FROM DELIBERATION TO DIALOGUE: THE ROLE OF THE I-THOU IN

DEMOCRATIC EXPERIENCE

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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This dissertation argues for a dialogic grounding for deliberative democracy. Building on Habermasian theories of communication and discourse, deliberative democrats think better (more just, fair, and rational) democratic politics is possible because communication itself (in whatever form it takes) provides the legitimate mechanism for the transformation of citizens' opinions and political will. However, this is a problematic foundation for unleashing the normative potential inherent in citizen engagement. There are good reasons to suspect that a politics based in rational communication cannot actually produce the kinds of changes deliberativists insist are possible. Practical limitations of scale and scope make deliberative democracy difficult to envision. And the Habermasian claim about the inherent rationality in communication is challenged by postmodern notions of language and by conceptions of the embodied processes of reasoning. However, there is another normative foundation hinted at within the deliberative literature. Some theorists gesture toward a theory of transformation rooted more directly in the experiences associated with interpersonal relations, rather than in the language that is exchanged within these interactions.

Following this lead, I turn to the work of Martin Buber to outline a dialogic theory that can better explain the intuitive sense that when citizens meet and speak, they are (at

least potentially) opened up to new understandings. This theory, based in Buber's "I-Thou relation" and conception of "genuine dialogue," offers an account of the phenomenon located in an interpersonal relation of a particular type in which partners in dialogue are opened up to one another. I argue that a politics rooted in this dialogic experience provides a better account of the transformative potential in citizen engagement. Building on this new orientation towards dialogue, I then demonstrate some practical institutional innovations that are well equipped to take advantage of a politics anchored in dialogue. Along these lines, the dissertation culminates in a discussion of the Restorative Listening Project in Portland, Oregon, where dialogic meeting was a central focus of the institution's efforts to deal with the problem of gentrification in the city's NE neighborhoods.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The argument in this dissertation unfolds, bit by bit, over the course of 4 chapters. As such, I think it will be helpful to offer an introduction that lays out clearly what this project is aiming to accomplish. In one sentence: this project is about bringing a Buberian theory of dialogue to bear on deliberative democratic politics. Allow me to explain further.

Few outside the academy offer much hope for political discourse as a means to more just and fair democratic procedures. We live in an increasingly polarized age, so the story goes. And the possibility that we might bridge our differences and solve common problems by meeting and speaking to one another is often dismissed as utopian. But over the last 20 years, the deliberative democrats have invested a great deal of energy in a project with exactly these hopes. Unlikely as it may seem, I believe that they have more than a plausible defense of this hope. For one, some deliberative institutional designs have shown encouraging results for overcoming deep polarization and disrespect. Not always, of course, but sometimes. Successful results from Deliberative Opinion Polls, Citizens' Juries, and local community dialogue projects across the country suggest that when people meet and speak, they can truly find their opinions and wills transformed.[1] Direct engagement between citizens seems to have real potential to overcome the divides that fuel our pessimism.

That is why I want to put myself, broadly speaking, in league with the deliberativists. I share with many deliberative theorists the intuitive sense that meeting

and speaking to other citizens has real, tangible benefits to our democracy. But it becomes more difficult to side with deliberativists when their theoretical project is more closely examined. Whereas deliberation in practice often looks promising, deliberation in theory disappoints in a few key ways. It is hard to find a strong link between what the theory of deliberation suggests is at the base of the transformative possibilities of discourse (in particular, rational communication) and what our experiences of 'on the ground' deliberation are like. The first chapter tries to detail this normative core of deliberative theory and why it ultimately fails to give us a good account of the normative potential that exists in citizens' engagement with one another.

The normative possibilities inherent in deliberation are connected to the possibility of legitimate personal transformation. A process of deliberation (which produces such changes) makes democracy better – more fair and more just. And the core of the deliberative theory places the possibility for transformation squarely on the work that the process of rational communication can accomplish. This gets stated in a variety of ways, if it gets stated at all (often it is simply not spelled out). But the upshot is almost universally the same: it is through the nature of the communication itself, that is, through rational exchange (or something approximating it) that we can improve democracy by providing a legitimate mechanism for transforming opinions and wills of citizens towards these better ends. This is a Habermasian foundation, though as I lay out in the first chapter, it comes from a particular reading of Habermas that draws most heavily on his work on discourse ethics. I remain open to the possibility that Habermas might have been taken in a different direction. In fact, subsequent chapters of this project could, I think, be reframed as being fully in line with the spirit of Habermas's overall project (although this

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would be to discount the direction he himself took towards a further development of rational processes of communication for "discursive" democracy). However, the particular Habermasian foundation of a rational process of communication has not heretofore been challenged.

The second chapter works through Habermas and the dominant "uptake" of his project in order to lay bare its normative core. I then conclude the chapter with a critical treatment of this normative core along two lines. First, there are practical critiques that put into question the workability of this normative core of rational exchange for contemporary democracy. These criticisms do not question the plausibility of this transformative possibility located in communication of the right sort, per se. Rather, difficulties in instituting deliberation, or the limitations of particular conceptions of what counts as proper deliberation make the model inherently limited. Deliberativists have offered a number of responses to this line of critique (the expansion of 'allowable' communicative types, institutional innovations to produce more inclusive debate, etc.). But the thrust of the critiques remain. Retaining a normative core of rational communication means constantly having to reconsider the boundaries of what properly rational communication looks like and how the procedures for putting it in the service of better democracy are to take shape. Second, there are what I term 'ontological' critiques of deliberative democracy that get at the heart of what makes the deliberative project work – the very possibility that through communication with one another we might unleash a more just, fair, and rational politics. On these accounts, language and communication are either antithetical to 'better' outcomes, or are at least limited in their ability to cut through complicated brain/body processes of reasoning, limiting any hope

for beneficial transformation for deliberating citizens. These are the more difficult criticisms, I argue, because they are not simply addressed by creative institutional designs, or more expansive notions of communication that can count as deliberative. Instead, the very possibility of better democracy through engagement is questioned, and the intuition that there is value in the meeting and speaking together of citizens is put into serious doubt.

But this critical chapter is followed by a return to Habermas and the deliberative literature to look for an alternative account of the normative value of citizen engagement that is different from this usual tie to rational communication. To do this I first explore a critique of Habermas by Axel Honneth that suggests locating normative possibilities in interpersonal relations in particular (versus the nature of communication that unfolds in these interactions). When we begin to look at these relations themselves, we may see a different normative foundation for the kinds of transformations necessary for a deliberative democratic project to work. Indeed, I think several deliberative theorists have gestured toward just such a possibility. The third chapter discusses four such theorists: Nancy Fraser, Iris Young, Jane Mansbridge, and James Fishkin. Each of these theorists have pointed, although without a clear theory to guide them, to something that looks closer to creating opportunities for dialogue than it does relying on rational communication. Fraser's efforts point to the construction of spaces within the public sphere where one can speak and be heard in one's own idiom and style. Such spaces are meant to secure a kind of deliberation that does not only operate through exclusionary (white, masculinist) language and style. It is, I argue, a call for spaces that facilitate meaningful connection between partners in communication, not simply rational give and

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take of information and/or arguments. Similarly, Iris Young (despite her criticisms of face-to-face politics) gestures towards the importance of expansive types of communication and the creation of spaces for meaningful interpersonal interaction in her own contributions to democratic theory. Jane Mansbridge discusses the importance of "everyday" talk as a means to facilitating better deliberation through the decidedly non-deliberative interactions that happen (say, between two friends in a hallway) outside of the formal deliberative arena. These conversations can be impactful exactly because they unfold in a direct, unreserved way that is otherwise restricted by the requirements of formal deliberation. Finally, James Fishkin has shown that his Deliberative Opinion Polls produce the most significant change of opinions in the small-group discussion portion. In a response to some critics, Fishkin provided anecdotes of moments of meeting between participants that had immense impact on particular participants and facilitated the transformation of their opinions and wills. As such, even in these quite purposefully designed institutions, the most transformative potential resides in the particular meetings and interactions between participants face-to-face with one another.

All of these point to an interpersonal interaction that is communicative, and yet is also about something more clearly related to a space for a meaningful relation between speaker and hearer to unfold. I argue that this is a dialogic theory of transformation, far more than a deliberative one. The transformative potential in these particular sorts of relations seem to be doing a great deal of work for these theorists (while deliberation, properly speaking, is not). But they have not sufficiently traced out what work in particular, and how or why it benefits democracy (through better deliberation or otherwise). Thus I rely on them only to show that a space has already been opened up for

a theory of dialogue to serve as a normative foundation for a democratic politics. The fourth chapter, then, provides this foundation through the work of Martin Buber.

The fourth chapter has two major things to accomplish. First, because Martin Buber has been unfortunately absent from the democratic theory literature (and political theory literature more broadly), the chapter seeks to introduce his work and point out its relevance to the deliberative democratic literature. This requires some background and a careful treatment of some of his works on dialogue. But more than this, I seek to utilize Buber's theory of dialogue (as presented in his *I and Thou* and in later works under the label of "genuine dialogue") as a normative foundation for democratic politics based in citizen engagement. Allow me to run through this argument briefly, though it will invariably be a bit vague outside of the discussion that unfolds within that chapter.

The most important element of Buber's dialogic theory for my purposes is that it is a phenomenological account of the relation between two (or more) interlocutors. This is a crucial contrast with the Habermasian-influenced deliberative theory where the medium of language itself contains the transformative possibilities "in between" two interlocutors, properly oriented towards reaching understanding. With Buber we get an account of the phenomenon of this turning towards one another that explains our being opened up to transformation through our co-participation with this particular other, rather than remove the transformative potential to the medium of language used "correctly." When we are turned towards an other as a Thou, in their fullness, rather than as some collection of Its (particular qualities), we put ourselves in reciprocal relation to this other. And, if they are similarly turned towards us, a space is opened up between us that becomes constitutive of each of us going forward. That is, the turning itself becomes the

prerequisite for potential transformation through engagement. The very presence of the other becomes a potential catalyst for change apart from what is said (though what is said will still very often matter in this dialogic turning, to be sure). It is an account that better fits that feeling we have of being "moved" by an interaction to new considerations about ourselves, others, and the world. As such, I argue a politics "anchored in dialogue" is a better normative foundation than a politics rooted in particular sorts of communication apart from this relation.

I argue that this move away from practices of communication toward a phenomenal experience of dialogue has five principle advantages for deliberative democracy over the typical Habermasian orientation: it escapes an over-reliance on communication in favor of something within our experience; it gives an account of "fruitfulness" (potential for transformation through interpersonal interaction) with or without deliberation; it better understands the significance of otherness in a particular way – this other here before me, rather than a generalized other holding a argument to which I respond; it holds mutual recognition between partners as central to the very experience of being in a dialogue and makes that central to the very act of turning towards this other; and finally, it better explains the nature of reciprocity and mutuality from within such a relation (and how it functions to open us up to transformation), as opposed to assuming that these are features inherent in particular kinds of communication.

These advantages get spelled out in more detail in the fourth chapter. But they are all a function of a reorientation towards the shared experience of dialogic relation – an I-Thou experience between partners – rather than a product of rational language use. I

finish this chapter by discussing the criticisms of the typical normative core of deliberation (practical and ontological), judging dialogue to fare at least as well on the practical criticisms and better in relation to the ontological criticisms. I also acknowledge some concerns inherent in this turn towards dialogue. Notably, the spontaneous nature of I-Thou relation (or, at least the lack of guarantee of its occurrence) means that there lacks the normative certainty one could have if they trusted in the inherent rationality of communication used properly. Of course, I do not actually think deliberation can deliver on any guarantee in the first place, making this less worrisome than it may appear. Further, it is also possible that bringing people into direct contact will worsen relations. But so it is for deliberation, traditionally conceived. Finally, there is a concern that a turn towards dialogue is, in effect, a turn towards small-scale, face-to-face (read: the wrong scale for complex de-centered modern democracies) politics. But this objection is drastically overstated. The deliberativists already have an answer to this objection (in terms of the link-up between mini-publics and the larger public), and there is much that can be done in terms of institutional arrangements to facilitate the link between small-scale, face-to-face politics and "larger" democratic politics. But this will look somewhat different when a politics anchored in dialogue is considered rather than a typical deliberative politics. Sorting out what sort of institutional arrangements make sense for a politics anchored in dialogue is the work of the fifth chapter.

In many ways, the fifth chapter begins with a similar observation as the third – that dialogue is already an implicitly relied upon by deliberative theorists. There has been an intuitive sense by those interested in deliberation "on the ground" that there is great value in putting people into direct contact with only basic ground rules to facilitate

successful deliberation. Thus many institutional designs already incorporate the insights

of a dialogic theory, even if they have arrived there as a matter of practicality. People are

more open to personal transformation when confronted directly with the presence of an

other. As such, good deliberation seems to require building in such opportunities for

small groups where direct engagement (and, I argue, the potential for dialogic relations)

is increased. All the better for a dialogic theory of politics to see that it has already been

effectively put into practice. In addition, there have been some institutional designs that

do not fit within the designs typically associated with the deliberative literature, and yet

are still politically valuable designs.

By way of an example of the value of a non-deliberative institutional

arrangement, I conclude by examining an institution designed to deal with racialized

tensions in NE Portland stemming from a process of gentrification. The Restorative

Listening Project was designed with the principles of restorative justice (like those

utilized by Truth and Reconciliation Committees, such as the one in South Africa) in

mind. It was not constructed to produce specific policy regarding gentrification. Instead,

it was organized around an opportunity for local African-American residents to express

the harms they had experienced as a result of the drastic changes being wrought in their

neighborhoods and communities. The audiences were asked largely to listen, but were

also given opportunities to ask questions or make comments. They were also given space

in small groups after the presentations to reflect on what they had heard. The meetings

were held regularly by the city and facilitated by three organizers. Occasionally "experts"

on gentrification and/or the history of Portland's most affected (Northeast)

neighborhoods made presentations. But most often it was community members

themselves who shared their stories. Audiences were usually predominately white – that is, the gentrifiers in question. And deliberation in any formal sense was discouraged (for instance, no calling into question the "truth" of anyone's particular story). But small-scaled as it was, the meetings had a great deal of politically significant impact for the community in question. A number of testimonials and reflections about the process indicated that a meaningful exchange had occurred in the spaces provided, especially (though not exclusively) with some of the white audience members. Personal transformation of the sort deliberativists rely on occurred through these meetings (to new ways of understanding the problems in the community and the impact of gentrification on their neighbors), but without any deliberative give-and-take between participants being required. Instead, I argue, the design of the Restorative Listening Project itself facilitated spaces in which dialogic relations could be entered into by (some of) the participants. Deliberativists have always had a plausible story about how these small-scale transformations can then coalesce into larger political changes. The shift in opinions and wills become the foundation for larger political movements as public opinion is altered, barriers to change are eroded, and desires for new policies gather steam. But none of this is possible until some mechanism for transformation is unleashed. Dialogue, through institutions like the Restorative Listening Project, is capable of facilitating just this sort of inertia towards collectively solving complicated and difficult social problems.

If I may be so bold, I hope this project is capable of at least opening up contemporary discourse on democracy to the importance of the experience of dialogue. Further, as the case of the Restorative Listening Project shows, this experience can have practical impact on contemporary democracy through institutional designs capable of

creating the conditions of possibility for dialogic meeting. Finally, I would also count it a

success if Martin Buber were considered an exciting resource for thinking about

democratic experience and the possibility of meaningful democratic participation for

future scholars. In any case, any success associated with this project will (of course) be

up to the readers.

Notes

[1] I will not belabor the point here, as I treat these in more detail in chapter 5. But for an excellent collection of promising deliberative designs see: Gastil and Levine, eds., *The Deliberative Democracy Handbook*, (San Francisco: Wiley and Sons, 2005); see also: Archon Fung, *Empowered Participation: Reinventing Urban Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

CHAPTER II

THE HABERMASIAN FOUNDATIONS OF DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

This chapter is concerned with deliberative democratic theory. It has two principal aims. First I want to argue that deliberative democratic theory is attached to a particular normative claim about the progressive possibilities inherent in rational communication. Rational communication (most often understood in terms of public argumentation) is the means by which legitimate transformation can be produced. Citizens can be brought to new (and better) understandings, opinions, and political will through the communicative interaction with other citizens, which in turn improves the quality of democracy. This normative claim is rooted in Habermas's writings, of course, though as I will show it comes from a particular reading of Habermas with a heavy emphasis on his discourse ethics. The deliberative project might have proceeded along different lines (this will be explored further in chapter two). But this core of rational communication as a means of producing personal transformation has remained central to deliberative theory despite its varied presentations and developments over the last 25 years – and despite many authors claiming to have distanced themselves from Habermas. However the theory gets spelled out in particular, deliberative democracy depends on the results that communication of the 'right sort' is able to produce in the citizens themselves.

The second aim of this chapter is more directly critical. I argue that this normative foundation of rational communication does not offer a compelling account of the kind of personal transformation that deliberative democracy requires. I offer two types of criticisms. One is concerned with the practical realization of a deliberative politics in

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various ways, though the possibility is left open that there might be real democratic benefits from rational communication in some form or other. More damning are what I call 'ontological' critiques, which bring into question the very possibility that rational communication can produce beneficial transformations in individuals in the first place.

The overall goal of this chapter, then, is to demonstrate a central, but problematic, tenet of deliberative theory in order to make clear the need for a different normative foundation for a democratic politics rooted in the engagement of citizens with one another. I will argue that this alternative foundation is a dialogic one. But for now I will restrict my discussion to deliberative theory as it is typically presented and understood.

The Normative Core of Deliberative Democracy

After a so-called "deliberative turn" in the democracy literature of the 1990's, deliberative democratic theory has become a juggernaut in the field.[1] Its adherents have multiplied (as have its critics). Its literature has grown voluminous. This rapid development has seen its terms, assumptions, and normative aspirations seep increasingly into the "real world" of institutions and governance. Thus according to many, deliberative democracy has undergone a turn of its own towards empirics and practical institutionalization.[2] At least one commentator has suggested that three fully distinct generations of deliberative democratic literature exist, moving from a debate about normative foundations and abstract theory, to theories concerned with workability in modern democracy, to an effort to work the theory into actual democratic institutions and practice.[3] And all of this has happened in the relatively short period of about 25 years.

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This ever expanding body of work makes it difficult to give a single definition of the model. But despite the size and breadth of the literature, I think a central set of features have emerged from the field. A general definition might run as such:

Democracy is better (more just, legitimate, fair, effective) when it is connected as closely as possible to robust engagement by its citizenry (including elected officials) in processes of argumentation and debate about matters of public concern. As such, these (more or less ideal) processes of public debate should be connected directly and/or indirectly (depending on the theory) to state institutions with decision-making capacity.

There are differences between particular articulations of the deliberative model that matter, of course. And I do not mean to pave over these important distinctions. But here I am more interested in something they all share: a normative core of rational communicative exchange. This is a Habermasian foundation that accords transcendent, emancipatory potential through language use in certain kinds of communicative interactions. It is my claim that every account of deliberative democracy builds from this foundational assumption. Many are explicit about this; others only tacitly accept it. And some seem to offer arguments against a normative orientation towards communication (especially in the guise of reason and argumentation), but then offer no alternative sources for the normative potential in their deliberative theories. This is in part because they do not seem to have a better argument as to why our deliberations with one another can be thought to improve democracy, though they seem to remain committed to the hope that they can. The normative core comes down to the same thing in the end: the power of

the right kind of communication to change opinions, shape worldviews, produce mutual understanding, enlighten, bridge gaps of difference, etc., etc.

The most common articulation of this normative core is in terms of "public reason." Public arguments backed with reasons (in whatever form they actually take) are the "transformative engine" for these democratic accounts. They are the things that broaden understandings, change minds, and shape wills. Public arguments unleash reason (which makes democracy better) because participants in debates must defend positions with claims that others might be influenced by. Thus the 'unforced force of the better argument' is allowed to do its work. And better arguments equal better dissemination of information, knowledge, and understanding as the basis for legitimately directed political power. As James Bohman understands it, "The deliberative process forces citizens to justify their decisions and opinions by appealing to common interests or by arguing in terms of reasons that 'all could accept' in public debate … such a conception of democracy presupposes an account of how the *process* of public deliberation makes the reasons for a decision more rational and its outcomes more fair."[4]

Some deliberative theorists have tried to move beyond this original understanding of public reason. But, I argue, their account of the transformative potential of deliberation remains tied to the same foundation of rational communication. In order to ground this claim more thoroughly, I turn now to a treatment of Habermas's work and the uptake of his arguments into the deliberative literature. This is in order to show what this normative reliance on rational communication is based in, and how it was converted into the central normative claim of the deliberative democratic model. Following this, I will discuss some more contemporary versions of deliberative democracy that ultimately demonstrate the

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same reliance on rational communication, as well as some key central components to deliberative theory that depend entirely upon this normative core. And, again, all of this will lead up to the critical section that takes on this normative core.

The Habermasian Foundation of Deliberative Democracy

Three central features of Habermas's overall project have provided much of the foundation for models of deliberative democracy – his theory of communicative action and communicative rationality, his moral theory (discourse ethics), and his work on the public sphere. These are all crucial to understanding the normative possibilities inherent in rational communication between citizens – and thus the normative core of deliberative democracy. His work on moral theory and the public sphere were especially foundational to envisioning an ideal procedure by which communication could be relied upon for the benefit of democratic politics. But communicative action was a necessary first step to this project, though it would (for most deliberative democrats) remain a background condition for the theory of moral argumentation that Habermas developed later.

