-field on another tier of chrono-time, a more dramatic change may be on the cards: as when an asteroid shower destroys dinosaurs and both events together set the stage for the rapid evolution of human beings; as when a period of rapid capitalist growth accelerates climate change that then recoils back upon the self-sustaining capacity of capitalism; as when a powerful new virus jumps from birds to human beings; as when a group of devout Christians encounter Buddhism and find themselves tipping toward conversion; as when gays forge

alliances with feminists and civil rights leaders; as when white blue-collar workers forge new alliances after being ignored by traditional allies; as when neo-liberal capitalism foments a crisis that scrambles its traditional base of support.

The *politics* of becoming is that politics by which a constituency or agenda that had been ill-formed, scattered or impugned, finds leverage to push its way onto the scene of official contestation. It happens periodically. The politics of becoming is spurred into being by unexpected changes on the cultural or economic scene and/or by shifts in other zones that impinge upon it. The hurricane we call Katrina revealed the incompetence of the Bush administration to a large set of constituencies, exposed the depth of racism in some sectors of society, enlivened some TV newscasters who had been content to remain neutral, and drew the attention of a generation of students who had been focused on their careers. The result was a shake-up of the American political scene that is still in motion.

I agree with William James that there is a loose set of connections between accepting time as becoming, identifying different sites and degrees of agency in the universe ("a pluralistic universe") and thinking more dynamically about a pluralistic political culture. There are other ways to get there, some of which will be considered shortly. But exploration of time as becoming can move you beyond mere acceptance of "the fact" of existing pluralism, to thoughtful engagement with the politics of pluralization (or becoming) by which new constituencies, spurred by events and pressures, struggle to find a place on the register of actual diversity. If you do come to terms with the interdependence and tension between pluralism and pluralization, a host of complicated issues is raised. How and on what terms can you distinguish movements of becoming that are apt to be compatible with pluralism from those that are not? If ethics does not correspond neatly to a set of universal imperatives set on a linear track of progressive time, how can an ethos of cultivation and the politics of pluralization be joined together? What role does a positive ethos of engagement play in the institutional life of pluralism/pluralization? What are the possible relations between pluralism and egalitarianism? What limits must be set to pluralism and why? Having addressed those questions elsewhere, I move to related issues now.

## Resentment and *ressentiment*

It is unlikely that a new social movement could unfold without its potential members feeling resentment toward key elements in the status quo. If the situation is tough, many may also internalize a certain disdain for themselves. Working-class white males in America, to take one instance, displayed ample amounts of that ambivalence two decades before formation of the evangelical-capitalist resonance machine. I charted such feelings and accompanying political orientations in two earlier studies. Jews, Blacks, Welfare Recipients, Gays, Atheists, Prostitutes, Muslims and many, many others periodically find

themselves in situations that call forth resentment, and sometimes self-resentment as well. Resentment is an all-too-human passion. When it endures, it is an intense reactive disposition connected to the judgment that you have been treated unfairly by others who share some responsibility for that treatment. I, for instance, resent the way atheists and nontheists are often defined, treated and marginalized in the regime I inhabit. My sense is that millions of others have been moving toward a similar reaction.

Resentment can also be transfigured into indignation, roughly resentment about the way selected others are treated. Many of us are indignant about the treatment of African-Americans, Amerindians, Gays, and Muslims in this society. We would not have access to that complex feeling if the reactive, social experience of resentment were magically subtracted from life. That is not apt to happen, however, since we are embodied, mortal, relational beings who experience pain, grief and anguish as well as joy and gratification. Sometimes the intense, reactive attitudes of one constituency start to resonate with those in other social positions, creating the rudiments of a new movement that may soon exceed the parts from which it was formed.