The Theory of Communicative Action appeared in two volumes in 1984 and 1987. The work marked the first full exposition of Habermas's "linguistic turn." It was an attempt to place communicative reason at the core of human social relations. Broadly, the work had three aims: to defend a concept of reason that was not limited to the individual subject (as was the typical rationality of the Cartesian ego so common to liberal thinking); to give a theory of society that took into account both the "lifeworld" and "system" perspectives (not one or the other); and, finally, to develop a critical theory

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against this background that could resist the abandonment of the Enlightenment project.[5] But it was his rehabilitation of reason away from its usual Enlightenment-inspired articulations that would most profoundly and directly impact deliberative theorists by opening up a space for (once again) trusting in reason's progressive potential, and emphasizing the potential for personal transformation through cooperative communicative interactions – though in the eyes of many deliberativists it could not yet be applied to a democratic politics in any direct way.[6]

For Habermas, language represents the medium of our cooperative action as social creatures. In order to do anything in concert, we must first rely on communication through language to establish a ground of common understanding – a shared action situation. Simply put, this particular effort of one or more people to establish mutual understanding through language is communicative action. Habermas more formally defines communicative action as "the interaction of at least two subjects capable of speech and action who establish interpersonal relations (whether by verbal or extra-verbal means)," where the actors "seek to reach an understanding about the action situation and their plans of action in order to coordinate their actions by way of agreement."[7] For now, I want to set aside the element of this definition that points to something about interpersonal relations, even though these appear foundational for the linguistic exchange that follows. Despite his seeming to put some weight on this establishment of interpersonal relations, Habermas is primarily concerned with the linguistic exchange toward reaching understanding that ensues in this relation. And he thinks this exchange follows some particular rules – unavoidable presuppositions – whether we are aware of it in our actual communicative practice or not.

Communication with others towards mutual understanding requires the making of criticizable "validity claims." When we claim a truth about the world, an appropriateness or rightness of a social norm, an honest self-expression, and so on, we insist that what we say is valid and worthy of agreement by our partner in conversation. Though, of course, they may or may not agree with our assertion. As Habermas puts it, validity claims require our interlocutor to take "yes or no positions." "Yes" responses are usually implicit and unacknowledged. With them the conversation can move on based on an already achieved shared understanding. But "No" responses produce the requirement that our claims be defended with reasons if we are to achieve the mutual understanding we are seeking (again, in order to cooperate together going forward). Of course, this process is often largely unexpressed. Further, in saying "yes or no" we have often thought through (and have sufficient competency to do this) the possible reasons one could have for offering a particular validity claim and assessing them according to our own understandings, and all of this simultaneously along (at least) three "dimensions" (is the claim objectively true? normatively appropriate? personally sincere?). But, upon a "No" response (on whatever grounds), an actual exchange of reasons, clarifications, and/or revisions can ensue, with the eventual mutual acceptance of claims, their alteration, or their outright rejection, depending on the "force" of the reasons offered. That is, the rationality of the position according to good reasons acceptable to both (or all) interlocutors.

Of course, we could undertake other means to get agreement – force or deception, for instance. But these means, Habermas argues, are parasitic on communicative action. After all, without the presumption that good reasons are backing up claims, deception

would fail as deception. In fact, it is key to his critical theory to understand that these distortions of otherwise "natural" functioning of communicative reason are increasingly a consequence of modern social pathologies – the distorting impact of power and money in modern late capitalist society.

This process of reaching understanding through rational exchange does a great deal of work for Habermas beyond the simple sorting out of particular "action situations." Intersubjective language use is the mechanism underlying entire processes of socialization – the production and re-production of the lifeworld. The lifeworld exists as an always already there store of socialized knowledge and understanding that structures (and is structured) by our communicative interactions. Since all these elements of our lifeworld are symbolically (that is, linguistically) structured, they are produced and reproduced intersubjectively through communication. As Habermas understands it the lifeworld appears as, "a reservoir of taken-for-granteds, or unshaken convictions that participants in communication draw upon in cooperative processes of interpretation."[8] This common pool of resources provide much of the foundation for communicative exchange (the unarticulated "yes" answers that pass by without open contestation). But given a particular situation, elements of the lifeworld may emerge as themes of the conversation, especially when there is disagreement between some content of the lifeworld of particular participants. At base, then, communicative action simultaneously relies on and shapes our orientation in the world by way of the resources of the lifeworld. Or, ideally at least, it should. Contemporary times (and the rise of functional/strategic rationality) puts our ability to communicate freely towards mutual understanding in serious jeopardy.

This work provided deliberativists with a form of intersubjective rationality based in language. This form of rationality (really, a process of producing rationally defensible outcomes) had progressive potentials that did not fall prey (in the same way as the instrumental rationality usually considered) to late modern/post modern criticisms. Further, they could attach this notion of intersubjective reason through communication to the very process of social cooperation we could already observe – however abstract Habermas's treatment of it tended to be. But it was at least plausibly 'there' in our cooperative interactions. There is intuitive power to the idea that language and communication can do some of the things Habermas claimed. People do sometimes change their worldviews when presented with compelling alternatives, and socialization processes are transmitted through communicative interactions (at least at some level).

Habermas's later essay on discourse ethics was an expansion of these basic arguments about communicative rationality. In this project, he enters into an existing debate over moral foundations, armed with the belief that communicative rationality held for moral utterances as well as any other validity claim. That is, when we ask 'What ought I do?' the answers are not arbitrary, but are claims that can be defended with reasons. Moral claims require a particular sort of defense, however. Just as statements about the objective world, about social norms, or about self presentation all require different kinds of arguments particular to the claims they make (claims to truth, rightness, or truthfulness), moral arguments require a defense that speaks to their universal nature as rules that apply generally and equally to all.

Habermas thinks that the most fruitful place to look for a rule governing appropriate defenses of moral claims is the Kantian categorical imperative – not its

content per se, but its notion of an impartial, general character of a moral rule: "The moral principle is so conceived as to exclude as invalid any norm that could not meet with the qualified assent of all who are or might be affected by it."[9] But Kant's articulation of the universal nature tended to cause him to mistake individual reasoning ability for that of any and every other person. This is the rationality embodied in the individual subject that Habermas has worked so hard to defeat with his intersubjective (communicative) rationality. Thus two principles are necessary for moral argumentation, one that appeals to this principle of universality, and another to appeal to the need for actual processes of discourse to defend some moral claim or other. The universalization principle (U) says:

> *All* affected can accept the consequences and the side effects [that] its *general* observance can be anticipated to have for the satisfaction of *everyone's* interests (and these consequences are preferred to those of known alternative possibilities for regulation).[10]

The second principle, the discourse principle (D), then puts those moral arguments thought to satisfy this form into actual discourse for validation. It reads:

> Only those norms can claim to be valid that meet (or could meet) with the approval of all affected in their capacity *as participants in a practical discourse.*[11]

The first principle exists as an "argumentation rule" that satisfies Kant's intuition about moral rules, but does so with an awareness that any claim fitting this form must still be circulated and defended in a practical discourse, as required by the second principle. As such, the first principle is built upon a bedrock of intersubjective reason before any actual discourse must commence. That is, a set of "unavoidable presuppositions" ground its satisfaction unless one wants to slip into preformative contractions.[12] For a principle to satisfy U, something like the following conditions must be (hypothetically) met: no one may be excluded or limited in fully participating (unconstrained opportunity to argue, express interests/needs/desires, etc) in the discourse that would justify such a moral norm.[13] Meeting this criteria means having a legitimate moral norm to offer. Thinking through these intersubjective requirements can be fulfilled by Habermas's ideal speech situation abstraction (where one is supposed to envision themselves in an ideal discourse that meets all the normative requirements), though he was less inclined to rely on this idealization for the confusion it created in seeming like a Rawlsian-like abstraction not requiring any further work. After all, 'further work' towards validity was exactly what a practical discourse was meant, in principle, to achieve.

These abstract principles are clearly central to the normative claim that communication, properly unleashed, can produce better democracy. After all, many argued that making better policy requires arguments pitched at the same general, universal level as moral claims. That is, they need to hold for "all possibly affected." This is a level 'big enough' for contemporary democracies. Thus (and as we shall see momentarily) early statements of deliberative theory often cited the ideal speech situation

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and the universalizing potential inherent in public reason (modeled on the U and D principles) as justifying a faith in the procedure of public argumentation.

Interestingly, Habermas's own understanding of the uncertain processes of the practical discourses themselves often received less attention by these same early deliberative theorists. Practical discourses are an imperfect, messy procedure by which normative claims (in this case moral claims, though also others) are "tested for validity." That is, it is the process of discussion and debate carried out by individuals within concrete time, space, and within specific social-cultural settings. In these discourses an orientation towards mutual understanding seems to be presumed by Habermas and the deliberativists that follow him. This is because, ideally, communicative action is the means by which these discourses are moved towards consensus. But, in actual practice a great deal of 'other things' can disrupt the process towards a hypothetical consensus of each and every member of the communication community. For instance, such discourses about moral matters cannot be separated from "two other forms of argumentation: aesthetic and therapeutic criticism," which by their nature are not resolvable via the same rationally motivated agreements other sorts of arguments (like moral arguments) can.[14] Further, arguments about moral norms run up against "the balance of relations of intersubjective recognition" that structure a given society – what Honneth will later call the "recognition order." In general, then, Habermas understands that in practice moral discourses are always directed against a host of "settled" social dynamics and power relations. Still, Habermas, and the deliberativists that draw from him, remain committed to the real possibility that moral discourses can transcend situated claims about culture or dominant ways of life to thematize appropriate matters from the "moral point of view."

One thing worth noting here for understanding deliberative uptake of Habermas is the shift from the broader story about communicative action in more immediate relations to a story about the settling of certain sorts of principles in much larger, impersonal contexts.[15] All potentially affected, in fact. This reduced, in a sense, the scope of topics for which consensus-driven communication could tackle – only those admitting of something defensible on universal grounds. Of course, the ability to give a good defense of communicatively justifiable moral norms with universal application is close in spirit to how public policy (which must apply equally to all) might ideally be defended. However, this turn towards universal reasoning and consensus made many democratic theorists uncomfortable. To address this, many imagined various theoretical amendments to weaken these requirements of consensus and universal reason (I will discuss this further below). But even these projects depended, ultimately, on this procedure of rational communication ('discourse') among citizens. Thus, the possibility of transformation through citizen engagement became firmly entrenched in deliberative theory in all its varieties, with the debate being about how universal, or how strong claims to consensus should be – or, in other words what reasons/arguments should 'count' in the process through which citizens could be brought to new and better understandings.

Finally, these rather abstract insights were given an empirical root in Habermas's work on the public sphere.[16] In this work, Habermas sought a source for the political and social transformations of early modernity in the West. And before he had a theory of language to explain in detail "how" this change could have been brought about, he uncovered a "where" and something of a "why." He located it in the use of public reason unleashed in the emerging bourgeois public sphere. It began as a literary public sphere,

but its resources were put to work on political matters regarding the common good. In salons and coffee houses, newspapers, letters and pamphlets, rational-critical debate on public matters emerged into a new means by which to motivate political action. As Habermas understands this historical phenomenon:

> The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor. The medium of the political confrontation was peculiar and without historical precedent: people's public use of their reason.[17]

Habermas was interested in showing the development of this new space for argumentation, its institutional forms, and its emergence as a space between private life and the state that could "steer" the state according to the interests of private citizens. For him, 18th century England was the model case, though France and Germany also developed comparable sites for rational-critical debate.

But for Habermas, this public sphere was in decline by the late 19th century. Its rational-critical functions displaced in late modern times by advertising and consumption of mass culture, as well as the changing relations between the state and private individuals in the age of the modern welfare state. There is hope for the public sphere, however, as the potential remained for the rational-critical public sphere to be reestablished (albeit in a different version and however unlikely) in Habermas's account.

Now, this "public use of reason" in the public sphere was just the sort of grounded example that made the abstract process of moral argumentation seem plausible to democratic theorists interested in Habermas's work. On scale alone, I think, this understanding of public reason led more easily to a discourse ethic interpretation than a

more basic communicative action one. During 18th and 19th centuries, the public sphere grew into a space where the aggregation of a process of public reason coalesced into something with political impact. This led to good arguments (and not, say, ascribed aristocratic status) being the basis for political action that would affect everyone in that society. Again, it was as 'big' as discourse ethics (affecting a whole society), rather than located in particular contexts of shared action situations among particular interlocutors (as with much of the discussion of communicative action). In effect, then, Habermas had provided a historical, empirical example grounding his theories of communication and (especially) discourse that demonstrated real political potential. And for hopeful democratic theorists this came along with a critical theoretic take offered in *Theory of Communicative Action* and echoed in *Structural Transformation* about the possibility of recovering communicative rationality *within* a properly functioning public sphere. All that was needed was to imagine the institutional and social reforms necessary and deliberation (with all its normative benefits) could be properly unleashed.

Allow me to briefly summarize the central Habermasian contributions to deliberative theory. First, Habermas offered a conception of rationality rooted in communication. His theory of communicative action pointed towards the normative possibilities inherent in communication oriented towards reaching understanding. Deliberativists had a sense that one could legitimately expect citizens engaging with one another to find their opinions and wills transformed through a communicative interaction with each other. This base of communicative rationality then informed Habermas's project of discourse ethics, where moral argumentation could undergo a process of justification such that particular moral principles could be sufficiently justified as to be

deemed valid by all affected by their adoption. This discursive procedure was at a scale worthy of politics and policy making, as it imagined an entire community participating in a collective process of validation. Finally, Habermas's work on the rational-critical functioning of the public sphere in early modernity gave an empirical grounding to these abstract notions of communication and discourse. Deliberative democrats could now argue that communication could produce real, large-scale political changes, given sufficiently free and fair communication between citizens about political matters. All of this was built around the normative idea that such communication between citizens had the ability to shape opinions and wills towards better democratic ends.

Let me turn, now, to the uptake of these central elements of Habermas as they proceeded in the literature. The point of showing this uptake is, again, to show how the normative core of deliberative democratic theory is rooted in these Habermasian arguments. The normative core identified above has remained central to deliberative democratic theory even as some have tried to take a critical stance towards these seminal works. That is, this initial uptake of a certain reading of Habermas has gone more or less unchallenged even in more recent contributions to the deliberative literature that appear to have advance beyond these initial formulations.

Deliberative Democracy and the Uptake of Habermas

There were two primary strains of deliberative theory in its initial stages, each of which relied on Habmeras's work to produce the normative possibilities of the models they offered. One strain was based in liberal theory that was concerned, in Rawlsian

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terms, with the fact of legitimate pluralism and reasonable disagreement about essential political matters. For these theorists, Habermas offered a practical, procedural approach for dealing with these difficulties that improved upon Rawlsian veil-of-ignorance abstractions. The second group were critical theorists who were more directly attached to a Habermasian program and the progressive possibilities therein for democracy (which Habermas himself had not spelled out as yet). From different directions, both secured the status of Habermasian claims about the normative potential inherent in rational communication in developing the deliberative democratic model.

The most notable of the liberal theorists was Joshua Cohen, who remains one of the most well-cited of the early deliberative theorists. Although Cohen understands his approach as growing from a Rawlsian orientation, I would argue that the normative hopes he places in this type of democracy are clearly Habermasian.[18] Cohen outlines an ideal procedure of deliberation where 4 assumptions are made:[19]

1) participants regard themselves as both bound by and capable of action in relation to the results of free deliberation amongst one another;

2) the parties to deliberation must rely on reasons and the unforced force of better arguments for making collective choices;

3) the participants are equal in standing and potential influence in deliberation;

4) the participants are aimed at a "rationally motivated consensus."

Here, of course, the Habermasian influence is clear. These statements share a great affinity with Habermas's ideal speech situation as it applies to moral discourse, and Cohen cites Habermas in defending this idealized process. In fact, commenting on his overlap with two other early deliberative democrats of liberal origin (Bernard Manin and

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Jon Elster), Cohen writes in a footnote that the overlap exists because they all three "draw on Habermas."[20] In general, those liberal theorists utilized Habmeras because they are committed (in liberal spirit) to the problem of securing the legitimacy of collective, democratic state action. As such, the desirable normative element inherent in deliberation lies in its movement towards rationally defensible outcomes of a deliberative process open to all. For these liberals, a democracy centered around public debate can attain legitimacy due to the inclusion of all in the deliberative process. But more than this, these authors (Cohen, Manin and Elster in particular) pointed to the process of deliberation itself as a means to produce something approaching (though perhaps never achieving) a universally agreed upon public will by transforming individual opinions and wills on the basis of good communicative reasons.

At the same time this move towards a discursive conception of liberal politics began to emerge, other writers from a perspective of critical theory were utilizing Habermas's work to articulate a deliberative politics. Among these authors, Seyla Benhabib and John Dryzek (both still being among the most widely cited of the deliberativists) are especially noteworthy.

To associate these authors with Habermas is hardly controversial. They both turn explicitly to Habermas in developing their democratic theories. But I want to highlight a few key elements of their respective theories because they have continued to influence more contemporary conceptions of deliberative democracy.

In a highly influential volume on democratic theory which she edited, Benhabib contributed an essay titled, "Toward a Deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy."

Here, the normative core found in the discourse ethics project had clearly and explicitly found its way into a theory of "deliberative democracy." She writes:

> According to the deliberative model of democracy, it is a necessary condition for attaining legitimacy and rationality with regard to collective decision making processes in a polity, that the institutions of this polity are so arranged that what is considered in the common interests of all results from processes of collective deliberation conducted rationally and fairly among free and equal individuals … The discourse model of ethics formulates the most *general principles* and *moral intuitions* behind the validity claims of a deliberative model of democracy. The basic idea behind this model is that only those norms (i.e., general rules of action and institutional arrangements) can be said to be valid (i.e., morally binding), which would be agreed to by all those affected by their consequences, if such agreement were reached as a consequence of a procedure of deliberation[.][21]

And beyond simply securing legitimacy based on the ideal of a free and fair discourse about the basic features of society, Benhabib also suggests that these processes of deliberation can secure a more rational politics. "According to the deliberative model, procedures of deliberation generate legitimacy as well as assure some degree of practical rationality" because "Deliberation is a procedure for being informed." And, "More significantly, the very procedure of articulating a view in public imposes a certain reflexivity on individual preferences and opinions … This process of *articulating good reasons in public* forces the individual to think … from the standpoint of all involved for whose agreement one is 'wooing.'"[22]

John Dryzek demonstrated similar influences in his effort to bring Habermas's work to bear on democratic theory by way of an overall appreciation of the Frankfurt School. Where Benhabib had unparalleled influence on the uptake of the abstract elements of Habermas's project into the democratic literature, Dryzek was central in giving these abstract theories some applications to institutional contexts. His 1990 work

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Discursive Democracy was among the early contributions to the "deliberative turn" and to the theory's eventual turn toward institutions and institutional design.[23]

After a sustained critique of instrumental rationality, Dryzek offers discursive – or communicative – rationality in its place as a means by which to propose a politics better suited to contemporary ills. And while Habermas is one several theorists who appear in this discussion, his place is central. Dryzek seeks to apply a vision of communicative rationality to "concrete political concerns," largely as extension fo Habermas's project, which at that time had failed to "develop anything that [met] the specifications of his theory."[24] As such, Dryzek seeks to apply discursive rationality to real institutions of democracy and the problems they confront in both the system and the lifeworld. He argues for the application of discursive democracy to "social problems (especially complex ones), political and policy-making institutions, policy analysis, and empirical political science" not in order to "defend the lifeworld against further colonization by the system but to conduct a counteroffensive by taking discursive rationality to the heart of the enemy's domain."[25]

From this point forward, Dryzek's book applies "discursive designs" to institutions and policy making (as well as the study of institutions and policy making) that rely on the "counterfactual of ideal speech," and the "authentic public sphere." Within institutions Dryzek saw great benefits in Habermasian concepts such as relying on authority based only in "the forceless force of the better argument," communicative competence among actors, non-exclusion of voices, etc.[26] But all of this with a practical orientation towards solving real, complex political challenges. This made Dryzek's work of particular importance to those seeking to apply the more idealized and abstract models

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of deliberative democracy to "real politics." And in drawing on Dryzek, they were, in effect, drawing on Habermasian notions of the normative possibilities built into rational discursive exchange.

The Continuing Influence of Habermas

As the deliberative democracy literature developed, many theorists purported to have moved away from the model's Habermasian foundations – to the extent they acknowledged these foundations at all. Some such as James Bohman attempted to move the abstract theory in to a more practical account of deliberation as it might actually unfold 'on the ground' between citizens. Others sought to move away from strict orientation towards consensus and universal reasoning, or take deep disagreements and legitimate pluralism as serious limitations to the possibility of moral or political consensus. Despite a variety of surface changes, the vast majority of these "revisions" retain the original normative core taken from Habermas.

James Bohman often claims to have separated himself from Habermas at various points in *Public Deliberation*, but his basic formulation remains clearly attached to the normative presuppositions made possible by Habermas.[27] He argues that many accounts of deliberative democracy (and by 1996 there were many) leave unexamined the basic reasons why deliberation can work to solve collective problems. His account locates the normative *possibilities* in deliberation in a dialogic account of the give-and-take of public reasons.[28] He describes deliberation thusly:

> Deliberation in democracies is interpersonal in a specific, political sense: it is public … "Public" here refers not just the *way* citizens deliberate but also to the

> *type of reasons* they give in deliberating … that is, they must be convincing to everyone. This fact about democratic deliberation provides a minimal standard for what constitutes an agreement among free and equal citizens.[29]

Properly engaged in, then, public reasoning leads, as Habermas argued, to an "uncoerced consensus." This is possible, at least potentially, because Bohman thinks public reasoning as a cooperative endeavor will lead to better outcomes (more rational, certainly), and non-tyrannical decisions (because of their having been justified publically). Bohman stresses a practical orientation towards cooperative problem-solving with inclusive participation. Unlike Habermas or Rawls, he argues that he does away with "pure proceduralist" notions of ideal speech or original positions. The reasoning process is purely practical, and unfolds in the communicative practice of citizens themselves. And yet, his account is clearly wed to Habermasian notions of transformation (agreement, ideally) through the give-and-take of good reasons in public. In fact, it is hard to see how this is substantively different from Habermas's model, ideal speech abstraction or no. Bohman explicitly relies on the normative potential inherent in the nature of rational communication (in this case as public reasoning).

Another typical development in the deliberative literature was to give up on a strong requirement for consensus-oriented reasoning (as many read Habermas as requiring) and instead suggest that inclusive and fair deliberation based on norms of mutual respect and/or reciprocity was sufficient, even if participants in debate never arrived at common understandings as a result of the deliberative process. This move was rooted in concepts like Benhabib's "egalitarian reciprocity," which is based on the equal respect for participants in discourse that allows equal opportunity to influence others (and the due respect that gives proper, equal consideration to everyone's arguments).

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Of note in this regard are Gutmann and Thompson's *Democracy and Disagreement,* which remains one of the most influential works in deliberative democracy. It has spawned its own secondary literature, as well as follow up work by the authors themselves, undertaken due to the immense popularity of this initial effort.

Gutmann and Thompson draw some from Habermas. But they draw most heavily from the early liberal deliberativists who were more explicitly indebted to Habermas (Cohen, notably). And what they produce, I argue, is unmistakably Habermasian whatever their source. First, Gutmann and Thompson argue, in general, that deliberative democracy responds to the fact of deep moral disagreement "directly on its own terms."[30] They offer four reasons why this is the case. First, deliberative democracy contributes to the sense of legitimacy of actual political decisions in which some will not get what they want (or get the same as others), something they equate to a morally-justified consensus that citizens continually strive for, though perhaps never fully reach. Second, deliberation allows participants to take a broader perspective and hear the claims of others. Third, deliberation can clarify the nature of deep moral conflicts and "sort out self-interested claims from public-spirited ones." Finally, deliberation can produce better public reasons. "Through the give-and-take of argument, citizens and their accountable representatives can learn from one another, come to recognize their individual and collective mistakes, and develop new views and policies that are more widely justifiable."[31]

In order to unleash these deliberative potentials, Gutmann and Thompson suggest three principles that need to be encouraged: reciprocity, publicity, and accountability. Reciprocity, they describe as the most important of these as it sets the conditions under which the others operate. Their notion of reciprocity has an extremely strong

Habermasian flavor. Reciprocity is needed in order to assure that "a citizen offers reasons that can be accepted by others who are similarly motivated to find reasons that can be accepted by others."[32] In other words, it is the desire to enter into exchanges cooperatively with the goal of giving answers that others can accept. Thus the normative foundation for their project is straightforwardly Habermasian.

A similar Habermasian foundation is also evident in deliberative literature that takes seriously the deep divisions created by cultural pluralism. And yet, again, the Habermsian normative core remains. Take, for example, a recent effort by Jorge Valadez to question the idea of reason-giving in terms "all could accept."[33] Valadez claims that deep incommensurability of cultural frameworks (including metaphysical beliefs, evaluative standards, and more) renders suspect the possibility that particular reasons will be able to similarly convince everyone involved in deliberation. His argument seems contrary to the received standard about public reasoning common amongst deliberativists. However, his solution retains a similar normative ideal. Instead of deliberative democracy working by means of reasons all could accept, deliberation can (and should) proceed by the mutual articulation of interests in the hopes of clarifying and identifying shared reasons for adopting agreed-upon solutions. That is, deliberation would not be about reasons with universal ability to influence, but instead be an opportunity for clarification and communication of interests, views, and understandings in order to seek common ground (if some exists) and common interests (again, if some exist). The mechanisms for being able to do this are greater multicultural education and a process of "reciprocal validation." This process is an exchange with others in which we depend on their testing for validity our understandings of their worldviews, as opposed to presuming

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on our own that we can access and understand their views and appeal to them with reasons we find compelling. If this sort of engagement is practiced, Valadez thinks that deliberation can produce "acceptable compromises by deepening mutual understanding and respect between members of different cultural groups."[34] In other words, Valadez desires an exchange in which participants articulate to one another their own understandings in the name of reaching mutually-acceptable positions that they can each support. It is hard to understand this revision as anti-Habermasian, even if it is against arguments being made in universal terms. But, nothing of the normative core of a rational exchange of language is deeply challenged on this account. It is still a story about the transformative potential of communication, only it is limited to the more modest goals of mutual understanding and respect between radically different others.

Finally, even a recent turn in deliberative literature towards the inclusion of rhetoric fails to move away from this Habermasian core. On the surface, allowing persuasion based on rhetoric seems removed from the reliance on rational-critical exchanges that most of the deliberative literature has used as a model. But this retains the reliance of rational communication that can transform. Rhetorical persuasion represents a sort of limit case for those deliberativists who rely on rationally defensible claims as the impetus for progressing arguments (and thus opinions and wills) to new and better results.[35] Rhetoric can be permissible if it is not the "bad" kind that willfully deceives, and it serves to bring arguments to audiences in ways they can more clearly understand. I will return to this concept when I discuss Iris Young in the next chapter. For now, what I think is notable about this most recent development in the deliberative literature is that it represents a continued effort not to look beyond rational communication between

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citizens, but to simply negotiate the boundaries as to what counts as communication that can properly be relied upon to change opinions and wills for the benefit of democracy. This is the same reliance on communication that has always been at the heart of the normative claims of deliberation, but now with an attempt to include more passionate expressions of rationally defensible claims.

Critiques of the Normative Core of Deliberative Democracy

Deliberative democracy has been criticized from a variety of perspectives, some liberal, some feminist, some post-modern, as well as some empirically grounded doubts. I want to look at a few of these concerns that I find convincing, not as a means to "defeat" the deliberative democratic project, but as a way of seeing what shortcomings need to be addressed if a workable theory of democratic politics rooted in the engagement of citizens with one another is to succeed. I group these criticisms into 2 basic types: critiques related to actual deliberative practice (call these practical critiques) and critiques about the very nature (and possibility) of deliberation towards better democratic ends (call these ontological critiques).[36] These two do not always appear separately, of course, as they often express overlapping and related concerns. But I think conceptually they address two different problems. I will describe the criticisms in turn and what they tell us about the normative core on which deliberative democracy is based.

Practical critiques rarely call into question the desirability of deliberation about political matters, but instead object to its being a central component in a democratic theory. This might be either because the practice of deliberation itself, as they understand

it, is too limited to encompass the size, scope, and nature of modern democratic politics; or, it might be because the nature of ideal deliberation is somehow too narrow or incomplete to properly address political problems that face contemporary societies.

Michael Walzer offers a practical critique of the first sort. In a piece dedicated to commentary on Gutmann and Thompson's *Democracy and Disagreement,* Walzer offers a list of necessary components of democracy (included are things such as lobbying, voting, mobilizing, demonstrating) among which he would not place deliberation. Why? Because real political inequality (a real ruling class who desires to keep its power) prevents anything like deliberation from taking center stage in the political processes in which conflict is real and necessary. Also, the sheer size and scope of modern democracies make deliberation impracticable in place of these other activities. He writes, "Deliberation is not an activity for the demos. I don't mean that ordinary men and women don't have the capacity to reason, only that 100 million of them, or even 1 million or 100,000 can't plausibly 'reason together.' And it would be a great mistake to turn them away from things they can do together. For then there would be no effective, organized opposition to the powers-that-be."[37]

Lynn Sanders' well-cited piece "Against Deliberation," represents a practical critique of the second sort. She cites some disheartening jury studies in arguing that deliberation often serves as a vehicle for dominant, privileged modes of communication. As such, deliberation (as it is usually understood) is too restrictive of communicative practice to produce the kinds of transformations deliberativists hope. She writes, "Arguing that democratic deliberation should be rational, moderate, and not selfish implicitly excludes public talk that is impassioned, extreme, and the product of particular

interests."[38] Instead, she proposes testimony, "citizens telling their own stories in their own ways," which addresses a "more fundamental goal: to try and ensure that those who are usually left out of public discussions learn to speak whether their perspectives are common or not, and those who usually dominate learn to hear the perspective of others."[39]

The upshot of such practical critiques, I think, is the observation that there is a difficulty translating an idealized and abstract notion of rational speech into something with practical democratic benefits. It is not that Habermas and the deliberativists are completely or necessarily wrong about language and reason in the abstract, but that their conceptions fall short, or even fail, in application. The ideas need to be stretched to fit real practice, and augmented by other institutions and procedures, or by forms of communication other than rational argumentation. In short, deliberation too narrowly conceived cannot be the core of a democratic politics, no matter how normatively valuable deliberation may itself be.

There has been a widespread effort to appreciate the weight of these criticisms by the deliberativists themselves, though they attempt to do so without betraying their basic models. In terms of opening up democracy to other forms of political decision-making, many deliberativists have already accepted bargaining and negotiation as necessary in a society in which "communicative action is overburdened," as Habermas puts it. And in terms of opening up what should count as deliberation, this, too, has been largely accepted by deliberative democrats. Following theorists like Iris Young (who will be central to the following chapter), the addition of communication styles and forms has been accepted up to a point. There are limits, of course, to the kind of rhetoric that can be

tolerated for the deliberativist if they are to retain their critical-normative insight into distorted forms of communication and power. But to a great degree, many deliberative theorists feel these practical objections are resolvable from within a theory of deliberative democracy that retains its normative core of communication having transformative (and critical) potential.

Still, the weight of these sorts of critiques is not easily dismissed, even with modifications offered by deliberative theories themselves. They amount to a call for a constant reevaluation of the lines of inclusion and exclusion in deliberation and a careful attention to the forms of power that may disrupt the functioning of deliberative processes. And they certainly preclude any deliberative theory from a misplaced confidence in the "natural" functioning of communicative rationality apart from the fact of these disruptions. That is, if the normative core upon which better democracy rests is to remain tied to the functioning of language apart from these distortions. Thus conclusions like Walzer's are hard to avoid, even if one has faith in the potential (and even someday the realization) of a politics more in line with the ideal of deliberative democracy.

The ontological critiques are in a sense more difficult to deal with for deliberative democrats. These critiques attack the very heart of deliberative democracy's normative core – the inherent rationality present in the right kinds of communicative exchanges. Often these are from post-modern sources, such as Foucaultian notions of power and Lyotard's or Derridia's challenges to the inherent rationality of communication. But they also have increasingly stemmed from a direction prefigured by Merleau-Ponty, now being confirmed in cognitive studies and dubbed the "brain-body" problem for traditional Western philosophy. Thinkers such as William Connolly and George Lakoff and Mark

Johnson have begun developing the philosophic conclusions that stem from our being embodied. And these ideas cast further doubt on the very possibility of something like rational communication.

A nice summary of the impact of the first post-modern line of critique on deliberative democracy is offered by Dana Villa's "Postmodernism and the Public Sphere."[40] According to Villa, from Foucault we are given doubt that any claims to better arguments, as well as the reliance on public autonomy and equal influence, are mitigated (if not rendered completely ineffectual) by the self-surveillance and internalized hegemony of civic actors. From Lyotard, we get the overriding doubt about any meta-narrative (of which Habermas's Enlightenment-rooted deference to the emancipatory nature of better arguments is one) and an insistence on the agonistic and "discordant" nature of language games as a more accurate theory of communication. Villa cannot see any viable response to these concerns that could be given by a Habermasian, though he does find some possibility in Arendt's idea of the public sphere.

Another line of post-modern critique has been canvassed by Margaret Kohn: Wittgensteinian, Bahktinian and Derridian criticisms. Kohn suggests that:

> the structure of language itself undermines the possibility of fully determined meaning … Language cannot be completely determined because it is constantly being reconstituted by social conditions and erased by custom and practice. This means that instances of miscommunication and manipulation are not accidental, secondary effects, but rather part of the nature of language itself.[41]

According to Kohn, Wittgenstein and Bakhtin argue convincingly that language reproduces power relations, perhaps in terms of unequal distribution of linguistic competency (per Wittgenstein via Bourdeiu), or through its suppression of difference in order to form 'genres of unity' (Bakhtin). In either case, some users of language are

inevitably at the mercy of others by the nature of language itself, not because of its (ameliorable) distortions at the hands of outside powers, as critical theorists like Habermas would have it. Finally, Kohn refers to Derrida's argument that even though language is in fact largely performative (as Habermas also agrees, following J.L. Austin), it is based on a "gap" between what is said and what is meant. This is because language is both used by an individual, but exists already as a system made up of "all previous instances" in which some sign within language has been used. Language is thus based on iterability, not "a telos of serious, literal speech [that] is the perfect correspondence between speaker's intention and the linguistic formation."[42] Further, Derrida shows us, following Nietzsche, that original meanings of language are erased over time. What remains is not a language corresponding perfectly to a world of things or ideas shared by everyone, but a system of myths and metaphors whose origins have been erased from our awareness. Thus, Kohn concludes, "By appealing to the standards of rationality and reason, discursive democracy masks an irrational core at the heart of its project."[43]

These ontological arguments regarding the nature of language and language use suggests that the Habermasian story of language oriented toward rational ends is, at least, suspect. The question, of course, is to what extent distortions from the Habermasian ideal are the product of power from "outside," or whether it is the fact of power and language themselves that create doubt about a faith in rational communication. If the latter is true, the troubles facing deliberative democrats are immense. Such criticisms go to the very heart of what the deliberative project requires – the possibility of transformation based on an exchange of good, defensible reasons. Without this possibility, one cannot have deliberative democracy.

On to the "brain-body" issue. These materialist accounts call into question the basis for our faith in reason unleashed through communication at the very level of our ability to act as competent users of language. Instead, we are constrained (in a sense) by our bodies and the metal processes of our brain in ways that complicate the linking of language, reason and action. One version of this argument grew out of a question about the psychological plausibility of Habermas's linking between communication and action in individuals. For example, Mark Warren expresses doubts about Habermas's idea of a discursively-competent citizen, someone who needs to be capable of "ascending" to the level of argumentative discourse in a way that they can "live out" the analytic separation of arguments about political issues and language use aimed at securing their self-identity. He writes, "Discursive democracy requires individuals who are autonomous in the sense that they can question elements of their lives and life-styles without drawing into question their own identity and value."[44] Further, Warren suggests that while Habermas has a psychoanalytic theory to justify this separation (a communicative reading of psychotherapy as critical theory), there is a danger in his theory of overstating our self-access and control of drives and experiences (and God forbid neuroses) through language. He writes, anticipating the "brain-body" problem I will detail below:

> The danger is that because the body's nonlinguistic 'talk' cannot be conveyed in linguistic form, it will come to seem illegitimate, something that falls outside the interests and needs of the self … These implications have not been lost on Habermas's critics, who sometimes suggest that his focus on the rationality of language threatens a tyranny of discourse over the necessary and desirable ambiguity of inner experience. The point is not a romantic one, but rather a recognition of the manifest inadequacy of language to inner experience. Inner experience, though it may not be formulated in discourse, anchors parts of the self that not only 'disturb' language, but also account for happiness, uniqueness, and difference.[45]

Thus there is something beneath what is communicable through language that shapes our selves and constrains our abilities to act as autonomous participants in discourse. It is something psychological, but seems to have a link with our embodied selves as well. And this is the insight developed even more powerfully by those who locate this psychological state in the actual brain-body processes at the level of biology.

Take for example the following explanation of reason by Lakoff and Johnson: Reason arises from our brains, bodies, and bodily experience and cannot transcend these structures; it is not "universal" except in the sense of our shared bodily structures that produce certain commonality of process; it is mostly unconscious; it is largely metaphorical and imaginative (not literal); and it is not dispassionate, but emotionally charged.[46] They draw a number of conclusions from this fact that put a Habermasian project into question. An embodied reasoning process is dependent largely on metaphors that are neurally linked to "sensorimotor experiences." As such, concepts and moral reasons often contain mutually inconsistent structuring of abstract concepts that are difficult to revise "Because our conceptual systems are mostly unconscious and neurally fixed … we cannot freely change our conceptual systems by fiat."[47]

In *Neuropolitics,* William Connolly offers a similar take on the nature of embodied reasoning. Connolly adds the dimension of culture into this brain-body dynamic to indicate the thick, well-sedimented layers of culture that form neural connections that become difficult to break. This is an insight complimentary to Lakoff and Johnson, as our cultural experience becomes the source for many of the metaphors and experiences that form the hard-wired structure of our concepts and reasoning processes. And, again, these happen largely beneath our perception at a speed our

conscious brain could never participate in. For Connolly, the dispositions produced in these processes is our "affect". One particularly interesting type of brain-body-culture phenomena is called a "somatic marker." This is "a culturally mobilized, corporeal disposition through which affect-imbued, preliminary orientations to perception and judgment scale down the material factored into cost-benefit analyses, principled judgments, and reflective experiments."[48] Or, in other words, the stuff prior to our conscious thought that drastically whittles down alternatives, streamlines options, and sifts through possibilities before we ever begin consideration. It is part language and cultural experience, part biology, and all largely beyond our direct control. And the nature of this process leads Connolly to suggest:

> Once somatic markers are added to your ledger, both rational-choice theory and the reduction of culture to an unlayered set of intersubjective concepts and beliefs are thrown into jeopardy. The model of "deliberative democracy," loved by many political theorists, requires modification too. Culturally preorganized charges shape perception and judgment in ways that exceed the picture of the world supported by the models of calculative reason, intersubjective culture, and deliberative democracy. They show us how linguistically complex brain regions respond not only to events in the world but also, proprioceptively, to cultural habits, skills, memory traces, and affects mixed into our muscles, skin, gut, and cruder brain regions.[49]

This awareness of our embodied self leads Connolly to articulate an individualist "micropolitics" of techniques of the self and a appreciation of deep pluralism in the world. This is because the best we can do is respect the difference in others and engage in an uncertain project with ourselves towards some end we desire – always at the mercy of our brain-body-cultural matrix to some extent.

On the whole, then, brain-body arguments cast a materialist doubt on the possibilities that language can produce in us (given that it is utilized "by us") any dependably rational conclusions that will then "bind and bond" us to action

recommended by these rational arguments. The "higher level intersubjectivity" of communicative processes (as Habermas has come to refer to them) are always tied to the actual use of language by embodied – and thus monstrously complicated and notoriously undependable – creatures. The lifeworld concept can get at some of this, to be sure. The layers of culture, prior experience, deeply ingrained metaphors, even the firmly wired neural pathways themselves might fall within the domain of the "pre-given" of our lifeworld. But these theories put into serious question the idea that in communication we can open up a slice of this lifeworld and reconsider it, alter it on the basis of better arguments, and proceed anew. The layers are deeper then we can access in our conscience, and thus beyond the reach, perhaps, of even the most universal presuppositions of language use in communicative contexts – at least in any neat and reliable way.

Looking Forward: A Project Worth Redeeming?

Deiberative democrats need a story of transformation. Most thought they had found it in a Habermasian account of the normative possibilities of language use. But I think the criticisms offered in this chapter provide us with real doubts about this foundation. But if the normative core is subject to question by these critiques, it is not, I think, altogether lost. There remains something both intuitively compelling and normatively valuable in putting some faith in the possibility that when citizens meet and speak, sometimes, somehow, something beneficial happens in this encounter. The critiques of the deliberative project, however, leave some doubt as to whether we can

place all our eggs in the basket of normative expectations related to the proper unleashing

of rational communication. Even if we remain open to the possibility that language use is

rooted in a kind of rationality, we have to also have reason to hesitate in thinking it can

be unproblematically unleashed for our common good. The practical critiques show us

this. And we may even have reason to remain skeptical in regards to our reasoning ability

itself, even in its intersubjective form, as a trustworthy as a means to rational politics and

common understanding. The ontological critiques raise this doubt. So what now?

The following chapter will pick up a different line of thinking from within

Habermas and the deliberative literature that I think is much more promising. It is a

dialogic account (in a much "thicker" sense of the word than we have encountered it thus

far) of what makes citizen engagement promising as a means of transformative

experience with the potential for greater mutual understanding and "better" democratic

politics along the lines deliberativists hope. It is an account that does not jettison

language and deliberation entirely, but situates these activities within an interpersonal

experience that is not reducible to communication. And although they have not

necessarily understood it in terms of dialogue, I will show that it is already operative in

some theorists' conceptions of deliberation.

Notes

[1] The notion of the "deliberative turn" I get from Dryzek. See: John Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1, though by now it is a widely used descriptor.

[2] Simone Chambers, "Deliberative Democratic Theory," *Annual Review of Political Science* (2003): 307-26.

[3] Stephen Elstub, "The Third Generation of Deliberative Democracy," *Political Studies Review* (2010): 291-307.

[4] James Bohman, *Public Deliberation: Pluralism, Complexity, and Democracy,* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996) 5-6.

[5] This particular phrasing is developed from Thomas McCarthy's "Translator's Introduction," In: Jurgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, vol I: Reason and the Rationalization of Society,* Thomas McCarthy, trans., (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984). For those unfamiliar with the "lifeworld" and "system" concepts, allow me a brief description here. The "lifeworld" is meant to be that "store" of linguistically-structured understandings, cultural and traditional norms, features of our identities and self-understanding, etc., that is taken for granted and remains in the background (most of the time) in our interactions with others. It is the "reservoir" of material for our symbolically mediated interaction with the world. The system concept is meant to represent the functional logic of an organized system that is self-steering. Habermas sees the production and reproduction of the lifeworld (which should happen through communication with others) as threatened by the increasing role of systemic logics, which has "colonized" the lifeworld.

[6] John Dryzek may be something of an exception to this statement given his earliest work made use of a concept of communicative rationality that is from this earlier period. However, even Dryzek makes use of several concepts from Habermas's discourse ethics when applying the insights of communicative rationality to actual argumentative exchanges within deliberative institutional designs. See: John Dryzek, *Discursive Democracy: Politics, Policy and Political Science,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

[7] Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action,* 86. The interpersonal relation element of this will be very important later. But for now (like many deliberativists) I'll leave it aside.