I use the word "you" to cover both individuals and interwoven assemblages in which members are constituted to some degree by their place in the assemblage. When you are on the initiating side of a social movement, resentment and indignation provide indispensable sources of energy and inspiration. Fear, of course, can play an inhibiting role as well. When you are on the receiving side    when you are surprised by a movement that makes charges against those in your social position    you are initially apt to feel resentment against the intrusion and the intruders. As such reactions resonate together, they may be amplified by voices on the internet or mass media who help to mobilize a new, reactive constituency. Occasionally, however, minor voices within us and dissenting voices around us call some of those reactions into question. We are called upon to rework shared, expressive dispositions and affiliations. It happens rather often.

It is not easy to work tactically upon established constituency reactions, even when you have decided that it is wise to do so. This was (and is) true for many "straights" whose sense of natural heterosexuality had been imbued into their very identities, sometimes linking up to successful sexual performance itself. In such instances the pressure of a new movement and of events that dramatize the injuries posed by exclusive heterosexuality, can combine to move an entire culture. Our ability to use the terms "straights" and "gays" today testifies to how much micropolitics has accomplished in this domain. Similarly, it is not always easy for African-Americans, who have faced several centuries of oppressive treatment, to identify symbolically with gays. "They" are not marked by color; "they" can be anonymous if they choose to do so; "they" are more often affluent; "our" faith defines gay marriage as a sin; and so on. First-wave feminism faced similar issues. Again it often takes ugly events, challenges posed by friends, relatives and public figures, and experimental exchanges with the minority to break the ice. Similar points could be

made about older Jews who found themselves moving from an impossible holocaust to a new situation in which Israel is an occupying power.

In a pluralist/pluralizing culture you sometimes find yourself on the initiating side and sometimes the receiving side of a social movement. When you are on the initiating side, you may seek to curtail fear and transfigure resentment into a vibrant social movement. No one knows for sure exactly where or how far it will go. Sometimes, to your surprise, you find yourself on the receiving side, treated as a participant in a mode of oppression that did not seem so to you before the issue was posed. Things get confusing, as they did in the 1970s in the United States when a vibrant, messy coalition of feminists, blacks, gays and anti-Vietnam activists were surprised to find that they had fomented bitterness among working-class whites implicitly treated by them as the only low-status group who deserved to be where they were. We, they and much of the rest of the world are still paying a price for that reaction.

Resentment, then, is both indispensable and dicey in politics. *Ressentiment* is another matter, one related but different enough to deserve its own term. By *ressentiment* I mean a feeling of profound resentment against the most general terms of human existence as you understand those terms.[1] Maybe you (again used in both individual and plural senses) confess an omnipotent creator God and secretly resent the burdens this faith imposes upon you. Or maybe you believe at one level in eternal salvation and doubt its possibility at another, resenting the world for bestowing both mortality and that doubt upon you. You are unlikely to take that resentment out on the deity you confess. You look elsewhere, to those who express such doubts publicly or those who confess a quite different faith in ways that rattle your self-confidence in your own. Or, perhaps, you join a small minority in confessing a universe of becoming in which death brings oblivion, while unlike other compatriots, you unconsciously resent the world for not coming equipped with assurance of salvation. Again, it is hard to express overt resentment against the world for such a combination. The pressure is either to seek alternative targets against which to vent, or to work to overcome resentment of the existential condition you confess. If you do vent, the feelings of *ressentiment* are likely to be aimed at those constituencies and forces who have injured you most and/or opened a wound in your creed.

Carriers of *ressentiment* typically look for vulnerable constituencies to castigate, punish or attack. If a regime slides into an ethos of *ressentiment* between *contending* constituencies, the existence of pluralism becomes fragile and the prospects for new movements of pluralization become bleak.

The temptation to r*essentiment* is bound to the human condition, particularly to the facts of mortality, profound suffering, grief and the irreversibility of time that mark that condition. It is not inevitable, merely a temptation that comes with existence and can be triggered by fateful events. It can grow out of an accumulation of justified resentments. That is one route to *a politics of ressentiment*. There are others, for instance, an initial sense of extreme entitlement by a privileged constituency joined to the experience of rapid

deprivation. The danger of fascism resides in that combination. My sense is that today a set of general circumstances work to intensify the cultural temptation to *ressentiment.* The globalization of capital, with its production of extreme inequality between and within regions, is one. Another, ironically, is exposure to new experiences of time that press themselves upon us, challenging conceptions of time in which the three monotheisms and modern secularism have been set.