[8] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, vol 2,* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987) 124.

[9] Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action,* Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen, trans., (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990) 63.

[10] *Ibid.* 65.

[11] *Ibid.* 66.

[12] The preformative contradiction denotes a situation in which someone offers an argument, the content of which undercuts the foundation for having made the claim itself. For instance (from Habermas), when the "ethical fallibilist" argues for the meaninglessness of moral assertions, but in doing so relies on universal presuppositions of moral argumentation to advance this claim to his or her opponents. *Ibid.* 80-1.

[13] This summarizes a list Habermas borrows from Alexy. *Ibid.* 87-9.

[14] *Ibid.* 102. After all, these types of arguments do not contain propositions that can expect

to attain universal agreement. For instance, in terms of aesthetic criticism, we can make sensible, defensible claims about the quality of a work of art, but we cannot expect universal agreement on the general propositions about what makes art good (or not).

[15] I do not mean to say that all the relations pointed to by Habermas in his *Theory of Communicative Action* are 'small-scale' or face-to-face relations. He uses his concept of communicative action to explain processes of socialization that take place on a very large scale. But Habermas's examples of the unfolding of communicative action happen between particular sets of interlocutors in particular shared contexts for action. As such, it retains a more direct link to the interpersonal relations in which communicative action unfolds than does his later moral theory where objective third person views and abstract audiences of "all affected" does much more work. Thus I think it is safe to say that his discourse ethics is by comparison a much more depersonalized, abstract project than his work on communicative action.

[16] His *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere,* of course, was written much earlier than these other works but did not receive an English translation until 1989. This had the effect of making it serve as a sort of "capstone" to his work on communicative action and discourse ethics for those (largely English speaking) deliberative democratic theorists.

[17] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society,* Thomas Burger, trans. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989) 27.

[18] In fact, though it isn't necessary to carry the argument out at length here, I would go so far as to say that no deliberative democrat is more Rawlsian than Habermasian, so long as they require an actual theory of democratic engagement/deliberation for the shaping of understandings, preferences, opinions, and will. And, by definition, a deliberative democrat has some such theory. Simone Chambers echoes this, declaring in her *Annual Review* article that Rawls, while an admitted fan of deliberation, does not attach it to a democratic project, "per se." And so "doesn't count" as a deliberative democrat. Rather he is a liberal theorist who believes his principles of justice, already known, can be defended from a variety of views (though as a "freestanding" conception) through something resembling a deliberative exchange. See: Simone Chambers, "Deliberative Democratic Theory," 307-26. Benhabib also shares this distinction between Rawls himself and deliberative democrats, see her "Toward a Deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy, in *Democracy and Difference,* Benhabib, ed., (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 1996), pp. 74-5. Also, for an attempt to bring Rawls' insights to bear on deliberation (while acknowledging that, on their own, they do not qualify as an account of deliberation) see: Michael Saward, "Rawls and Deliberative Democracy," In: *Democracy as Public Deliberation: New Perspectives,* Maruizio Passerin d'Entreves, ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002) 112-30.

[19] Joshua Cohen, "Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy," In: *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics,* Bohman and Rehg, eds. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), 72-3. The article originally appeared a 1989 edited volume. Not surprisingly, Habermas

himself approvingly cites this list in his own account of deliberative politics in *Between Facts and Norms.* See: Jurgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms,* William Rehg, trans. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996) 304-8.

[20] Cohen, "Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy."

[21] Benhabib, "Toward a Deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy," 69-70.

[22] *Ibid.* 71-2, emphasis in original.

[23] And as mentioned above, Dryzek saw it in this way as well, counting it as his own "small contribution" to this emergence and eventual dominance of "deliberative democracy." See his introduction to *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond.*

[24] Dryzek, *Discursive Democracy: Politics, Policy and Political Science,* 19.

[25] *Ibid.* 20.

[26] *Ibid.* 38-43.

[27] Bohman, *Public Deliberation: Pluralism, Complexity, and Democracy.*

[28] Later, I will use a notion of dialogue much differently than Bohman does. His definition seems to be a stand-in for interpersonal communicative exchange (rational argumentation, actually). And he is explicit in saying that such exchange needn't be made in person. See *Ibid.* p. 24.

[29] *Ibid.* 25.

[30] Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996) 41.

[31] *Ibid.* 43.

[32] *Ibid.* 53.

[33] Jorge M. Valadez, "The Implications of Incommensurability for Deliberative Democracy," In: *Deliberative Democracy in Practice,* Kahane, Weinstock, Leydet and Williams, eds. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010) 155-73.

[34] *Ibid.* 172.

[35] For an excellent survey of the arguments for a deliberative inclusion of rhetoric, see: Bryan Garsten, "The Rhetorical Revival in Political Theory," *Annual Review of Political Science 14* (2011) 159-80.

[36] There is one line of critique that may seem to fit in this camp that I am leaving out

altogether. I have in mind a rational choice influenced critique of the idea that deliberation can produce better outcomes through public argument. These critiques, while aimed at the very heart of the normative core of deliberation, are more of a "counter-theory" of rational motivations, usually without any direct commentary on the Habermasian recasting of rationality in intersubjective terms. They amount, I would say, to an insistence on the "naturalness" of strategic reasoning, for which the deliberativist need only insist they fundamentally misunderstand deliberation and cite Habermas as a counter. For an example of this sort of critique, see: Susan C. Stokes, "Pathologies of Deliberation," In: *Deliberative Democracy,* Jon Elster, ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 123-39.

[37] Michael Walzer, "Deliberation, and What Else?" In: *Deliberative Politics: Essays on Democracy and Disagreement,* Stephen Macedo, ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 68-9.

[38] Lynn M. Sanders, "Against Deliberation," *Political Theory, vol. 25, no. 3,* (1997), 370.

[39] *Ibid.* 373. I am using Sanders as a critic of deliberation here because she offers such a clear statement about the too-restrictive understanding of deliberation. However, I think it would not be unreasonable to see her piece as advocating a communicative project not altogether different from some later deliberativists, Jorge Valadez for instance. Although this might be against Sanders' own inclinations, I think her usage of testimonial indicates an implicit admission that there are transformative possibilities in hearing the stories of others – that they might move us to better understand others, or see their point of view more clearly, and consequently adjust our own. Otherwise, what would be the point of offering such an alternative?

[40] Dana Villa, "Postmodernism and the Public Sphere," *American Political Science Review vol. 86, no. 3,* (1992) 712-21.

[41] Margaret Kohn, "Language, Power, and Persuasion: Toward a Critique of Deliberative Democracy," *Constellations, vol. 7, no. 3* (2000) 410. Though I rely on Kohn's treatment of these post-modern critiques, her position is interestingly closer to a practical critique, despite her reliance on these ontologically damning criticisms. At the conclusion of her article she comes very close to agreeing with the points of Sanders and Walzer, lauding deliberation as a useful political procedure, but wanting to acknowledge its necessarily limited scope in democratic politics: "My point is not that there is no place for deliberation, but rather to argue that there is something more crucial at stake in democracy. Realizing abstractions such as reciprocity, equality, and opportunity is usually a process of historical struggle rather than theoretical consensus. This struggle does not take place primarily on the abstract terrain of language, but at concrete sites of resistance[.]" See page 426.

[42] *Ibid.* 414-5.

[43] *Ibid.* 417.

[44] Mark E. Warren, "The Self in Discursive Democracy," In: *The Cambridge Companion*

to Habermas, Stephen K. White, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 181.

[45] *Ibid.* 194.

[46] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought,* (New York: Basic Books, 1999) 4.

[47] *Ibid.* 555-7.

[48] William C. Connolly, *Neuropolitics,* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 34.

[49] *Ibid.* 35.

CHAPTER III

THE HIDDEN NORMATIVE FOUNDATION IN DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY:

PUSHING TOWARD DIALOGUE

The previous chapter suggested that a normative core rooted in Habermas is central to the deliberative democratic literature – that the give and take of the right kind of reasons by citizens, properly inclusive, can produce more legitimate and rational democratic politics by transforming opinions and wills. I argued that this normative orientation is at best incomplete, and at worst entirely suspect when it comes to an account of what actually transforms citizens – what moves people to hear new arguments, adopt new positions, and find common ground where it previously did not exist. And yet, I suggested there was good reason not to abandon the deliberative project on the whole. This chapter begins to outline an alternative account of the normative foundations for deliberative democracy in a theory of dialogue.

The particular understanding of dialogue I have in mind has not been an explicit focus within the Habermasian/deliberative literature. Still, I think it has been present, if only implicitly, from the very beginning. I will further develop this dialogic orientation by reference to Martin Buber's work in the next chapter. But at this stage, I want to demonstrate that there has been a sense by deliberativists (only rarely acknowledged, and occasionally denied outright) that something happens within certain sorts of interpersonal experiences – experiences that go beyond how and about what we exchange arguments. And through these experiences citizens' engagement with one another can produce some of the uncoerced transformations that deliberative democracy depends on.

To begin mining the deliberative literature for this alternative I will return first to its wellspring in Habermas, this time by way of a critique offered by Axel Honneth. I do this in order to show that Habermas offered another normative possibility in his communicative program within interpersonal relations themselves. From there, I offer a few committed deliberativists who stress alternative types of meeting and/or communication in immediate interpersonal relations that I think gestures at something like dialogue. With these theorists we begin to get an outline of what a dialogic theory is and what it can accomplish within the deliberative model. But it will be the task of the following chapter to fill in this theory via the work of Martin Buber. Nancy Fraser, Iris Young, Jane Mansbridge, and James Fishkin, are all central to my claim that the resources for a theory of dialogue are in many ways already implicit in deliberative politics. They each articulate, in their own ways, the importance of encounters between citizens that are direct (face-to-face), welcoming, spontaneous, and unreserved. All of this will be central to an account of a dialogic grounding for deliberative politics. By the end of this chapter, then, I hope to have provided a direction for developing a dialogic account of interpersonal exchange that has a "home" in a deliberative politics.

An Ambivalence in Habermas; Or, Exploring the Normative Possibilities in Interpersonal Relations

As I argued in the last chapter, deliberative democratic theory relies on a Habermasian foundation for its normative claim about the transformative potential inherent in rational communication. But in this section I explore the possibility that Habermas also left the door open to normative potential being located in interpersonal

relations themselves, though he did not himself follow through on this as completely as he might of. Deliberative theory, in its uptake of Habermas, also ignored the normative potential located in these interpersonal relations. Instead, deliberative theorists invested all of the transformative potential in processes of communication that unfold within such relations. But allow me to work through the ambivalence between interpersonal relations and communication in the Habermasian project beginning with a critique by Axel Honneth.

Axel Honneth, thought by many to be the heir apparent of Habermas and the Frankfurt School, has offered a different approach to the critical theory program that, in part, expands on a tension he finds in Habermas's work. According to Honneth, Habermas utilized a "real" or "immanent" anchor in a theory of language use and social relations in order to offer a transcendent critical theory with emancipatory possibilities (with the proper unleashing of communicative reason and communicatively generated power). That is, Habermas attempted to locate normative potential (the possibility of greater human emancipation) in an actual feature of human life – in his case, intersubjective language use. Honneth has suggested that his own project seeks the same immanence/transcendence move (like all good critical theory), but he finds it necessary to move beyond Habermas's particular framework because:

> a certain ambivalence is still inherent in his [Habermas's] efforts, since it is not entirely clear whether the transcending potential is to reside in the normative presuppositions of human language or in social interaction. Even if this distinction appears artificial – since all complex actions among people are linguistically mediated – in the end it makes a considerable difference whether social interactions themselves bear normative expectations or whether it is only through language that a normative element comes into communication.[1]

Further, if the normative potential is linked primarily to the use of language oriented towards reaching understanding, then it happens in that "pre-theoretical space" that is prior to the awareness and experience of those that engage in it. Or, put differently, any success (or distortion) of this fundamental type of communicative practice happens, "behind the backs of the subjects involved" and this "in no way appears as an emancipatory process in the moral experiences of the subjects involved."[2] To sum up the point: speech acts do not make themselves apparent in our experiences of interpersonal relations. Their successful (or unsuccessful) functioning remain hidden from us in the give-and-take of lived communicative experience. As such, any normative potential that resides only in the proper functioning of language (through appropriate speech acts) escapes our awareness, and thus our ability to participate in emancipatory action as subjects. The whole normative project that is tied to communication in language, then, is removed from the very actions and experiences we have as social actors within which proper (or distorted) communication unfolds.

But Honneth thinks that an alternative exists "if we follow Habermas's communication paradigm more in the direction of its intersubjective, indeed sociological, presuppositions."[3] For Honneth, this means a turn towards a recognition-theoretic perspective, which relies on the experiences of disrespect as a violation of the normative expectations of proper intersubjective recognition. Or, more simply, an anchoring of his normative theory directly in social experiences themselves and not (strictly) in formal rules of language use.

My aim here is neither to endorse nor criticize Honneth's program of recognition directly. While I certainly think that experiences of mutual recognition are in fact central

to both dialogue and good deliberation, I will describe the experience of recognition in different terms than Honneth does.[4] But this critique of Habermas demonstrates something important about locating normative possibilities in the functioning of language that is (in a sense) outside of our interpersonal interactions themselves. This move has been reproduced by much of the deliberative literature, which has sided far too much with the abstract communicative exchange typified by Habermas's later move to moral theory, rather than locating normative possibilities in social relations themselves. Any "transcending" potential for deliberation is thus located in the functioning of rational communication, rather than in the event of our meeting and speaking. Or, again, as Honneth helps us understand it, democratic theorists locate the normative potential of deliberation too firmly in a communicative framework that is not part of the immediate "moral experiences" of citizens in their actual engagements with one another. However, one can find material in Habermas that opens the door up to seeing normative potential located in experiences had in direct interpersonal engagement, just as Honneth suggests, though there are also some limitations in his project that need to be addressed as well.

Recall that Habermas defines communicative action as "the interaction of at least two subjects capable of speech and action who establish interpersonal relations (whether by verbal or extra-verbal means)," where the actors "seek to reach an understanding about the action situation and their plans of action in order to coordinate their actions by way of agreement."[5] Given that communicative action is the base for the Habermasian move to discourse and democracy, this event where the subjects establish interpersonal relations would seem worthy of explanation. In a sense, it remains "step one" of each and every particular cooperative endeavor that makes rational communication between

subjects possible. By comparison, however, it sees much less attention from Habermas than does the structure of the linguistic exchange and the presuppositions that are required for a successful cooperative venture. And, consequently, receives almost no attention by deliberativists indebted to this Habermasian project.

One way to conceptualize what this establishing of interpersonal relations requires could be by (again, drawing from Honneth) understanding it as an experience of mutual recognition: an "event" in which participants acknowledge one another and invite them (as equals) into the communicative exchange. Habermas seems to have something like this in mind at times, but continually reduces the event to the process of communication that follows from it, to the actual offering of validity claims and responses in a reciprocal way (thereby acknowledging one's interlocutor as an equal participant in the exchange). But he uses the concept of recognition both to mean recognition of validity claims and the recognition of an other without carefully distinguishing between the two.[6] Even when Habermas addresses matters having to do with intersubjective recognition in response to Charles Taylor's famous essay on the politics of recognition, he does so by reference to the recognition of subjects capable of political action in a modern democracy.[7] In this case, he argues all that is needed is the actualization of the political rights guaranteed as individuals in order to participate and be recognized as a specific other (in terms of individual or groups status). This is, in a sense, correct when pitched at the level of recognition of one's universal status as a political actor who is entitled to press one's particular claims. But it misses the fullest impact of the harms of misrecognition in one's everyday social interactions, a harm that is richly described by Taylor (and Honneth, as well). It is not simply about being allowed to speak or participate, but being affirmed,

acknowledged, and/or confirmed as a specific other (perhaps as part of a specific group). This is something required alongside (or, perhaps even prior to) one's being recognized as an individual capable of speech, action and political participation. It involves one's being recognized as the individual that one is in any given moment. Always temporarily so, of course, but nonetheless "me" in an irreplaceable sense, which needs your acceptance and affirmation.

Thus for Habermas it seems that recognition is simply a part of the communicative exchange, either produced within it, or as an always already present and part of any linguistic exchange. But this does not shed light on the nature of the interpersonal relation that is required, nor the function of those "extra-verbal" means that might secure our cooperative interaction. Further, he also often reminds his readers that communicative action does not coincide with the speech acts that coordinate it, which seems to lean again to a thicker conception of communicative action then suggested by a consideration of language use only.[8] Habermas hints at such a direction, but never really delivers a theory of such relations apart from his theory of communicative exchange. Recognition seems central to this establishment of interpersonal relations, but its status is unclear in Habermas's project, and thus by itself cannot shed much light on what is required in these relations for communicative action to properly function.

Kenneth Baynes seems to tap into this ambivalent element in Habermas in his comparison of Hegel and Habermas's notions of freedom, specifically referring to communicative freedom in Habermas's case. He writes: "On the one hand, freedom is a normative social status that, together with the capacity to reason in general, depends on forms of recognition and the social practices in which they reside … Subjectivity, in the

sense of being a 'reason-giver', depends centrally upon the existence of distinct forms of social recognition."[9] Thus Baynes, referring to a Habermasian trope, calls subjectivity and intersubjectivity "co-constitutive." This means that what allows two subjects to reason cooperatively is a certain freedom to respond as independent subjects to one anothers' claims – freely give 'yes or no' responses. And this freedom is available to a given subject in virtue, it would seem, of a host of social processes (proper socialization towards competent language use, for instance) as well as the 'granting' of a proper place/status in which to speak located in the nature of co-participation in linguistic interaction.

Again, however, Honneth's comments on the ambivalence of this account remain. If some elements that establish interpersonal relations in which communicative action can occur are (at least sometimes) 'extra-linguistic,' then they happen apart from what occurs within the cooperative exchange of validity claims. In fact, such relations seem to be necessarily prior to, and at a minimum something at least partially independent from, any cooperative exchange of reasons/validity claims – even on Habermas's own definition of communicative action.

So why does any of this matter to deliberative democracy? I think many deliberative theorists may have too narrowly conceived the transformative potential in their own model following a reading of Habermas that depends on the abstract, "higher level" intersubjectivity of rational communication; at least, in terms of their explicit defense of the potential inherent in deliberation. And in doing so, they are "stuck" with a model that has limited congruence to our actual experiences of democratic engagement that produces opportunities for movement and transformation. But they could have, also

following Habermas, explored a different direction regarding interpersonal relations and what their role is in establishing the very possibility of communication oriented towards understanding. But just as Habermas displayed some ambivalence in this regard, so too have many deliberative theorists. That is, most deliberativists seem, like Habermas, to locate the normative potential in the deliberative model in the power of public reason and argumentative exchange. But, also like Habermas, they seem to place a great deal of importance in the interpersonal relations established more or less directly between actual people in small-scale (face-to-face) settings. In short, as the theorists detailed below and in chapter 4 demonstrate, deliberativists have often relied on transformative moments produced in interpersonal exchange to "show" that the power of public reasoning and argument is doing what they hope – no matter how much our experience and practice points to something in these relations themselves. In other words, they have implicitly pursued Honneth's reading of Habermas and focused on social interaction and interpersonal relation, but retained Habermas's language about the normative hopes located in language and communication itself, obscuring the role that these social interactions and interpersonal relations actually play in their own theories.

Of course, deliberative democratic theorists have spent relatively little ink on either the theoretical problem of their reliance on public reasoning, nor on working through an actual phenomenology of democratic participation in interpersonal relations themselves that transforms opinion and will. However, some have moved us in a direction to consider what might be involved in social relations themselves (and not tied narrowly to the nature of reason-governed exchanges) that makes deliberation work. I

turn now to some of these accounts in order to set the stage for a dialogic theory in the following chapter.

<u>Beyond Rational Communication, Towards Dialogue: Deliberative Democracy Revisited</u>

Nancy Fraser, The Ethics of Solidarity and the Subaltern Counterpublic

In general, Nancy Fraser has been a supporter of a Habermasian approach to democratic institutions and practice, though she has often been a "friendly critic" within this same debate.[10] From very early on in the secondary literature on Habermas and democracy, Fraser began to mark out a slightly different approach to what makes good public deliberation possible. This approach, I argue, seems to rely on something that is beyond the nature of communicative practice between individuals. Instead, it seems to get at a "thicker" conception of what allows deliberation to be successful for a diverse range of people. This "thicker" conception places a great deal of the normative possibilities in deliberation in secure spaces for communication, diverse styles of communication, and on the strong bonds that connect up communities of people and make their communicative practice more meaningful and successful. And all of this moves us closer to dialogue than deliberation.

In a commentary on Seyla Benhabib's work, Fraser suggests that a politics of discourse has an advantage of being able to contest dominant cultural patterns of communication and exclusion, so long as discourse ethics could "maintain a kind of suspicion or distance from any given vocabulary for interpreting needs, defining situations and pressing claims." If not, then dominant modes and styles of communication

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could limit participatory (deliberative included) possibilities of subordinated groups by excluding their input. In order to secure sites for equal discursive participation, Fraser wants collective identities to be stressed as the path to a better political ethic (specifically, an ethic of solidarity) for combating privileged discourses. This is in part because Fraser believes there is a real collective dimension to identity that is made up of relationships that exist in an "intermediate zone" where solidarity and collective ties matter. This ethic offers political resources in order to ensure group members have equal participatory opportunities "in moral and political deliberation" and to: "speak and be heard, to tell one's own life-story, to press one's claims and point of view in one's own voice."[11]

Fraser expands on these ideas in another essay that, in particular, has had an enormous impact on the Habermasian picture: "Rethinking the Public Sphere" in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Habermas himself has explicitly supported thinking about the public sphere in the terms Fraser introduces in this essay.[12] In general, Fraser meant this essay to support the overarching idea of a public sphere as necessary for a critical theory and a radical conception of democracy. Her concern is, however, that the image of the public sphere painted by Habermas in *Structural Transformation* is (problematically) both bourgeois and masculinist. As such, this original formulation offered by Habermas does more to exclude than to include a wide variety of voices and viewpoints by relying on a bracketing of social difference (even if this seemed to have the effect of privileging only the best arguments). That is, in terms of her earlier article, the public sphere envisioned by Habermas was too likely to contain an exclusionary communicative style (a style common, for instance, amongst educated white males),

which by definition privileged some groups' participation in social life over others. A public sphere that is made up of a number of smaller counterpublics is preferable (descriptively and normatively) for Fraser both in "actual" democratic society (marked by inequality and political exclusion), and even in an ideal democracy (which is more or less completely egalitarian and is multicultural). The reasons for multiple counterpublics are slightly different relative to which of these two societies are being considered.

For actual democratic society, the counterpublic represents a site of critical contestation to 'dominant' discourses. Rather than bracket inequalities, counterpublics can successfully "thematize" such inequalities and put them into public consideration. Further, in public discourse dominant paradigms and ways of understanding very often control the terms of discourse and eliminate points of view critical to these dominant ways of thinking. In such cases, discourses counter to this dominating one can be articulated and advanced within counterpublics. This is why Fraser titles such counterpublics "subaltern." She imagines them as "parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs."[13] These counterdiscourses can have an effect on "official public spheres." Fraser finds such evidence in the successes of the feminist counterpublic, which successfully articulated "new terms for describing social reality, including, 'sexism,' 'the double shift,' 'sexual harassment,' and 'marital, date, and acquaintance rape.'"[14] Thus participatory parity (Fraser's own critical-theoretical yardstick) is served by the existence of subaltern publics, even in a society where perfect equality does not exist.

Focusing on a normative model of public debate, Fraser argues that for societies that have already achieved egalitarian social relations, and are multicultural (a likely outgrowth of free expression and association, she thinks) multiple publics remain necessary. The reasons why recall her rationale for the political advantages of considering an ethic of solidarity in a discursive ethics framework. Fraser argues that participation in a particularistic counterpublic (one devoted to some particular social group) is necessary because what happens in public space goes "beyond" simple exchange of arguments. Matters of identity and (though she did not yet utilize the term) recognition are in play in these spaces. She writes:

> To answer this question [why multiple publics would still be necessary], we need to take a closer look at the relationship between public discourse and social identities. *Pace* the bourgeois conception, public spheres are not only arenas for the formation of discursive opinion; in addition, they are arenas for the formation of and enactment of social identities. This means that participation is not simply a matter of being able to state propositional contents that are neutral with respect to form of expression. Rather, as I argued in the previous section, participation means being able to speak in one's own voice, and thereby simultaneously to construct and express one's cultural identity through idiom and style.[15]

To be able to participate in processes of not only opinion and will formation, but also processes of culture and identity construction does not move one beyond the scope of communicative action. After all, communicative action was the means by which lifeworlds are created, sustained, and remade. But Fraser's point seems to be that these processes are intimately tied to our public participation of a more classically "deliberative" sort (the discursive exchange of public arguments). Hence the likelihood that "counterdiscourses" will emerge from subaltern publics as particular (and in some way disvalued, excluded, or unequal) social groups articulate particular experiences against dominant assumptions. But even in the absence of a need to create

counterdiscourses from a particular social experience, multiple publics provide a place in which one can speak and be heard in those particular ways that one is accustomed to. This indicates that for Fraser there is something thicker required for public discourse to properly unfold. Public discourse best takes place within interpersonal relations of a certain sort – just as within identity groups that Fraser saw as politically important in her ethic of solidarity. The problem being addressed here is that those in dominant groups have a space where they have been received as participants – as competent contributors to opinion and will (and culture and identity) formation. Multiple publics provide similar "pre" acceptance for those not properly welcomed or encouraged in these other spaces. They give us spaces to speak as someone (in particular) to someone (in particular). In short, multiple publics for Fraser seem to offer opportunities to connect and share with others in a thicker way than the neutral exchange of reason could possibly provide, and at its worst may dissuade such exchange (at a minimum for those who aren't already socialized to participate in this way). Expectations of recognition, lifeworlds that more fully overlap, and especially opportunities for unreserved communication with others that care to listen – all of this is likely in play within one's collective group and its related "sub-public." Thus, it is not the potential for public reasoning of a certain sort that moves participants in Fraser's story, or at least not only this. Put in terms I hope to defend later, smaller publics and collective identity groups open up opportunities for real meeting and communication – "dialogic encounters" – in a way that an "all encompassing" rational-critical debate or a discourse ethics as usually understood cannot. And Fraser begins to point to this fact very early in the literature, though it is not yet a theory of dialogue properly speaking.

Iris Young, City Life, Communication Styles, and the Ambiguous Place of the Face-to-Face

Iris Young offered two impactful works on democratic theory. In her first work, *Justice and the Politics of Difference,* Young gives a critical appraisal of various forms of oppression and a defense of the value of diversity and difference for an ideal democratic life. This work is not directly concerned with deliberative democracy or Habermas, though some similar terrain is covered by both this book and the emerging literature on deliberative democracy. But her following book is fully engaged with the deliberative model. Taken at face value, neither of these works seem to offer anything approaching a theory of dialogue. In fact, Young is critical of those democratic theories that rely too heavily on face-to-face elements, which she associates (unfortunately, I think) with the neo-republican theories of communitarian writers. And she is critical of political possibilities inherent in face-to-face interaction both in ontological terms, as well as practical. But despite her strong criticism of neo-republicans, I think Young is actually ambivalent about interpersonal interactions and the desirability of actual meeting between citizens in both of her accounts of democracy. Despite herself, I think Young opens us up to something only beginning to emerge in Fraser's work. Namely, the idea that actually encountering others presented before us means something valuable to democracy and democratic communication. And arguments, rational or no, do not seem to really get at the heart of these relational possibilities. In the sense Honneth hints at, they are interpersonal and very much in the experience of those that participate in them. And

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whereas Fraser was inclined to focus on such meeting within a given community/identity group/public, Young reminds us that diversity and meeting across difference are equally, if not more important in thinking about the possibilities of better democracy. In what follows I want to work through both her critique of the neo-republicans as well as explore some of the many ways in which she points toward a theory of dialogue, despite her misgivings about face-to-face politics.

In *Justice and the Politics of Difference,* Young offers a strong criticism of ideals of community that underlie republican politics. She thinks that such politics rely on assumptions that are both metaphysically suspect and politically undesirable. This notion of community suffers from what she calls (following Foucault) a "Rousseauist Dream." She writes:

> This ideal [of community] expresses a desire for the fusion of subjects with one another which in practice operates to exclude those with whom the group does not identify. The ideal of community denies and represses social difference, the fact that the polity cannot be thought of as a unity in which all participants share a common experience and common values.[16]

This problematic ideal of community, which she thinks is shared not only by neo-republicans such as Benjamin Barber and Michael Sandel, but also by deliberative theorists such as Seyla Benhabib, relies on notions of reciprocity and mutuality in their democratic theories. All of these theorists mistakenly rely on what Derrida calls the "copresence of subjects." This means that they assume that "each understands the others and recognizes the others in the same way that they understand themselves, and all recognize that the others understand them as they understand themselves." This, she argues, "denies the ontological difference within and between subjects."[17] Young argues that subjects are asymmetrical, opaque (to themselves and to others) and necessarily

heterogeneous. When democratic theorists pave over diversity and heterogeneity in this way, it results in "serious political consequences" of privileging face-to-face politics. Instead Young suggests (in order to avoid such fallacious metaphysics) that, "Politics must be conceived as a relationship of strangers who do not understand one another in a subjective and immediate sense, relating across time and space."[18]

As Young moves on to defend her conception of communicative democracy, her fear about face-to-face politics remains, though not for (only) the metaphysical reasons she defended earlier. Her concerns are more practical and along Habermasian lines. Her concerns about unity and homogeneity remain, but now she adds a criticism about the impractical nature of small-scale face-to-face for modern complex democracies. Both neo-republicans and some deliberative democrats fall in this camp, she thinks. Instead, she thinks democracy needs to be thought of as de-centered, existing in mediated, diffuse interactions between citizens across time and space.

It would seem Young, then, is a rather odd figure to turn to for uncovering a latent concept of dialogue. However, I argue that despite her explicit criticisms of face-to-face politics, she repeatedly returns to a vision of democracy that seems to rely on the benefits related to actual interpersonal connections that citizens might make. And this is, I argue, a kind of pushing towards the necessity of dialogue for democracy, even if Young would have rejected this claim.

Young nods occasionally toward the value of face-to-face meetings and small-scale politics, even as she insists on understanding a politics that relies on treating them critically. In *Justice and the Politics of Differences,* she writes:

> I am not arguing that there is no difference between small groups in which persons relate to one another face-to-face and other social relations, nor am I

denying a unique value to such face-to-face groups … existing with others in communities of mutual regard has specific characteristics of warmth and sharing that are humanly valuable … A vision of the good society surely should include institutional arrangements that nurture the specific experience of mutual friendship which only relatively small groups interacting in a plurality of contexts can produce. But recognizing the value and specificity of such face-to-face relations is different from privileging them and positing them as a model for the institutional relations of a whole society.[19]

And in *Inclusion and Democracy,* she again offers a hesitant nod towards small scale politics:

Without question, democracy cannot function well unless there is freedom of association and civic culture that encourages people to meet in small groups to discuss the issues that press on their collective life. A discussion-based democratic theory will be irrelevant to contemporary society, however, unless it can apply its values, norms, and insights to large-scale politics.[20]

Still, it is not in these nods to the value of face-to-face interactions we find Young's dependence on dialogic experiences, but right in the heart of her democratic theory itself. I will consider each "part" of her democratic theory in turn, her ideal of "city life" presented in *Justice and the Politics of Difference,* and her "communicative" democratic theory in *Inclusion and Democracy.* Both, I argue, have at their core a largely implicit dependence on something very close to a theory of dialogic experiences.

In Young's understanding of "city life," the city is normatively preferable to the (homogenous) community for four reasons: social differentiation without exclusion, variety, eroticism, and publicity.[21] By social differentiation without exclusion Young means that urban life offers a certain freedom to form "affinity groups" in a way that is never fully "settled." Groups (and individual members of groups) intersperse, overlap, and intermingle. Though borders between groups exist (there are neighborhoods that have clear "ethnic identity"), these borders are always uncertain and at bottom undecidable. Variety exists in cities because of the diversity of social space and the intermixing of

purposes in social spaces. Bars, clubs, restaurants comingle with residences and offices.

People form attachments to their particular mix of social spaces, engendering

commitments to the diverse range of people and places that make up "their"

neighborhood. Eroticism is meant in the broad sense of an attraction or pleasure in the

strange and other. The diversity in cities brings us into the constant possibility of new,

unfamiliar experiences and encounters. And its aesthetic qualities can always entice and

entertain us. Finally, publicity refers to the inherently public dimension always present in

cities. Cities provide spaces and forums open to anyone and everyone to speak and listen.

They are full of spaces where the truly heterogeneous public can operate.

Throughout this description of city life, Young makes frequent gestures towards

the importance of face-to-face meeting for the benefits of city life to be realized. In

understanding social differentiation without exclusion, affinity groups appear as those

close relations between like minded people that motivates the communitarian vision of

community. Of course, these groups are more uncertain at their margins. But what makes

them non-exclusive is "a side-by-side particularity" where they can "intermingle" without

becoming homogenous. Groups exist both as opportunities for encounter of "sameness,"

while encounters with difference limit their exclusionary abilities. Encounters, one

presumes, in the actual sense of meeting and interacting with others. Variety is based on

what Young calls the "interfusion" of groups in multiuse social spaces. That is, the

variety comes from the actual interaction of people from different groups in actual social

life as they "go about their business." Eroticism is similarly based in the experiences of

"walking through Chinatown, or checking out this week's eccentric players in the park."

She writes: "There is another kind of pleasure … in coming to *encounter* a subjectivity,

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as set of meanings, that is different, unfamiliar … A place of many places, the city folds over on itself in so many layers and relationships that it is incomprehensible. One cannot 'take it in,' one never feels as though there is nothing new and interesting to explore, no new and interesting people to meet." [22] In short, the city's eroticism is bound up in the possibility that we meet, face-to-face, with something different than ourselves. The public-ness of the city is similarly oriented towards the actual meeting, speaking and listening of citizens to one another in the spaces and forums it provides. It is, by definition, a site of engagement of people actually presented to one another in public, "where people stand and sit together, interact and mingle, or simply witness one another … where anyone can speak and anyone can listen."[23]

Nowhere in Young's description of an ideal social setting, vibrant and democratic, are face-to-face engagements precluded. Far from it. Interactions between people actually present to one another seem to form the heart of what the normative ideal of the city offers us. And, of course, these interactions are supposed to affirm diversity and difference (not reduce it to homogeneity), which makes them different from the sort of neo-republican politics of face-to-face interactions she criticizes, though she does not offer us a theory about the difference between these valuable encounters and exchanges and those she derides, only the assertion that they are in fact different.

And so it is with Young's communicative democracy. Young is critical of those deliberative projects that assume a politics of face-to-face interaction, citing their insufficiency in complex modern democracies. Yet, her own attempts to understand a more inclusive democratic politics often return to this very space. Consider her attempts to open up communication styles of public debate to include greeting, rhetoric, and

storytelling. These modes of address are meant to draw on communicative practices that occur in "everyday life" to "enable understanding and interaction in ways argument alone cannot."[24] Greeting is meant to invite others, to recognize or acknowledge interlocutors, to name them as partners in a common project. It is a crucial "first step" because, "Without the moment of greeting … no discussion can take place at all, because the parties refuse to face one another as dialogue partners."[25] Indeed, rhetoric, in its affirmative sense (not in its potentially deceitful mode), brings passion and color to exchanges. It is how we engage an audience passionately and be sure we are engaged by them in return. It is not always utilized in speech (though it often is), but may come in a variety of forms, "visual media, signs and banners, street demonstrations, guerrilla theatre, and the use of symbols."[26] But importantly it serves to (among other things) make communication attentive to particularity of an audience, a difficult but important task in complex society. "[A]ny actual situation of political discussion is particular with respect to forum, participants, audience, issue, and the history that has called forth the discussion … Rhetoric constructs the speaker, the audience, and occasion by invoking or creating specific connotations, symbols, and commitments."[27] Storytelling, or narrative, is meant to put interlocutors into a relation of understanding or sharing by revealing personal experiences, collective meanings or understandings that the audience might not be familiar with, and enlarging thought. It is a mode of communication that can open up the possibility of meaningful exchange when difference is "too great." She describes storytelling as a way for 'local publics' to form within mass society: "Storytelling is often an important means by which members of such collectives identify one another, and identify the basis of their affinity. The narrative exchanges give reflective voice to

situated experiences and help affinity."[28] And while these local publics are not synonymous with a spatial locality (they need not form only among people in the same place and time), these publics are meant to indicate those smaller, more intimate spaces that are "carved out" of mass society. Thus storytelling is meant to move ever closer to an ideal of community and face-to-face politics than may otherwise be available in society.

The relations in these accounts are very often between speakers and audience, between participants in a discussion, between performers and observers, and between localized groups of affinity. Thus they seem largely oriented towards describing actual engagements between people. Arguments, of course, can be more or less mediated. They might take place in the op-ed sections of newspapers, on television, or other "de-centered" forums. But Young herself seems to understand communication as rooted in exchanges that are at least in some meaningful sense "personal" or "inter-personal." And at a minimum they serve to bridge the distance (physical or affective) created in mass society by bringing us closer to the ideal of actual engagement with others.

Consider further her understanding of the way in which common problems and concerns are solved in publics. She writes:

> Political co-operation requires a less substantial unity than shared understandings or a common good … It requires first that people whose lives and actions affect one another in a web of institutions, interactions, and unintended consequences acknowledge that they are together in such a space of mutual effect. Their conflicts and problems are produced by such togetherness.[29]

The mechanism for dealing with these problems produced by togetherness is the democratic participation of citizens in a public (and, of course, some defined procedural mechanisms for democratic decision making). And it is notable that Young relies on

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Arendt for her description of what a public is: "a place of appearance where actors stand before others and are subject to the mutual scrutiny and judgment from a plurality of perspectives."[30] Again, the language here is about standing before others, communicating with them, speaking and listening, being together. This is not the stuff of face-to-face interaction only, but it seems certainly to have its roots therein.

Jane Mansbridge and "Everyday Talk"

Mansbridge, in some ways, can make a claim to being a pioneer of the deliberative turn, at least as it gained a following by way of its critical relation towards interest group liberalism. Her *Beyond Adversary Democracy,* while most immediately impactful to neo-republican "strong" democrats in the 1980's, is still a widely cited work for deliberative theorists today. In it she relies on two case studies, a town-hall meeting and a workplace (a crisis response center), to begin to articulate an alternative "unitary model" of democracy located in face-to-face settings. And while Mansbridge is careful to distinguish unitary democracy as a model where common interests reign (and thus not a replacement for the more traditional adversarial model), this opened up a great deal of interest in alternatives to adversarial politics and the everyday politics that happens between "regular folks" in small, face-to-face settings.[31]

In a much later essay commenting on Gutmann and Thompson's, *Democracy and Disagreement,* Mansbridge brings to bear this orientation towards the everyday and interpersonal elements of politics on a deliberative ideal. Here she understands the role of "everyday talk" as a critical component of the "deliberative system." Though by itself

this kind of talk does not always (or even often) meet a suitable definition of deliberation, Mansbridge thinks it helps contribute to a process where people can "change themselves and others in ways that are better for them and for the whole society."[32] It does this in two ways. First, it facilitates the political action of the "everyday activist" who grabs ideas or criticisms from larger movements and applies them in the practical dealings in personal life. It is thus the medium of personal politics. Second, everyday talk also "sometimes provides spaces that shelter one from the demands of more formal deliberation." She describes this everyday talk thusly:

> Everyday talk sometimes provides spaces, such as the arms of a best friend, in which the most corrosive and externally harmful words can be uttered, understood, assimilated, and reworked for more public consumption … good deliberation has to include what goes on before and after, as individuals talk over their positions with likeminded and opposing others … These processes work best in groups of only two or three, where the flow of communication, both verbal and non-verbal, is relatively unfettered. [Formal public spaces] all require their spaces of unmediated authenticity, which sometimes require nonreciprocity toward the outside world.[33]

This idea, I think, captures a version of daily, on the ground, political activity that has to transpire between "real" people in "real" relations to others. Thus they are even smaller "publics" than one is inclined to picture in Fraser's account above. But the concepts overlap, to be sure. Each theorist is envisioning a smaller space, carved out of our bigger discursive participation. A space in which one is free to be oneself with some other(s).

Mansbridge's concern is to differentiate what may happen within these enclaves of personal conversation from what should be expected from good deliberators – deference only to better arguments, reciprocity and mutual respect, etc. Hence her focus on the potentially "corrosive and harmful words" and "nonreciprocity with the outside world."[34] And this may well be a powerful function of non-deliberative personal

conversation, and perhaps of the subaltern counterpublic as well – a space to "vent." But this venting is productive. And these everyday conversations need not be (and are not always) so inflamed. They are sometimes (as Mansbridge said) about resolving a disagreement, or addressing someone with whom we disagree in this smaller context. Their topics and stakes vary. But Mansbridge's overall point seems to be that these side conversations of an everyday nature are helpful in producing better deliberation because, as part of a deliberative system, they have the potential to produce something transformative for those involved.

Note the words Mansbridge relies on in describing what makes these smaller conversations meaningful. They provide "unfettered communication" and "unmediated authenticity" between conversation partners. There is a Habermasian reading of these features of a conversation relative to communicative action. Habermas understands everyday conversation as (at least potentially) communicative action, so long as particular types of expressions are offered towards reaching some kind of understanding.[35] A Habermasian no doubt thinks something like this is a part of what makes everyday talk a potential contributor to greater understanding between speakers and hearers.[36] And certainly "unfettered" communication could be construed as communication not distorted by strategically oriented forms of power. But I think Mansbridge has something else in mind here. Instead, this unfolding of everyday talk is deeply related to a personal presence of particular speakers and hearers – a meeting in which what is said is not limited by a desire to "win anyone over" (hence its unfettered-ness) and involves an actual sharing of space in a personal relation (which is why it is "immediate" and "authentic"). Within such interpersonal relations, something happens

that cannot be understood in terms of the give and take of reasons – even if something like the give and take of reasons happens. The relation itself in which everyday talk unfolds seems of the utmost impotence for its own sake and for better deliberation.

James Fishkin and an Unseen Mover in Deliberative Opinion Polls

Thus far, we have only taken the institutionalization of deliberative democratic principles as a side issue. This discussion will occupy much of the final chapter, but I think at this stage there is good reason to turn to one of the leading figures in the effort to institutionalize deliberative democracy, James Fishkin. In Fishkin's most recent work, *When the People Speak,* he attempts to show how his design of the Deliberative Opinion Poll can achieve something approximating the advantages of the deliberative model *en masse* from within smaller, more manageable settings. And he thinks the results of experiments with these Deliberative Opinion Polls have produced some very promising data in defense of the deliberative model. I think his description of the most transformative space within these events are actually better evidence of a dialogic, rather than a deliberative foundation for the results these Polls have demonstrated.