What are the experiences that challenge received images of time? There is the acceleration of pace in several zones of life such as travel, tourism, fashion, media communication, and military attack, often disrupting the pace of change appropriate to received modes of deliberation, religious devotion, and child-rearing. There are popular films in which experiments with irrational cuts, sound/image dissonances, sliding into dreamy states, and depth of field shots encourage people to engage the possibility that the human experience of duration reveals something fundamental about the larger compass of time itself in an open universe. There is the recent explosion of complexity theory, opening doors to rethink the evolution of the universe, species, geological formations and the exchanges between these evolving systems. There is the heightened awareness of hurricanes, tsunamis, tornadoes, earthquakes and the like promoted by media globalization and which may invite questions about how such breaks in regular patterns occur so frequently. There is the acceleration of global finance, replete with opacities and sudden shifts. Most pertinent, perhaps, there is growing awareness of how the trajectory of capitalism and that of climate change affect each other. These experiences accumulate and interact, calling into question received conceptions of natural regularity, agency, a purposive God, time, and the purity of culture, fomenting existential resentment in some quarters and experimental exploration in others.

My attempts to explore positive possibilities in some aspects of the acceleration of pace and the contraction of distance have been informed by the idea that we are unlikely to turn them back entirely. That response may have led some to think that I do not see the dangers involved. In that respect, consider just one quotation from a book written in 1995, which seems even more pertinent to me today than it was when it was written:

> The globalization of contingency refers to a perverse correlation between the drive of dominant states to master contingency in their internal and external environments and the corollary production of dangerous global possibilities that outstrip the capacity of any single state or the interstate system to control them. These new possibilities include the creation of a greenhouse effect or other climactic/environmental changes    such as worldwide soil erosion or contamination of water supplies    that fundamentally damage the earth as a shelter for human life; crises in the supply of essential economic resources located in foreign lands through crisis or decay in the supplying regimes; the escalation of state and non-state terrorism into a permanent condition; the production of an international

economic crisis within a world economy of extensive interdependence; a nuclear exchange that destroys regions of the world or civilization itself.

(Connolly, 1995: 22)

The globalization of capital, a sharper sense of global contingency and *ressentiment* are interinvolved, though it is possible that intelligent responses to the first two can forestall intensification of the third.

I contend that modes of existential resentment filter today into the practices of capitalism and the military, feeding investment priorities, consumption preferences, patterns of inequality, expressions of special entitlement, and preemptive attacks. A spirituality of some sort or other is always embedded in economic institutions, making a real difference to how they function. There is no such thing as a dis-embedded economy. Only those captured by methodological individualism or a mechanistic reading of institutions could think otherwise.

It is not that everyone must come to accept time as becoming, though I do commend that vision. It may be that proponents of every conception of time (and the sacred) need to come to terms thoughtfully with how to overcome resentment when some in the vicinity challenge, by their very mode of being, self-confidence in the certainty of your own creed of time, mortality, suffering and redemption. It may be that there is always an existential dimension inside politics, even though it is not reducible to that dimension. The existential dimension may even be accentuated today, in part because of the minoritization of the world taking place before our very eyes at an accelerated pace. Minoritization is not likely to slow down unless a catastrophe throws the entire world into deep crisis. A theorist of time as becoming cannot rule the latter possibility out. A tragic conception of *possibility* is consonant with a world of becoming, though such an outcome is not fated by the gods as some (to me, debatable) readings of Greek tragedy insist.

So, resentment sets a condition of possibility for the politics of pluralization and the reduction of inequality. But in a world moving faster than heretofore, in which inequality is rampant, in which minoritization proceeds at a fast pace, and in which traditional conceptions of time face a host of counter-experiences, resentment can all too readily slide into *ressentiment*. *Ressentiment* poses a threat to the future when it becomes encoded into the spirit of institutional life.