The Polls work as follows: first, a poll is conducted generating public opinion on some set of issues to be addressed in a smaller deliberative group. This smaller group is a random sample of citizens (approximating something like "the people"), and are given background information on some set of issues which is aimed at a balanced presentation. Then, this random sample meets for a weekend receiving presentations from experts "on

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both sides of the issue" during which they can ask questions. And then, and this will be crucial, they also meet in smaller groups to deliberate together in face-to-face settings.[37]

Fishkin and some collaborators have statistically measured the change in opinions at various stages in the this process. The results for the overall event lend support to the transformative possibilities of deliberation as conducted in these Polls. But more, the results indicate that for many issues, the most change-inducing element of the whole deliberative process is the small group "in-house" deliberations.[38] The question is what makes this small group stage so powerful. One explanation Fishkin offers that I find especially interesting is given in response to criticism from Lynn Sanders. One of Sanders' criticisms is that opinions arrived at through deliberation may or may not result from the process of better reasoning. She cites psychological studies that indicate that prejudice and bias may color our political opinions "under the surface" of our consciousness. In response, Fishkin claims that some evidence from Deliberative Polls show that people can overcome prejudice, whatever their predispositions were (and, presumably however deep in one's consciousness they were rooted). He offers the following anecdote:

> In the very first US [Deliberative Poll], the National Issues Convention in 1996, we observed what may be part of the dynamic. An eighty-four year old white conservative was in the same small group as an African American woman who was on welfare. Welfare reform was part of one of the topics (the future of the American family). At the beginning of the small group, the conservative said to the woman, "you don't have a family" because a family required having a mother and father in the same household. At the end of the weekend, he came up to her and said "what are the three most important words in the English language? They are 'I was wrong.'" I have always interpreted that incident as indicating that he came to see her viewpoint in the discussions. There was a kind of ideal role taking in which he could view the issue from her point of view as well as from his own.[39]

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And a second, equally moving account from a discussion in Bulgaria from which Fishkin draws a similar conclusion:

> I noticed a similar dynamic with the Roma. I observed a small group in which one of the participants claimed that the Roma were lazy and undependable workers. Then a woman said that she had never missed a day of work at her factory job and that, in fact, she was Roma. This revelation appeared to have a startling effect on the discussion as she had already established herself as an active member of the group. When people of different backgrounds discuss public problems together in moderated discussions in which some minimal norms of civility are established, the dynamic of ideal role taking can be engaged so that people can look at the issue from the point of view of those affected by a policy as well as from their own perspective.[40]

Clearly, Fishkin understands these situations in good deliberative, even Habermasian terms (ideal role taking recalls Habermas' usage in regards to arriving at moral claims that could satisfy his U principle).[41] And certainly deliberation about matters of common concern is central to both of these stories. This was, after all, the design of the meeting space in which these events occurred.

But what makes these transformative moments emerge from the small group settings in particular? Theoretically, these same arguments might have been advanced at other points during the Deliberative Polling process – that the conservative's definition of a family was too narrow, or that many Roma were, in fact, dependable workers. But would we expect these arguments to have the same effect if delivered, say, in preparatory literature regarding the weekend's topics, or by spokespeople or experts in large group settings? Or, even if they had been offered by proxy from people not personally related to the claims being made ('Have you ever considered that some Roma may in fact be hard workers?')? My hunch is to say 'no.' And I think Fishkin would likely agree, given his defense (statistical and anecdotal) of the transformative potentials unleashed in the small group setting. So even if we grant that something like "ideal role taking" occurred here

(though I'm not entirely sure this is the right way to characterize it), there remains something worth explaining here for deliberative theorists. The most plausible answers, I think, fit the models hinted at in this chapter much better than the one presented in the previous chapter, where (theoretically) arguments advanced in op-ed sections of newspapers, or offered by cool-headed representatives in Congress should contain similar force. But I think Fishkin adds weight (perhaps unwittingly) to the intuitive sense that they don't. Instead, something in these small groups facilitated personal transformations in participants who were personally connected (in some sense) to the people from whom a moving argument was issued. This is not to say that the rest of the event surrounding the deliberative opinion poll was unnecessary or unhelpful. But something happens in those face-to-face encounters that couldn't have happened without them.

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What remains is to fully work out this alternative normative explanation for the kinds of events Fishkin relates. An alternative needs to be described that links up with Fraser's insights about speaking freely in one's own 'idiom and style' to an attentive and accepting audience; that connects to Young's opening up of communication styles in (whether she would accept it or not) face-to-face settings; one that is directly connected to 'everyday talk' with transformative potential as explained by Mansbridge. This is the task of the next chapter. I will work out through Martin Buber's dialogic theory a different normative grounding for citizen engagement that, I think, can elucidate the un-

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theorized elements of the above accounts as well as solve a number of difficulties for

deliberative democratic theory more generally.

Notes

[1] Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange* (London: Verso 2003) 247.

[2] Axel Honneth *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007) 70.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] I do not have any need here to offer a detailed account of Honneth's program, nor my reasons for preferring an alternative account of recognition through the dialogic theory of Buber. This will come up again in the following chapter when I consider the possibility of mutual recognition in the event of dialogic encounter. But let me say something briefly about the scale of Honneth's project. While Honneth does successfully follow through on locating normative potential in "social relations themselves," I think his effort to call on forms of proper recognition (for him there are three: relations of love, rights, and solidarity) remain quite large and abstract. They may unfold within immediate relations (not unlike communicative action), but Honneth has come to understand the terms defining experiences of recognition through complicated processes of social sanctioning according to entire social "orders of recognition." Again, I do not want to endorse or reject this project, but I think even Honneth may move too quickly away from the phenomena of relation that always unfolds between particular partners engaged in a social relation. For the basics of Honneth's account (and how it has developed from experiences of mutual recognition into a larger account of entire "orders of recognition") see (in addition to the works cited above): Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts,* Joel Anderson, trans. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995). Also, for an excellent discussion of several accounts of recognition, including some that fit closer to what I will describe later in regards to Buber, see: Paul Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, David Pellauer, trans. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

[5] Jürgen Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action vol I,* 86.

[6] See Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition,* 247.

[7] See: Jürgen Habermas, "Struggles for Recognition in the Democratic State," In: *Multiculturalism,* Amy Gutmann, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) 107-148.

[8] Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, vol 1,* 101.

[9] Kenneth Baynes, "Freedom and Recognition in Hegel and Habermas," *Philosophy and Social Criticism,* vol. 28, no. 1 (2011) 11.

[10] See: Nancy Fraser, "Toward a Discourse Ethic of Solidarity," *Praxis International, vol. 5, no. 4,* (1986). This is a commentary on Seyla Benhabib's paper from the same journal, which begins "I approach Seyla Benhaib's paper as someone with a longstanding interest in Habermas and the possible implications of a 'discourse ethic' for the collective, political struggles of social movements, including but not limited to the feminist movement."

[11] Nancy Fraser, "Towards a Discourse Ethic of Solidarity," *Praxis Internation* (1986), 427.

[12] Habermas cites Fraser in his *Between Facts and Norms,* for her idea of weak and strong publics. But also, he was always willing to acknowledge the role played by 'new social movements' in shaping discourse and critical challenges. And Fraser had a sense of this, no doubt, being aware of Habermas's later work – she even briefly references it in her critique of his public sphere theory, saying that her ideas were more in the spirit of Habermas's later communicative ethics. Still, none of this is to suggest a misreading by Fraser of Habermas's first work. He does certainly seem a bit overeager to extol the virtues of the limited (albeit historically radical) bourgeois public.

[13] Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," In: *Habermas and the Public Sphere,* Craig Calhoun, ed. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992) 123.

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] *Ibid.* 125-6. It is interesting to note that while this idea of identity formation within a group of solidarity occupies much of Fraser's work during this period, it largely drops out by the time she carries out a debate with Axel Honneth about claims of recognition. She instead wants to see recognition (and its role in the intersubjective securing of identity) as a part only of a larger story about participatory parity that requires a "substantive dualism." See: Fraser and Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition,* especially 60-70.

[16] Iris Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990) 227.

[17] *Ibid.* 231.

[18] *Ibid.* 234.

[19] *Ibid.* 233.

[20] Iris Young, *Inclusion and Democracy,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 45.

[21] *Justice and the Politics of Difference,* p. 236-41.

[22] *Ibid.,* p. 239-40.

[23] *Ibid.*

[24] Young, *Inclusion and the Other,* p. 57.

[25] *Ibid.,* p. 61.

[26] *Ibid.,* p. 65.

[27] *Ibid.,* p. 68.

[28] *Ibid.,* p. 71.

[29] *Ibid.,* p. 110.

[30] *Ibid.* p. 111.

[31] See: Jane Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1983).

[32] Jane Mansbridge, "Everyday Talk in the Political System," In: *Deliberative Politics: Essays on Democracy and Disagreement,* Stephen Macedo, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 211-12.

[33] *Ibid.* 223-4.

[34] It is clear here that she means reciprocity in the sense used by deliberativists such as Gutmann and Thompson, which requires mutual respect for the arguments of an other and an openness to the possibility of being influenced by them (and, of course, vice-a-versa). In this sense, the kind of talk Mansbridge is describing most assuredly does not count as reciprocity. But in the following chapter, the way in which I describe reciprocity following Buber could still understand these sorts of personal conversations as entirely wrapped up in reciprocal relations. That is, she may describing relations in which one is deeply open to the influence of the other within this shared moment of meeting, precisely because an unfettered, immediate exchange has opened up between them.

[35] Habermas uses the notion of conversation to refer both to those elements of communication that only stabilize the communication context and do not relate to the joint "purposive activity" of the interlocutors, where the "discussion of themes becomes independent for the purposes of conversation;" and, also in a technical sense ("conversation") to the communicative action context in which "constantive" speech acts are performed were there are declarations about states of affairs in the objective world, admitting of claims to truth. And, of course, any of the other forms of communicative action are possibly featured in something like everyday talk: references to norms, or personal declarations about "internal" states. See: Habermas, *Theory of Communicative*

Action, Vol. 1, p. 326-9. The point to all this is simply to say that what might be going on in this "everyday talk" is the stuff not of formal discourse, but is still (might be) the stuff of action oriented toward reaching an understanding.

[36] Interestingly (and looking forward to the discussion of Buber in the next chapter), Joohan Kim and Eun Joo Kim have linked communicative action as "everyday talk" to Buber's theory of dialogue, calling this combination "dialogic deliberation." It is an interesting account of the informal talk that provides the foundation for the deliberative democratic politics of a more formal sort. I think this is close in kind to Mansbridge's insight, though I think the Kim and Kim article suffers from a too-easy blending of Habermas and Buber on this account. See: Joohan Kim and Eun Joo Kim, "Theorizing Dialogic Deliberation: Everday Political Talk as Communicative Action and Dialogue," *Communication Theory, vol. 18, no. 1* (2008), 51-70.

[37] For a detailed account of the methods and the ongoing projects, both his book and the Center for Deliberative Democracy website are good resources. See: James Fishkin, *When the People Speak: The Deliberative Deficit and What to Do About It* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); and the C.D.D. website: http://cdd.stanford.edu

[38] Cynthia Farrar, et. al., "Disaggregating Deliberation's Effects: An Experiment within a Deliberative Poll," *British Journal of Political Science 40,* (2010) 333-47.

[39] James Fishkin, "Response to Critics of *When the People Speak: The Deliberative Deficit and What to Do About it," The Good Society,* Vol. 19, No. 1 (2010) 69.

[40] *Ibid.*

[41] See: Jurgen Habermas, "Discourse Ethics," In: *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*.

CHAPTER IV

MARTIN BUBER AND A POLITICS ANCHORED IN DIALOGUE

In the previous two chapters I argued that deliberative democrats rely on a Habermasian core of rational communication, which is a suspect normative foundation for a democratic politics. But, I also argued that an alternative foundation was available in the deliberative literature, though it has not been worked out in any explicit or sustained way. I will argue that the alternative is best understood as a theory of dialogue. A dialogic theory directs us to look at what can happen in the deep connections we sometimes make in our interpersonal relations – where we are physically present before a particular other that is fundamentally different from myself, where we can speak without reserve, feel welcomed and/or recognized as a partner in conversation, and interact specifically and irreplaceably as oneself. These are the sorts of experiences that the authors in the previous chapter seem to think make personal transformations through deliberation likely (or, at least more likely). So, following the lead of these insights, I will develop the concept of dialogue specifically related to the work of Martin Buber. Buber, though he wrote long before Habmeras and the deliberativists, offers an account of the phenomenon of dialogue that captures these insights about the transformative potential that sometimes occurs within our interpersonal relations. His work on the I-Thou relation and genuine dialogue gives us an account that can explain what such relations look like, and how and why experiences of dialogue can be beneficial for democratic politics. But, regrettably, Buber has not been a central figure for contemporary democratic theory. Thus the chapter begins by detailing Martin Buber's legacy and introducing him as a

resource for democratic theory despite this absence. I then describe his conception of the I-Thou relation and its development into a theory of "genuine dialogue," as an alternative normative foundation for a deliberative politics. Finally, the last section of this chapter outlines some of the prominent features of a "politics anchored in dialogue" and compares this model with the deliberative one that was considered in the first chapter, demonstrating the advantages (and also some concerns) of this dialogic foundation.

Martin Buber's Legacy and Influence

Buber was born in Vienna in 1878. He lived out much of his youth on his grandparents' farm in Galicia, an area near western Ukraine and Southern Poland. He received an excellent education from private tutors and eventually at the local Polish schools. He attended his first University classes in Vienna, and by the early 20th century had become influential in several circles in Viennese culture. He was well received among local socialists, became a committed and influential Zionist, and was a budding academic, translator, editor, and essayist.[1] Buber's early life was also defined by his conversion to Hasidism. Among his early works were Hasidic translations and stories. Many credit him and his work in this period as having a profound impact on Jewish cultural renewal. But he was also interested in sociology and was inspired by Simmel and Dilthey. As an editor and essayist he contributed to a growing literature on social thought during the first 15 years of the 20th century. Included in this early work was his sociological concept of the "Interhuman" (the realm created in between two people engaged in social interaction), which would later inform his dialogic philosophy.[2] All of

this culminated in Buber's turn toward a philosophy of dialogue, which came (relatively speaking) late in his career. Buber was in his mid 40's when his most influential and lasting work was published. His *I and Thou,* published first in German in 1923 and in English in 1937, marked a turn towards a philosophy of dialogue that would occupy him throughout the remainder of his prolific academic career, ending only shortly before his death at the age of 88.

I and Thou was both Buber's first and preeminent statement of his dialogic philosophy. Though surely his magnum opus, it was in many ways a work of transition both in terms of focus and style. He had begun developing a relational theory that was a mixture of German social thought and a heavily mystical Hasidic influence.[3] Although he had turned away from this mysticism (though not Hasidism in general) by the time of its writing, this influence is still apparent in *I and Thou.[4]* This religious orientation may, in part, explain the currently limited interest in Buber outside of religious scholarship. But such a dismissal would be hasty. Buber was a religious thinker with secular interests rooted in the problems of this world. One may not be able to entirely separate Buber's religion from his work, but his work has significance beyond religion. A politics relying on Buber's dialogic philosophy may have ties to his Hasidic worldview, but it does not have to 'stay there.' It can inform the secular world of democratic politics without any mass conversion required.

Though it is a difficult text, *I and Thou* and the subsequent formulations of Buber's dialogic philosophy did indeed have an impact – both in terms of its applications to a wide range of fields and among some important 20th century philosophers. This makes its current absence from democratic theory literature surprising. In fact, in the mid

20th century, Buber's practical, popular impact was by academic standards quite impressive. After WWII, Buber went on a number of successful lecture tours in Europe and North America. His work was picked up (more or less directly) by theorists and practitioners of psychology, notably Carl Rogers,[5] and educational theory, notably Paulo Friere.[6] His understanding of the distinction between I-Thou and I-It was referenced by no less than Martin Luther King, Jr., in *Letter From a Birmingham Jail.*[7] Buber remained a popular public intellectual both within Israel and abroad, attaining something of a celebrity status, so far as academics can achieve such things.[8] Despite this widespread influence in the mid-20th century, commentary on Buber's work – even his more clearly secular, dialogic work – has in recent years been largely relegated to religious studies literatures.[9]

Despite this contemporary pigeonholing, there is little doubt that Buber had noteworthy influence among some philosophers who have been at least tangentially important to debates in democratic theory. His intellectual lineage is probably clearest in the work of Emmanuel Levinas and Hans-Georg Gadamer.[10] Levinas's ethics is based on a necessary response of an I to a Thou – in particular to the "face of the other." An ethics of responsibility issues from our experience of the other in face-to-face relations. This experience demands we answer the call of the other. Levinas' philosophy makes use of the immediate relational experience shared by an I and Thou, and understands the primacy of this relation. There is much Buber in this program, though Levinas sees the relation in different terms than Buber, with the primacy of the Other over and above the I.[11] To establish the difference, Levinas offered a series of criticisms of Buber's program which proved, in some sense, damning to Buber's continued influence in the discipline

(while interest in Levinas, helped by Derrida, grew).[12] Despite the criticisms and differences, though, Buber's work was undeniably central to Levinas' ethical project.

Gadamer's explicit reliance on a concept of the I-Thou relation is also clearly inspired by Buber. The I-Thou relation occupies an important place for Gadamer's hermeneutics and his notion of a "fusion of horizons." In *Truth and Method,* Gadamer explicitly evokes Buber in describing the "highest type of hermeneutical experience" which is akin to the I-Thou experience.[13]

Buber was also a political theorist in his own right. Favoring a sort of communitarian vision, he articulated a suspicion of politics and the extent to which the "political principle" could be relied on.[14] But this was in part due to a concern about the corrupted nature of social and political relations in the modern world. Not to mention the fact that the expansion of what constitutes politics in personal and social life (at the hands of feminist and post-modern thought) had simply not yet happened. Buber thought of politics as that which concerned collective life as tied up with the state and economy. Thus his writings about political matters tended to focus on the restriction of politics to the role of administration. But against this cynicism towards mass politics and large institutions, Buber defended a version of communal socialism. This commitment was evident in his early activism with German Socialists prior to WWII, a deep friendship with and respect for German anarchist/communist Gustav Landauer, and presented most thoroughly later in his life as a utopian socialism, exemplified by a defense of the Israeli system of communes in *Paths in Utopia.*[15] Buber's politics had a deep connection with his dialogic philosophy, which (as I will detail below) is evident from his second section of *I and Thou* where he calls for reanimation institutions, public life, and community with

the spirit of real, direct relations (a "Thou saying" spirit). It was, accordingly, a communal socialism deeply tied to an intimately connected people.

Certainly, a thorough examination of Buber's political theory along these lines would be an interesting project, finding much affinity with Habermas, Arendt, and contemporary communitarian theorists (and much critical perspective on modern mass democracy). But that is not my aim here. Partly, this is because I question the applicability of Buber's politics to complex, modern democracies that we live in today, as the small-scale nature of Buber's vision remains unrealistically utopian. Instead, I want to detail Buber's dialogic philosophy in order to put it into the service of deliberative democracy, which I think makes a much stronger claim to application to contemporary institutional life. And, his own politics aside, I think Buber opens us up to something that can provide a normative foundation for the deliberative project that I have argued is otherwise suspect, but worth retaining as a valuable approach to contemporary democratic politics. This alternative might be called a "politics anchored in dialogue." It is, I think, what is really "there" underneath that intuitive inclination deliberativists have in thinking that engagement between people can do something beneficial for our relations to others and to our politics – even if they found it in different and problematic form in Habermas. But bringing this dialogic theory into an account of democratic politics requires a sustained effort to uncover the relevant terms and concepts in Buber's thinking, which I work through in the following section.

I and Thou

      I and Thou begins by outlining Buber's relational ontology. The world is twofold, he tells us, according to two relations humans can take in the world. These relations correspond to two basic "word-pairs" we can speak. When we turn to the world and speak "It" we enter into a relation to objects that we experience. When we turn to the world and speak "Thou" we enter into a relation with an other in their entirety.[16] And although we "speak" these word-pairs, it is not as if we must actually say these words (make the tones with our vocal cords and so forth). They are not reducible to the sounds we make, or even the linguistic signs that we attach to these particular pronouns. It is instead meant in the sense of an address or a turning towards that is accomplished in "speaking" one of these basic word-pairs. Allow me to detail each relation in turn.

      The I-It is our most common relation to the world. When we relate in this way to the world we relate to things, objects, or sense-data. It is where we perceive, count, quantify, study. It is the relation of the isolated ego to the world. An I-It relation is not, by definition, a relation in which one (co)participates with their object(s). Says Buber, "Those who experience do not participate in the world. For the experience is 'in them' and not between them and the world. The world does not participate in experience. It allows itself to be experience, but it is not concerned, for it contributes nothing, and nothing happens to it."[17] Although this is the relation we have with things, we also often relate this way to other humans. We see them according to some quality or qualities they

possess: they are tall, short, a man, woman, a Republican, Democrat, etc. And when we do this, we have experienced them as an object for our contemplation. We have received them as some information in time and space that we can classify, interpret, and know. They have this and that quality, this and that way of being, this and that type of personality.

The I-It relation is not by its nature wrong or bad. It is necessary and even, at times, produces enormous benefits for human kind. After all, the progress of math, science and other forms of knowledge require this mode of relation to the world. Whatever the status of the I-It relative to the I-Thou (and Buber certainly writes as if celebrating the I-Thou over the more commonplace I-It), we cannot do away with our It-relations even as we strive for more I-Thou relations. Buber writes, "Every You in the world is doomed by its nature to become a thing or at least to enter into thinghood again and again … But the language of objects catches only one corner of actual life. The It is the chrysalis, the You the butterfly. Only it is not always as if these states took turns so neatly; often it is an intricately entangled series of events that is tortuously dual."[18] At best, then, the I-Thou and the I-It are in a sort of constant tradeoff as our relation to the world shifts from a relation of objects to a relation with a Thou.

The I-Thou relation is one in which we turn to an other and enter into a relation:

When I confront a human being as my You and speak the basic word I-You to him, then he is no thing among things nor does he consist of things. He is no longer He or She, limited by other Hes and Shes, a dot in the world grid of space and time, nor a condition that can be experienced and described, a loose bundling of named qualities. Neighborless and seamless, he is You and fills the firmament. Not as if there were nothing but he; but everything else lives in *his* light.[19]

Here one encounters an other in relation, not in experience. At least, not in the sense of experience in which they are this or that type of person, having this or that quality, which

occurs to us in a way we can make note of. Instead, these qualities become indissoluble, inseparable from the person before us. As Buber describes it, "Even as a melody is not composed of tones, nor a verse of words, nor a statue of lines – one must pull and tear to turn a unity into a multiplicity – so it is with the human being to whom I say You. I can abstract from him the color of his hair or the color of his speech or the color of his graciousness; I have to do this again and again; but immediately he is no longer You."[20]

The I-Thou is by definition that which occurs in the present. Our Thou is just that which confronts us as presence, always here and now. As such, Buber understands the I-Thou encounter as "actual life." It is a constitutive act of the "whole person." Not in the sense of some fully presentable, fully knowable transparent subjectivity, but just as this particular other that I encounter in their uniqueness and entirety. As Buber says, one only "knows everything" of the Thou in the sense that "one no longer knows particulars."[21] This is not the same as saying one knows everything of the other as if they are a fully transparent list of particulars available for our evaluation. This would be the nature an entirely "successful" It-relation; the dream of, say, a certain kind of psychologist or, perhaps, professional marketer. Instead, it is an act of becoming and a creative deed, "I require a You to become; becoming I, I say You."[22] When we encounter an other in this way, we are presented to them, and them to us. In relation something might be accomplished between us – actualized – that has a chance to profoundly affect us both. But this relation cannot be forced or willed by one party. It happens when two people turn towards one another and each speaks "I-Thou." As such, Buber thinks the relation "encounters me by grace."[23]

The I-Thou relation, then, is an event – experience is not an acceptable word, though it does capture something of the phenomenon that the relation is.[24] It is that encounter that we have to "wake up out of." We are lost in a conversation, a good book, or into our surroundings (perhaps in nature). It only lasts briefly. And we are only able to take stock of the impact of what occurred after having had our encounter broken off. This is the oscillation between the I-Thou and I-It, from presence to experience.

Reminiscent of a Habermasian/deliberative paradigm, Buber understands reciprocity as central to the I-Thou relation. He writes, "Relation is reciprocity. My You acts on me as I act on it. Our students teach us, our works form us … How are we educated by children, by animals! Inscrutably involved, we live in currents of universal reciprocity."[25] Deliberative theorists like Benhabib and Gutmann and Thompson require reciprocity in order to guarantee something like equal respect, or a predisposition to be open to cooperation on equal terms with one's interlocutors. An aspect of this is preserved in Buber where reciprocity, in virtue of its tie to the I-Thou relation, is an openness to an other. But it is both something more and less for Buber than for the deliberativists. It is less in that it isn't a predisposition or ethical commitment needing to be secured (how?) prior to (potentially successful) deliberation. It is, instead, an element of the relation itself, as rare and fleeting as the I-Thou relation is, but necessary to it.[26] Thus in this sense it is also more than the deliberativists are able to rely upon. If they give an account of where reciprocity is supposed to come from (few do), it tends to be derived as necessary via rational argument itself. Take for example how Benhabib describes the securing of her notion of egalitarian reciprocity. For her, egalitarian reciprocity is a principle secured by the "metanorm" of the discourse principle (only those norms are

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valid that can meet with the agreement of all affected by their adoption). As a principle it should guarantee equal access to partake in and influence discourses. Once agreed upon (one supposes), this principle can be "realized through a range of legal and political arrangements as well as through noninstitutionalized practices and associations in civil society."[27] It is both a presupposition of discourse and a state of affairs requiring normative acceptance and institutional security. And all this only if it can generate adherence through the practice of deliberation. Quite an interesting circle. Benhabib has called it not a vicious, but the "hermeneutic circle that characterizes all reasoning about morals and politics." As such, she argues: "Discourse ethics in this sense presupposes the reciprocal moral recognition of one another's claims to be participants in the moral-political dialogue … such reciprocal recognition of one another's rights to moral personality is a result of a world-historical process that involves struggle, battle, and resistance, as well as defeat, carried out by social classes, genders, groups, and nations."[28] This, however, seems more of a (defeated?) nod to the critics of deliberation's impracticality than a defense of the expectation of reciprocity for contemporary deliberations. Buber's account, however, locates this standing in reciprocity to the interpersonal relation of partners in dialogue, in virtue of their having entered into the encounter itself. To be in relation is to be thrust into a reciprocal engagement with an other, perhaps all too briefly, but undeniably open to their influence and they to ours.

Buber describes the I-Thou relation as a relation of love. But this is not to confuse the profession of romantic love between partners as the same thing. That may or may not represent a moment of I-Thou relation. It would depend on whether or not an authentic relation was entered into, or there remained some distance at which the partners sought

some personal feeling of enjoyment from (and not with) the other. Buber instead has in mind a kind of love particular to the I-Thou relation, which he distinguishes from feelings. Feelings are inner experiences that one has to themselves. One experiences feelings. As such, they are (however deeply felt) of the It world. A relation, however, occurs in the present and between (not simply "in" either). And this relation is a "cosmic force" for those that find themselves enmeshed in it. He writes:

> For those who stand in it and behold it, men emerge from their busyness; and the good and the evil, the clever and the foolish, the beautiful and the ugly, one after another become actual and a You for them; that is, liberated, emerging into a unique confrontation. Exclusiveness comes into being miraculously again and again – and now one can act, help, heal, educate. Love is responsibility of an I for a You.[29]

Thus, rather than some romantic feeling, Buber seems to have in mind a feeling of responsibility for one's dialogic partner, a sense of obligation to an other who is presented to us. And this sense of obligation is prior to our linguistically "working out" such an obligation.[30] While Buber conceives of love as part of an I-Thou relation, he also argues that hate can come very close to authentic relation, though inevitably can never be a full I-Thou. He writes, "Hatred remains blind by its very nature; one can only hate part of a being. Whoever sees a whole being and must reject it, is no longer in the domain of hatred but in the human limitation of the capacity to say You … the basic word [I-Thou] always involves an affirmation of the being one addresses." He goes on to say that anyone who hates directly is "closer to relation than those who are without love and hate."[31] Buber suggests that the I-Thou affirms the other in their entirety by its very nature. That is, one cannot retain a particular aspect of someone – some demographic fact, say, their race or political persuasion – and truly hate the actual person in question. Only that given quality or qualities are hated. Nonetheless, when one feels hatred for

some particular person, they are nearer to the I-Thou than those who dwell only on the qualities (again, say, their race or political persuasion) they find detestable. This, I think, is a useful understanding for an agonistic dimension for democratic politics where conflict, even hostility can characterize our political interactions. In this understanding, relations of both love and hate can (potentially) spark real I-Thou relations.

The Modern World and the Rise of the I-It (or, Buber's Critical Theory)

Buber's second section of *I and Thou* offers a developmental story about the steady increase of I-It relations in the modern world. What is especially noteworthy in this section is that Buber begins to understand the interaction between the I-Thou and more public, collective institutional life, and the need to recover more of the I-Thou relation in our public life.[32] This will be important for realizing the applicability of Buber's dialogic theory for democratic politics, as his own desire to reanimate public life, I think, mirrors a great deal of the central motivations of the deliberative project.

Though the I-Thou is a rare and fleeting relation compared with the I-It, Buber thinks that the I-Thou is the primary relation. He has both a developmental psychological story and a historical/anthropological story to explain this. The developmental story has roots in the innate bond of mother and child. Once a child is born into the world there is a period in which the child must "make it a reality for himself; he gains the world by seeing, listening, feeling, forming." But, this first experiencing cannot be done in the same way as adults experience the world, as a detached observer, assimilating knowledge into already known categories and narratives. Lacking both the detached I of the ego and

a prefigured knowledge base, the child constantly reaches out to the world through direct encounter, revealing its innate longing for relation. Only through these encounters does the world eventually emerge for the I (now able to take the form of the detached observer). That is, only after a series of confrontations with Thous does an "I" and a world of potential "Its" emerge. As Buber puts it, at the level of each and every individual, "Man becomes an I through a You."[33]

The historical/anthropological argument is related to this argument about the development of the individual. In a story reminiscent of Rousseau, Buber explains that primitive man had to develop both concepts and a independent sense of self, which "gradually crystallized out of notions of relational processes and states … the living sense of confrontation [and from] living with one who confronts him." Prior to this, no detached concepts or prefigured categories of knowledge existed. As man began to grow apart from the world (in a process like that of a developing child) the detached relation to data became possible. But it was likely a slow process, over countless generations. Something of a glimpse of this development, Buber thinks, can be seen in the mystically/spiritually-tinged worldviews of primitive people and the traces of this wonder and mystery that works its way into primitive languages. Here the immediate relation to the world is still the primary mode of being, which is then codified into language. But over time, the development of It-relation to the world overtook these primitive worldviews and the emergence of the detached I and the awareness of the world as experienced by this I increased. This primal past, Buber argues, is where "our melancholy lot took shape" – with the emergence and eventual ascendency of I-consciousness and the I-It relation.[34]

In a sense, one might call this Buber's critical-theoretical take on modernity. Whereas the I-Thou relation is primary and the only truly human relation, the modern world has seen the ever increasing domination of the I-It at the expense of this primary relation. Buber tells a story about man's rapid improvement of the ability to "experience and use." Because of this increase in the I-It, communal and institutional life become void of real meaning (more on this in a bit). Given that only from within the I-Thou can one be present and truly act and create, further retreat into the It-world brings forth a sense of increasingly being at the mercy of causality. All of this produces a weakened sense that a person can recover real encounter with being. It is an experience (and now this is the correct word) of alienation both from man and from the world. It is a despairing retreat into the *im*personal.

But Buber does hold out some hope for the recovery of the I-Thou, though at this stage the recourse to individual thought and reflection (an I-It activity) is well established as a means for dealing with any existential discomfort (though the same retreat that is many ways is its source). Those things that have been reduced to Its in our experience are nonetheless always (potentially) able to reemerge in full relation to us. The "Thou" remains a possibility despite its habituated removal from the lives of humans in the modern world. But one can be moved to speak the basic word pair because of its primacy. After quoting approvingly of the kind of "I-saying" practiced by Socrates, Goethe and Jesus, Buber insists "The You abides."[35]

According to this same critical-theoretic line of thinking, Buber understands modern institutions, (both those of the economy and state, as well as "personal institutions" such as marriage) as having fallen under nearly complete sway of the It

world. That is, they are removed from any attachment from real presence and relation of humans to each other. As such, they take on a life of their own to which the humans living within these structures feel powerless to stop them. He writes, "the state is no longer led: the stokers still pile up coal, but the leaders merely *seem* to rule the racing engines … the machinery of the economy is beginning to hum in an unwonted manner" and the despotism of the It "under which the I, more and more impotent, is still dreaming that it is in command."[36] The It-world cannot be dispensed with in man's communal life (just as it cannot be dispensed with by the individual). Buber even thinks that man's "will to profit and will to power" as exercised in the spheres of the economy and politics are possibly legitimate. But only if they are "tied to the will of human relations and carried by it. There is no evil drive until the drive detaches itself from our being."[37] The institutions of the state and the economy, to recover from this "impotence" at the hands of the It-world, need to be reattached to a "You-saying spirit" of "true community" built around "living reciprocal relationship." He writes:

> The statesman or businessman that serves the spirit is no dilettante. He knows well that he cannot simply confront the people with whom he has to deal as so many carriers of the You, without undoing his own work. Nevertheless he ventures to do this, not simply but up to the limit suggested to him by the spirit; and the spirit does suggest a limit to him … He does not become a babbling enthusiast; he serves the truth which, though supra-rational, does not disown reason but holds it in her lap … It is only from the presence of the spirit that significance and joy can flow into all work … and all that is worked and possessed, though it remains attached to the It-world, can nevertheless be transfigured to the point where it confronts us and represents the You.[38]

All this is to say that the nature of institutions such as the state and the economy require something of the It world to function, but can (and should) also maintain a connection (always limited) to communal life that is centered on actual (inter)personal relation. Even though those involved in large-scale institutions in modern democratic societies simply

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cannot enter into full relation with every individual under their purview (they would

instantly be overburdened and rendered incapable of performing their duties), they can

(and should) retain something of the spirit of an I-Thou relation in their dealings – a sense

of responsibility to the actual human beings that exist within the scope and dealings of

the institution in question.

Genuine Dialogue in Later Works

Buber's prolific writings after *I and Thou* were often in the service of elaborating

his arguments in that work. In this section I work through two essays most clearly suited

to elaborating a dialogic theory for deliberative politics: his 1929 essay, "Dialogue," and

his much later "Elements of the Interhuman," from 1957. In these two essays, Buber

offers a number of extensions and clarifications of the I-Thou relation (now called

dialogue, or genuine dialogue) that will be crucial for envisioning what a democratic

politics that relies on a dialogic foundation will look like, and helping to distinguish it

further from a deliberative politics based in rational communication.

 "Dialogue"

"Dialogue" was produced in order to clarify the 'dialogical' principle he had

introduced in *I and Thou* six years earlier. He described his goal in the essay being: " to

illustrate it and to make precise its [dialogue's] relation to essential spheres of life."[39]

Buber's first section in this essay is committed to a description of dialogue and argues

first (and perhaps surprisingly) that silence can be communication – that "Speech can renounce all the media of sense, and it is still speech."[40] He offers an example of two men sitting beside one another not speaking, not even looking at one another. One of the men is open and inviting in his attitude, the other, however, is a normally reserved man, often simply incapable of communicating himself. But, in this moment, the reserved man (though he says nothing) feels this "spell lifted" though he did not do anything himself to have done this. He may never actually say anything to the other man, but he will have been opened up nonetheless in communication, though it is in silence. Thus Buber says, "Human dialogue, therefore, although it has a distinctive life in the sign, that is sound and gesture … can exist without the sign, but admittedly not in an objectively comprehensible form."[41] This echoes a point made earlier – that the basic words need not be spoken in a literal sense, but represent a "turning toward" an other that is "in language" (generally speaking) but not reducible to words or grammatical structure.

Perception was relegated to the I-It relation in *I and Thou*. But in his "Dialogue" essay, Buber refines this view to some degree. He now offers 3 types of perceivers: The observer, the onlooker, and one who instead "becomes aware." The observer notes details of an other as a collector of data. The onlooker is a more artistic sort. He or she lets impressions be made on them, not desiring to count or quantify, but to let experience unfold before them. However different these two seem, Buber argues that they both have situated themselves apart from an other in an impersonal way. The third type, however, is one who has been "spoken to" by an other and thus brought into a relation which is immediate. Here one cannot perceive the other as an object. Rather:

> I have got to do with him. Perhaps I have to accomplish something about him; but perhaps I have only to learn something, and it is a matter of my 'accepting.' It

may be that I have to answer at once, to this very man before me; it may be that the saying has a long and manifold transmission before it, and that I am to answer some other person at some other time and place, in who knows what kind of speech, and it is now only a matter of taking the answering on myself. But in each instance a word demanding an answer has happened to me.[42]

This is a perception of some kind, an awareness of something having happened. There is real content exchanged. Buber suggests calling it "becoming aware," which indicates presence – being aware "with" the other, as opposed to an observation "about" an other.

Buber also offers a comment on responsibility in the first section of this essay. He says, "Genuine responsibility exists only where there is real responding."[43] It is thus a matter of being "attentive" and "facing creation as it happens" ready to respond and participate. No system of moral rules or dictates (all of which remove the face of the other and our actual responsibility to them in some given moment) could capture this, unless it is connected to this sense of personal being there for an other. This is not, then, a Kantian system built on the power of reasoning apart from a given context. Rather, it is a morality that owes its sense to the specific presence and care for an other that has called out to us.

The second section of the essay discusses the limitations of the dialogic principle. That is, what does and does not count as dialogue in the sense Buber means it. He begins by comparing "genuine dialogue" with two other forms of conversation: technical dialogue and monologue disguised as dialogue. Genuine dialogue (spoken or silent) "where each of the participants really has in mind the other or others in their present and particular being and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relation between himself and them."[44] There is also what Buber calls a "technical dialogue" where two people converse "prompted solely by the need of objective

understanding." This seems to be an everyday sort of conversation aimed at the transmission of information, which is so necessary to "modern existence." And though this is not a genuine dialogue, it can occasionally "break the surface" of these exchanges (which may interrupt the flow of information, but, of course, may do a great deal more for the interruption). A third sort is the most troubling for Buber – monologue disguised as dialogue. Buber offers four examples of this: a debate in which each opponent speaks in order to win as if in a competition against someone (the particular someone being unimportant); a conversation that is motivated solely "to have one's own self-reliance confirmed by marking the impression that is made, or if it has become unsteady to have it strengthened"; a friendly chat where neither is willing to open themselves up; or, a lover's talk "in which both partners alike enjoy their own glorious soul and their precious experience."[45] None of these sorts of exchanges are genuine dialogue (they lack a true I-Thou relation) because they do not involve the phenomenon of being fully present to an other. There is no risk, no reciprocity. The partner is not important, only the activity of the self for its own ends – a victory in debate, a confirmation of one's sense of self, passing time by way of a reserved chat, or a self-gratifying attempt to enjoy an other in our own experience (all of which need an other, but not *this particular* other whom they address).

These non-dialogue forms of communication compare interestingly with Habermas's communicative action. Whereas Habermas understood an interpersonal relation between interlocutors as necessary for communicative action to ensue, he defined their interaction in terms of reaching understanding, not in terms of the relation itself. As such, it seems very much like the technical dialogue Buber describes – concerned with

information and coordination. To the extent Buber understands the occasional glimpses of real relation as emerging from such an attempt to reach understanding, it is as if the relation emerges despite (and certainly not solely in the service of) the transmission of information required for shared action. As I discussed in chapter 2, Habermas seems to either assume a relation of the right sort prior to the creation of a shared understanding, or is only concerned for its instrumental ability to open up communication in a way capable of being meaningful to each participant. But in doing so, all of the power gets relegated to the nature of the language used and its inherent ability to change minds and bind the interlocutors to action. The deliberativists, of course, incorporated this directly into their own theories. But to look at this through Buber's lens, this is an overemphasis on what is said rather than the spirit in which it is said. After all, nothing guarantees sincere communication, no matter how necessary it is to human life. Habermas knew this, too, of course, which is why he spent so much time understanding the pathologies of speech that interrupted the natural functioning of communicative action. But for Buber, strategic action (to frame it as Habermas does) is a symptom not of a certain way of (parasitically) using language, but of a failure to relate. We remain bound to our own ends, unopened to the voice and call of the other. Dialogue does not follow from a desire to reach understanding about something (though it might), but by the relation itself, whatever the content of our conversation.

Consider further the move toward discourse and the argumentative stance required. This removes one further away from the realm of personal relation, towards monologic reasoning. In order to avoid a recourse to (Kantian) monologue the deliberativist has to place even more trust in the intersubjective power of language to

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produce better results. But, to argue one's position does not imply any reciprocal concern for the arguments of others. Hence the need for deliberative democrats to build in (following Habermas) norms of reciprocity grounding one's participation in moral and political discourse (grounds to move one beyond monological, self-regarding reasoning). But rather than see this as Buber might (as considering one's moral obligations with a sense of the ever-present Thou), they had to depend on the logical power of such grounds. And a debate cannot produce any transformative powers if those engaged in practical discourse are not opened up to being moved. But the Habermasian theory of discourse ethics and the deliberativists who borrowed it lost sight of what made that transformation possible. Only reasons remained to fill in what was lost by ignoring the primary importance of the dialogic relation.

A similar line of view is offered in Buber's take on thinking. As a personal activity, thinking would seem to be an activity relegated to monologue. But Buber defends a type of reflection that has a dialogic grounding. Like morality based in a sense of the ever-present Thou, thinking is (at least potentially) built around dialogue. The emergence of thought happens against an "inner court" that is not the subject's only, but contains elements of those to whom the thinker must answer in arriving at and testing this thought. Buber calls on Socrates, von Humboldt, and Feuerbach to understand thinking as potentially located in the relation of an I to a Thou that has been taken up into one's own process of thought. But in opposition to a more Kantian and (to a qualified extent) Habermasian insight, Buber writes: "If we are serious about thinking between the I and Thou then it is not enough to cast our thoughts towards the other subject of thought framed by thought. We should also, with the thinking, precisely with the thinking, live

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towards the other man who is not framed by thought but is bodily present before us …

towards his person, to which, to be sure, the activity of thinking also belongs."[46] That is,

not to the arguments we can expect or imagine from another considered in our own mind,

but to the other's actual voice and presence as taken up into our own thinking. Habermas,

of course, tries to accomplish something of this sort in requiring an anchoring of Kantian

abstractions in a practical discourse where real speakers participate with one another. But

something is lost in the quest for the impartial viewpoint that must construct arguments in

the moral sphere (and, as translated by deliberativists, the political world). Instead,

personas in particular should form the Thou in our thinking, as opposed to an abstracted

and generalized Thou that has lost its specific voice, face, and presence in our

considerations.

The final point I wish to draw out of "Dialogue," is Buber's consideration of the

nature of community in light of this dialogic principle, which echoes his insights in *I and

Thou.* Even in the dealings between humans at the level of "the masses" a core of

personal relation can be realized, though contemporary community is devoid of this

living center. In contemporary politics, groups (we might think of political parties in this

regard) are dedicated to ends and collect up people as a means to build power and

accomplish these ends through influence and/or institutional channels. But this is not the

nature of true community. Buber distinguishes between a collectivity and a community:

> A collectivity is not a binding but a bundling together: individuals packed
> together, armed and equipped in common, with only as much life from man to
> man as will inflame the marching step. But community, growing community
> (which is all we have known so far) is the being no longer side by side but with
> one another of a multitude of persons. And this multitude, though it moves
> towards one goal, yet experiences everywhere a turning to, a dynamic facing of,
> the other, a flowing from *I* to *Thou.* Community is where community happens.