## Neither individualism nor holism

Given my attention to social movements as they arise from a nether world, with the web of language in which we are set, with prelinguistic modes of intersubjectivity, with pluralism as an ethos of engagement between constituencies of several types, and with the institutional structure of capitalism, I am occasionally surprised to be described as a methodological individualist. I suspect that such an identification depends upon the idea that a theorist

must choose between either reductive individualism or organic holism. But I accept neither option. Indeed, I find both to be bankrupt.

A reductive individualist, in a rough and ready sense, is a theorist who identifies separate building blocks from which a larger order is constructed. Many individualists probably played with Lego blocks as young boys. The Lego blocks they postulate may be sense data; they may be human individuals with fixed preference schedules; and, stretching a bit, they may be socialized individuals whose associations are chosen once they reach maturity. A theorist would then be defined as an individualist in one of those senses.

A holist is one who treats parts as intrinsically tied to a larger whole that constitutes them. The heart is nothing without the larger system in which it functions; a self requires an intersubjective web of language to be, and so on. These statements, true as stated, are then pressed further in holism. Let us see how this is so by reviewing a thinker who poses an alternative to both organic holism and reductive individualism.

In *A Pluralistic Universe*, William James challenges, in the name of time as becoming, the holism that governed much of philosophy in the United States and Europe of his day. He says,

> The pluralistic view which I prefer to adopt is willing to believe that there may ultimately be no "all-form' at all, that the substance of reality may never get totally collected, that some of it may remain outside of the largest combination of it ever made, and that a distributive form of reality, the "each-form", is logically as acceptable and empirically as probable as the "all-form" commonly acquiesced in as so obviously the self-evident thing.

A little later he adds, "radical empiricism allows that the absolute sum-total of things may never be actually experienced or realized in that shape at all, and that a disseminated, distributed or incompletely unified appearance is the only form that reality may yet have achieved" (James, [1909] 1996: 34, 44). In these statements, James resists organic holism. He contends that there is no "all-form" either already there or towards which we are inherently tending. His notion of radical empiricism, defined against both logical empiricism and teleological theories, says that when we sink into experience, we experience aspects of a distributed world, a world of connections punctuated by breaks and altered trajectories. He wagers that these pregnant experiences, which become available when action-oriented perception is suspended, provide an impetus from which the philosophy of a pluralistic universe can be forged.

But to pursue that line he also breaks with methodological individualism. Focusing first on the desperate search by logical empiricists of his day for 'qualia', he says,

> turn your face toward sensation, that flesh-bound thing which rationalism has always loaded with abuse … What, then, are the peculiar features in the perpetual flux which the conceptual translation so fatally leaves

out? … The essence of life is its continually changing character but our
concepts are all discontinuous and fixed.

(ibid.: 252)

James overplays his hand a bit in his comment about 'our concepts', since he
himself crafted some that attenuate the tendency to closure. It is better to
think of narrowly defined, discontinuous concepts as an illusion pursued by
those committed to methodological individualism. His key point, however, is
how experience itself   during those moments when you suspend action-
oriented perception and are particularly attentive   discloses a flux in which
elements from the past fold into the present and both of those into future
anticipation. Experience *consists* of interfolded elements. Action-oriented
perception itself would dissolve if that interfolding did not occur at a tacit
level. Even visual perception consists of an encounter between inter-sensory
memory and a new situation   as when you see the face of a very old man on
the screen, implicitly folding into that image a memory of what it would be
like to touch that face. It is called a haptic image, an image embodying the
memory of touch. The image would be much different if that element were
dropped. It is the same thing with smells, when you encounter an image of
dung with steam floating up from it: touch, smell, and sound, giving vision its
texture. Touch, sound, smell and vision are inter-involved in experience.

To a radical empiricist, experience comes replete with connections:

> [In] the real concrete sensible flux of life experiences co-penetrate each
> other so that it is not easy to know what is excluded and what is not. Past
> and future, for example, conceptually separated by the cut to which we
> give the name present and defined as being the opposite sides of that cut,
> are to some extent, however brief, co-present with each other throughout
> experience. The literally present moment is a purely verbal supposition,
> not a position; the only present ever realized being the "passing moment"
> in which the dying rearward of time and its dawning future forever mix
> their lights. Say "now" and it was even while you say it.

(ibid.: 254)

James, then, is neither an individualist nor a holist. He is what I will call a
"connectionist". Even viewed statically, experience comes replete with con-
nections. Sharp cuts and/or reductions are artificial abstractions. But, against
the thesis of holism, *the connections are typically loose, incomplete, and sus-
ceptible to change.* They don't add up to a complete whole and, James con-
jectures against Hegel, they never will. The connections are also punctuated
by "litter" circulating in and around them. Viewed temporally, which is the
superior way, connectionism presents a world in the making in a universe that
is open to an uncertain degree. Even our most elementary experiences are
temporal, in which the protraction of the present incorporates the wayward
past reaching toward an uncertain future. Such experience, James is willing to

wager, gives us a superb entry point from which to probe the larger universe. Recent developments in complexity theory, I suggest, support that idea experimentally with the aid of concepts that were not yet available to James.[2]

I too am a connectionist, exploring loose, incomplete and partial connections in a world of becoming. Without such connections, experience could not be. It would be noise. It is partly because of noise and litter that new things can come into being, ruffling an established set of connections or throwing them into crisis. It is partly because there are multiple force-fields in a world of becoming that intrusions periodically impinge upon a specific force-field.

To me, then, connectionism in a world of becoming does not just apply to the web of language, to essential processes of human communication below language, to musical experience, to thinking, to artistic movements, and to political movements. It also applies, in diverse ways, to large and disparate processes such as the evolution of the universe, biological evolution, civilizational change, and capitalism. That is why I think that James and complexity theorists need each other. The former to point to fecund experiences of dwelling that connect us to a larger world of becoming, and the latter to devise concepts and experiments that connect the larger processes to the experience upon which James bestowed so much trust.

Take capitalism. It consists of a set of moving elements such as the relative freedom of capital, contractual labor, the commodity form, and market/anti-market forces. But this complex (or "axiomatic" as Gilles Deleuze would say) is both incomplete and connected to other force-fields upon which it depends and/or which may intrude upon it. These include climate patterns, weather systems, animal human disease jumps, the provision or depletion of resources, educational systems, scientific activity, religious evolution, spiritual priorities, consumer trends, asteroid showers, and many other things. All these open systems are linked, in varying ways and degrees, to the evolving system of capitalism.

This means that you can't define capitalism as a pure or closed system, either in the sense advanced by some versions of neo-liberalism or in that advanced by some versions of Marxism. It means that when a new possibility or crisis is on the horizon, you often must experiment to ascertain where and how to engage it. It never occurred to Marx, Keynes or Milton Friedman, for instance, to explore the relation between capitalism and climate. That is fair enough, except for Friedman who wrote after that issue had been posed. But to the extent each appreciated the relatively open, incomplete and system-interfolded character of capitalism in a world of becoming followers of each could have looked earlier in this direction. Connectionism, open systems of multiple sorts, and a world of becoming all help to define each other. Capitalism is exempt from none of them.

## Immanence and transcendence

I confess the philosophy/faith of immanent naturalism. It includes the themes of connectionism, open systems, and becoming. To affirm immanence is to

confess the faith/conviction that the evolution of every system in the world and the interconnections between them, occur without the hand, intervention or guidance of a divinity. This is one of the junctures at which complexity theory and the cultural philosophies of Nietzsche, Freud, Foucault, and Deleuze have much to say to each other, with each party apt to change in some respects as it encounters the others.

But what about transcendence? An immanent naturalist accepts what I call "mundane transcendence", the idea that multiple forces of various types impinge upon a moving system from the outside. These forces are sometimes transcendent in the sense that they come from elsewhere, are not always identifiable before their arrival, and, sometimes, are not readily isolable once they become infused into the actuality examined. That carries a philosophy of immanence closer to the idea of transcendence. But it leaves us outside the spell of the Transcendent.

Have we proven immanent naturalism? No. Various arguments, experiences and experiments can testify on its behalf. But to prove it we would have to prove the impossibility of the Transcendent. Most immanent naturalists, as I read and commune with them, think it unlikely either that we will prove our philosophy definitively to those who embrace the Transcendent or that they will do so to us. New events and arguments may conjoin in impressive ways to put pressure on this or that version of either. Who, for instance, anticipated complexity theory in the seventeenth century (unless Newton's experiments with alchemy provided a dark anticipation?). And new conversions may occur in either direction. But proof seems unlikely. Immanence and the Transcendent may be two essentially contestable existential stances    two modes of argument infused with faith    with each housing numerous variations within it. At least that seems to have been so to this "point" in time.

The most noble and important thing to do under such circumstances is to pursue alliances with carriers of the Transcendent who also care profoundly about the earth, pluralism, and equality. Within theo-philosophies of the Transcendent there are numerous candidates for such modes of connection. Among Euro-American intellectuals, Charles Taylor, Fred Dallmayr, William James, Catherine Keller, Hent de Vries, and many others testify on behalf of such possibilities. Thinkers such as Veena Das, exploring the links between Hindu thought and Wittgensteinian philosophy, do so as well. Most concede that they, too, are so far unable to prove faith in the Transcendent to those who confess a different creed and they seek alliances across these lines of difference. Advocates on both sides have dropped the conceit in which philosophy is nothing unless it provides a set of sufficient arguments on behalf of one system.

In everyday life such alliances may become more possible as well. Young evangelicals in America have recently begun to shift from the closures of the older generation and a larger number of evangelicals of all ages now pay attention to the issues of global warming and inequality. There are also pregnant signs with respect to Islam and Catholicism. Many Catholic leaders

have renewed a commitment to economic equality and the power of Al Qaeda could wane as the policies of Euro-American regimes change.

A political resonance machine appropriate to the urgency of today will be composed of multiple constituencies from several subject positions including class, race, age, faith, and region, who seek to amplify gratitude for being in their own faiths and to address pressing issues of the day. It will put internal and external pressure upon states and international organizations at the same time. To see the acceleration of pace, the globalization of contingency, and the veritable minoritization of the world as defining marks of our time is to discern why such an assemblage is needed.

## Notes

1 Here is what I said about the issue in a recent book:

> To expose and counter the politics of existential revenge and extreme entitle ment does not mean that you demean specific economic grievances, resent ments and energies that propel positive democratic energies forward. To do so would be to embrace a spurious intellectualism that ignores the incorrigible role of passion in religious practice, economic activity, political struggle and individual thinking. The target is the congealed practice of *ressentiment*, not every mode of resentment.
>
> (Connolly, 2008: 57)

2 Someone will say, "But this shows that time is progressive, since those concepts are better than the ones which preceded them." Not quite. The introduction of new concepts and experiments does throw some old ones into crisis. One set of advo cates had extrapolated the progress of science in one way. And now we do so in another way. But in doing so we may draw upon concepts and philosophies that had been dumped under the old conception of progress. Hesiod, Lucretius and Spinoza would be excellent candidates here, suddenly becoming shining points rather than dead figures. And we now project forward along a changed path. When the next crisis comes, the recent extrapolation will shift again. This suggests to me the need for a "double entry orientation" to time where you admit that you extra polate the assumption of a new path of progress forward during each new con solidation but that this extrapolation itself may be twisted and turned at a later date. This likelihood itself suggests time is becoming, and that each new break in temporal experience will demand new modes of creativity in ethical judgment, political priority and the like. To say that time is *irreversible* is not equivalent to saying that it corresponds to an intrinsic line of *progress* or that the temporal horizon is in principle closed. This issue is discussed in Chapter 4 of *Pluralism*.

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