> Collectivity is based on an organized atrophy of personal existence, community on its increase and confirmation in life lived towards one another.[47]

The creation of community is not inconsistent with authority, but cannot persist with authority that seeks only the gathering of adherents, which is how politics generally operates. While the deliberativists no doubt can share Buber's concerns about collectivity versus community (a similar dissatisfaction with interest-group liberalism, after all, animated much of the energy of this literature), the option here is a turning toward others directly, not as required for more perfect democratic procedure, but as required for real participation with actual others.

"Elements of the Interhuman"

The term "interhuman" was invented by Buber long before *I and Thou,* but not fully elaborated or clarified until an essay very late in his career, "Elements of the Interhuman," which was published originally in *Psychiatry* in 1957. In this essay, Buber gives us a more thorough understanding of the dynamic that permits transformation in one or both partners in a dialogic relation. The "interhuman" represents a space of action that is between partners (in the sense of being within neither partner), which can have a profound impact on each of them. Further, Buber offers more limits to dialogic relation that indicate what interrupts the creation of this profound, impactful 'in between' space.

He begins the essay by distinguishing between "the social" and the "interhuman." The social realm, similar to Buber's explanation of collectivities, indicates only a common belonging together. Our interactions in the social world may or may not contain meaningful interpersonal relations. The Interhuman realm, however, is a term meant to

exclusively describe a realm of interpersonal relation. This relation can exist even among

the most mundane of exchanges, even between opponents, and even in brief, passing

encounters. Of course, this is the relation of the I-Thou, and the phenomenon of our being

absorbed into a relation with another. But here Buber offers it as distinct from everyday

social relations of humans, normally experienced and understood. Further, the dialogue is

necessarily not something in the objective experience of the other – experienced in their

psyche and bound by their own pre-given psychological state. It is instead the realm that

is created (and re-created in each and every instance) in between two partners who have

entered into the I-Thou (or into dialogue). Buber writes about this realm:

> When two men converse together, the psychological is certainly an important part
> of the situation … Yet this is only the hidden accompaniment to the conversation
> itself, the phonetic event fraught with meaning, whose meaning is only to be
> found neither in one of the two partners nor in both together, but only in their
> dialogue itself, in this 'between' which they live together.[48]

Thus the interhuman is reminiscent of Habermas's understanding of the intersubjective

nature of language, where meaning is produced not in either subject, but between them

through the medium of communication. But this interhuman realm is not reducible to

language in Buber, of course. It is instead a relation of one to another that opens up this

'between-ness.'

Buber then goes on to describe a series of problems that can impact the possibility

for the emergence of the interhuman realm between interlocutors. As with is description

of the limits of dialogue, Buber is concerned here to point out those modes of relation,

attitudes towards and designs on one's dialogic partner, that prevent a true I-Thou

encounter from happening; or, in this case, the creation of the in between of the

interhuman realm. When one attempts to interact with an other so as to produce a certain

response in their partner (impression management, as some would understand it), this prevents a real meeting of the interlocutors from happening. This is giving over to semblance, an attempt to focus my partner on some element (real, imagined, or otherwise) of my I in our conversation, which Buber opposes to meeting one with spontaneity and without reserve. Further, there is a barrier to the interhuman when people speak not to the other present before them, but past this person "to a fictitious court of appeal whose life consists of nothing but listening to him."[49] Buber argues that Sartre elevates this deficiency of human interaction into *the* ontological/existential problem of human life: the inevitable walls between partners in conversation that are impassible. But Buber understands this only as evidence of contemporary conditions and man's continued fall, not as evidence of an uncorrectable existential condition. This, of course, was central to the story of modernity in *I and Thou,* where modern conditions made I-Thou relations increasingly difficult. And it remains central here as Buber understands the increasing distance between interlocutors that too-often typifies our interactions.

Buber then offers a comparison between the propagandist and the educator. Both seek to bring something about in another, and thus have (in a sense) designs on the being of the other. But the propagandist does this with a message delivered in such as way as to be indifferent to the particular other in question, except perhaps for some qualities or other that they possess, which the propagandist can bend his message to more effectively secure their capture. The educator, on the other hand, seeks to form a partnership of sorts with a specific other and help in bringing about some potential in that other; to actualize something in them (their specific pupil), with the help of the educator's expertise. The propagandist is very close to Habermas's strategic actor, bent on producing a desired

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effect in their partner by means of deceit and manipulation. But where Habermas could only point to a parasitic use of language, Buber gives us a glimpse into the deeper failure of the strategic actor – they have failed to enter in the first place into a dialogic relation, but have remained at a distance in order to achieve their personal goals, whatever the structure of language they employed in this effort.

Perhaps more interesting than the failures of the "interhuman" realm are Buber's descriptions of genuine dialogue over and against these failures. They indicate that dialogue is comprised not only of a reciprocal, mutual relation, Buber also brings in elements of mutual recognition and even an agonistic dimension of struggle over and against one's interlocutor. Consider the following description of what must constitute a relation in genuine dialogue:

> The chief presupposition for the rise of genuine dialogue is that each should regard his partner as the very one he is. I become aware of him, aware that he is different, essentially different from myself, in the definite, unique way which is peculiar to him, and I accept whom I thus see, so that in the full earnestness I can direct what I say to him as the person he is. Perhaps from time to time I must offer strict opposition to his view about the subject of our conversation. But I accept this person, the personal bearer of a conviction, in his definite being out of which his conviction has grown – even though I must try to show, bit by bit, the wrongness of this very conviction. I affirm the person I struggle with: I struggle with him as his partner, I confirm him as creature and as creation, I confirm him who is opposed to me as him who is over against me. [50]

Mutual recognition of a sort is thus presupposed in dialogue. But not simply in virtue of the two participants speaking to one another. It is presupposed in their relation, and their turning towards one another as individuals. And this grounding permits even a struggle directly against this other, so long as it is considered to be against the views of *this* other, and not some generalized argument or point of view for which we see them as a stand in.

This is in part accomplished by what Buber terms the "personal making present" of an other "through imagining the real." By this, Buber means to enter into an I-Thou relation, though he describes it here as receiving a whole being without reduction or abstraction, in "his wholeness, unity, and uniqueness, and with his dynamic center which realizes all these things ever anew."[51] Imagining is a difficult term here, I think. It recalls something like the enlarged mentality of Arendt or other constructions fraught with the implications of transparent subjectivity. Or, worse, it may seem to indicate one forming presumptions about content of the other that we "imagine" being really them, which in fact is not. But this would be, again, to miss the mark and associate this kind of imagining of the other with the exhaustive 'It-knowledge' of all the particular qualities of the individual to whom we relate. Instead, Buber seems to have in mind the immersion into the other's presence of which we become fully "aware" in the sense of awareness he discussed in the "Dialogue" essay – an awareness of the other "with" them, as opposed to knowledge of or about them at a distance. Thus he defines the "imagining the real" not as simply seeing the other, but as a "bold swinging" into their life as I attempt to make them present to myself. And if we each accomplish this bold swing, the in between is opened up and genuine dialogue can ensue. Buber summarizes the nature of genuine dialogue as such:

> In genuine dialogue the turning to the partner takes place in all truth, that is, it is a turning of the being. Every speaker 'means' the partner or partners to whom he turns as this personal existence. To 'mean' someone in this connection is at the same time to exercise the degree of making present which is possible to the speaker at that moment. The experiencing senses and the imagining of the real which completes the findings of the sense work together to make the other present as a whole and as a unique being, as the person he is. But the speaker does not merely perceive the one who is present to him in this way; he receives him as his partner, and that means that he confirms this other being, so far as it is for him to confirm. The true turning of his person to the other includes this confirmation,

this acceptance. Of course, such a confirmation does not mean approval; but no matter in what I am against the other, by accepting him as my partner in genuine dialogue I have affirmed him as a person.[52]

And the benefits of such genuine dialogue, though uncertain, and certainly rare, are at least potentially significant. He writes:

> But where dialogue is fulfilled in its being, between partners who have turned to each other in truth, who express themselves without reserve, who express themselves without reserve and are free of the desire for semblance, there is brought into being a memorable common fruitfulness which is to be found nowhere else. At such times, at each such time, the word arises in a substantial way between men who have been seized in their depths and have opened out by the dynamic of an element of togetherness. The interhuman opens out what otherwise remains unopened.[53]

This is exactly the kind of openness required for the deliberative project to work. A "fruitfulness" made possible by being opened up to the influence of an other, which is produced between the self and other through dialogue. In the section that follows, I start to synthesize Buber's conceptions of the I-Thou relation and genuine dialogue into a conception of deliberative politics. But first, I want to briefly take stock of the most salient features of the I-Thou relation and genuine dialogue in order to make it clear what I am applying to the deliberative picture.

A Summary of the Dialogic Relation

An I-Thou relation to an other is an event, or a phenomenon of encounter. It is that feeling we have of being "lost" into a relation present to us – the existing in the present over and against our partner (be it another human or otherwise). For instance, in any given conversation (or, in a 'meaningful silence'), we may slip in and out of an I-Thou relation, escaping from time to time to consider what we have just been through and

reorient ourselves in the world. We check the time (how long have we been sitting here?);

we reflect on our own about something that was said and locate it among other things we

know (though in truth our brain and body has already done much of this without our

awareness); we plan a response; we recall other matters that need our attention. That is,

we remove ourselves into the It world and do the work of contemplation and reflection

that necessarily happens in this realm. But, so long as we remained turned to this partner,

immersed in our dealings with them, we may return to this relation, again lost in their

presence and they in ours. This is the phenomenon of genuine dialogue.

While in this I-Thou relation, each time we find ourselves in it, we have

necessarily lost sight of those particular qualities of our partner that we may otherwise

reduce them to. Instead, for a moment (however long this moment lasts) they are simply

this person present before me, my "Thou." Nothing about seeing a singular and unique

being means that I forget or stop knowing any of the qualities they possess, only that I

cannot pick them out just now, in this moment with them. They have fused into this

whole person that "fills the firmament" for me. This confirmation of them as only

themselves is a form of recognition. Mutual recognition, in fact, since we also require it

from them for our "in between" to emerge. We have the power to grant someone

affirmation as an equal partner in dialogue, but no guarantee that they will offer us the

same. It is a reciprocal granting of recognition necessary for the entering into the relation

itself.

Similarly, I have lost sight of my personal ego in this event – my pre-determined

goals for the conversation, my desire to produce a certain response in my partner, my

anxieties and self-consciousness, all these get a momentary reprieve. They have not gone

away entirely, I can go back and get them, and I will often have to do this if anything particular is to be accomplished according to plan. But to do so means to break out of the relation itself and close ourselves off to the more fully open and reciprocal relational event.

Again an example is perhaps the easiest way to communicate this phenomenon. I often rely on an example of reading a good book (probably fiction). This is a limited I-Thou encounter, and a particular kind of dialogic encounter given the unresponsive nature of the inanimate object in question. And, perhaps it is less compelling, politically speaking, when compared to an argumentative exchange of views between citizens. Still, I think it is useful for describing the phenomenon in question. At various times while reading we may think to ourselves how interesting we find the author's writing style, or reflect on an image presented in the book and let that trail us off into memories and feelings we associate with that image. Each and every time we do this the text disappears and our direct relation to it is broken. Often, if we continued reading (that is, letting our eyes scan over the words on the page) we might realize that we had not actually been aware of what occurred in the text while we were preoccupied with other thoughts. But, there are those times when the words blend together into a narrative and we are lost in a relation to it as the book "speaks" and we "listen." Sentences roll past, pages turn, though we don't know how many. And we are locked in to each and every word, its meaning (for us) being revealed without our stopping to define any of the particular words or phrases. Again, we will break off this connection and contemplate some element in this story, or perhaps turn our attention to something unrelated. Now we quantify, categorize, "make sense" of the book and its story as an object. Things that we were simply aware of as the

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narrative unfolded before us now become information for our contemplation. And this is an important thing to do over and over again. We need to contemplate and consider what occurs otherwise in a dialogic relation. But, enjoying being with this story, we might reenter our dialogue with it and let it continue to speak to us. And long after we've finished reading it, if it was a particularly good book (and good, in part, means having been able to maintain our sustained immersion in it) it still speaks to us, having made an impact in our self through our encounter with it. So it is, I think, within a relation of dialogue with a partner turned towards us, and us to them.

This lasting impact is possible because in such a relation we are inevitably opened up to the other, and they to us. Thus the relation is one of reciprocity by its very nature. It required each of us to turn towards one another and enter into the relation. And going forward, we remain open to the other's influence and they to ours (if we are thinking now of another person) until one or both of us withdraws again thereby ending the I-Thou relation, though, of course, not its influence. Within this relation we are not simply passive. We are certainly capable of action – even, for instance, of argument. But what we cannot do is stop to contemplate how we should argue in order to "win," or how we should comport ourselves so as to be thought of in high esteem by the other. But we can certainly, passionately, and without reserve, argue; or teach, or heal, or perform any number of actions, not on, but with our partner.

What remains now is to apply this understanding of dialogue to something that is beneficial for deliberative democratic politics.

A Politics Anchored in Dialogue

The easiest way to explain what rethinking deliberation through the lens of a dialogic politics looks like, I think, is by revisiting a basic sketch of the Habermasian foundations for deliberation. As discussed in the first chapter, the idea of deliberative democracy was built around a normative core of reason-giving, grounded in the inherent rationality of language. Even while some deliberativists attempted to create distance between themselves and the Habermasian account of rational argumentation that dominated the early deliberative literature, this normative core remained central to their project, if only implicitly. The unforced force of better arguments, however they might be communicated, received, or spread could be translated into democratic practices beneficial to everyone by the very nature of their being offered and defended. But, outside of a Habermasian faith in language use being rational at its core, deliberativists have had a difficult time showing why we could expect people to be moved by arguments to adopt new positions, make changes to their identities and worldviews, and bind themselves to new ways of thinking. There were both practical and deeper ontological reasons to suspect whether this program could be based on Habermasian influenced theories about language use, however compelling something about the idea of a democratic politics based on citizen deliberation seemed to be.

But something other than arguments animated transformative potential in the accounts of the deliberative theorists that I presented in chapter 2: in the protected and friendly setting of the subaltern counter public among those with whom one shared a feeling of solidarity, in the face-to-face meetings in city life and in the interactions

grounded in greeting and storytelling in the public sphere, in everyday talk and everyday

activism outside and beyond formal deliberation, and in the small-group face-to-face

settings in Deliberative Opinion Polls. I argue all of these theories are gesturing at a

moment or moments in which someone could be (and/or was) "moved" in ways that

deliberative politics requires. Perhaps up to a point arguments mattered. But it was more

about unreserved communication (in idiom and style suited to oneself and one's

audience), and being "bodily confronted" with the other in public, as the hearer of a story

(this story, from this person before me), or as a member of a small deliberative group

(where real others are present to me, not "naked" arguments). In these moments (where

dialogic meeting between people is possible) something beyond arguments seems to

matter. What does matter is presence, interpersonal connection, and deep engagement

with an other, in a word: dialogue. This seems to better explain the kind of event that all

of these theorists are articulating. Rational arguments can have an impact on our thinking

and worldview, no doubt. But such arguments apart from a real meeting with an other

there in our presence lack the transformative power they otherwise might have. If

arguments alone could do this, the large group meetings would suffice in the deliberative

opinion poll, the egalitarian public sphere would be a good enough forum for neutral

arguments, formal deliberations would accomplish anything informal, everyday

interactions might, and stories and greetings would be just so much superfluous

communication for real arguments to cut through. But this is not the case in any of these

examples of successful communication/deliberation. An I-Thou connection (a dialogic

encounter) seems to get much closer to pointing to what had the power to transform in

these communicative interactions in face-to-face settings. In such settings, where

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dialogue is more likely to spring forth, the rational give and take of reasons may or may not occur. But if they do, they are much more likely to impact those who hear them in the way deliberativists need.

Along these lines communications theorists Kenneth Cissna and Rob Anderson have adapted the ideas of Martin Buber and Carl Rogers into a theory of public dialogue. They based their work largely on the views expressed by each in a single "moment of meeting" between the two in a public dialogue in 1957. Prior to this event Buber had expressed reservations in writing about the possibility for real dialogue in a public setting before an audience. After the meeting, though he offered mixed impressions of Rogers and the topics they covered, he asked that the final paragraph of his "Elements of the Interhuman" be removed because it had stated that a public dialogue was impossible.[54] He had clearly come to believe it was in fact possible. The event and the positions expressed by each Buber and Rogers lead Cissna and Anderson to describe public dialogue as capable of producing change. They write: "Dialogic change is not progressive, not a constant, but the result of often surprising and even epiphanous or sporadic insight … Dialogue does not demand full understanding, complete mutuality, or pervasive cultural immersion; instead, it depends on sparks of recognition across the gap of strangeness."[55] And these momentary meetings can be facilitated by careful planning and institutional design – though of course, never demanded or forced. But they are possible, as Buber and Rogers seem to agree, even in the face of distinct and unknowable otherness and even deep disagreement. I will save the specifics of institutional design for the next chapter. But the very possibility that dialogue can be achieved in public settings means that the concept holds promise for deliberative politics.

With these insights in mind, let me present a few noteworthy features of a dialogically-grounded deliberative politics that I think have an advantage over the usual model. Following this, I will attempt to revisit some objections to the deliberative model offered in chapter 1 with this new normative center in mind. I think these objections are still weighty, but take on a very different feel when dialogue, not rational language, is the core of a deliberative politics. But there are also some concerns on this model that should be acknowledged. After detailing some advantages of the dialogic model, I will treat these concerns briefly. Finally, the task of the following chapter will be to trace out some of the practical/institutional implications of this switch in focus.

A dialogic core for deliberative democracy has five principle advantages over the classic model: It escapes a too-narrow grounding in rational language use; it can offer an account of fruitfulness with or without formal deliberation; it offers an account of the significance and importance of otherness; it holds a central place for mutual recognition that goes beyond a simple acceptance into communication; and it explains the nature of reciprocity and mutuality within the interaction itself.

First, dialogue successfully jettisons the problematic reliance on rationality inherent in language use of the right sort. The I-Thou relation, while structured in a certain way by language (we, after all, "speak" I-Thou, and we certainly have an element of communication whenever a dialogue is entered into), is nonetheless not reducible to language or language rules. After all, even silence could qualify as dialogue if it was shared in openness to the possibility of encounter with an other. Instead, the dialogic relation describes a phenomenon that is a part of our experience in the broadest sense of the term. It is located in the interpersonal relation itself, just as Honneth directs us to look

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in his critique of Habermas. That is, it is in the "moral experience" of citizens as potential participants in dialogue with one another. How so? I think one often experiences some failure to connect with another along the lines described by Buber. We perceive a conservation as a failure when a partner refuses to put aside their own designs for the encounter (such as the aggressive debater who is clearly trying to "one up" our arguments for the sake of victory), or perhaps fails to recognize us as a whole being (remaining focused on some quality or other they have ascribed to us). To put it another way, we often know when we have been received as an object for the other – when we have been "It-ed." This can even happen with a look (or a failure to look) at another, or some other non-verbal indication that we are unwelcomed as a partner. On the other hand, we also are aware when we have connected deeply with someone, or even when we were welcomed by an other even if no such deep connection occurred at that time or place.

Related to this decoupling from rational language use, I think dialogue can supply the idea of fruitfulness through meeting with or without deliberation in any strict sense. Deliberative democratic theories relying on a Habermasian foundation are relegated to attaching progress or movement to a (hopefully) successful process of public reason-giving. Debate has to change minds on the basis of better reasons in order for democracy to improve. But a dialogic theory can understand the possibility of meaningful experiences that have transformative potential with or without argumentation, public or otherwise. Fruitful encounters exist even where no deliberation has taken place. This is, in part, I think, the reason stories and testimonials are seen by Young and Sanders as potentially productive forms of communication. They "do" something to us (sometimes) if we are in position to let them, not by virtue of any set of reasons that we affirm as valid

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or not. We may not even be moved to respond or question in that moment of receiving someone's personal message. But so long as we are there to receive it as such, we may feel ourselves truly changed (now, or over time) through the encounter, and thus a fruitful dialogue has taken place.

Dialogue provides an account of self-other relations that is fuller than anything deliberative theory has been able to offer. It understands the otherness of an other as an essential part of the dialogic encounter. Deliberative theory in its Habermasian formulations struggles with the actuality of an other apart from the arguments, made in universal terms that an other may submit to discourse. Even in its more sensitive treatments the real, bodily other is always in tension with the universal aims of discursive reasoning.[56] The rational process unleashed through "subjectless forms of communication" occur apart from the immediate interactions of "personal bearers of a conviction," within their particularly constituted lifeworld. Hence Habermas's limiting of recognition to one's ability to participate in discourse – as "someone" from "somewhere" to be sure, but always obligated to using terms all might accept. This tension is at the heart, in many ways, of both Fraser's and Young's friendly criticisms of deliberative politics in the public sphere (which they both found too exclusionary of diversity), though they did not present it as a damning critique for the entire project of deliberative democracy. Dialogue, however, gives substance to the other in their particular interaction with us. They are this or that other, in particular, the person to whom I say Thou. Buber offers in his dialogue with Carl Rogers (referenced above) an example of how this otherness is linked to the necessary element of surprise and spontaneity in dialogue. He said, "A dialogue – let's take a rather trivial image. The dialogue is like a game of chess.

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The whole charm of chess is that I do not know and cannot know what my partner will do. I am surprised by what he does and on this surprise the whole play is based." He is further reported to have said (though the tape ran out at this unfortunate point and had to be changed) that a feature of dialogue is that the otherness of the other is "prized."[57] This orientation towards the other convinced Cissna and Anderson that both Buber's and Roger's work prefigured some postmodern concepts in that it understood and accepted (even celebrated) radical alterity (otherness) and was suspicious of any meta-narratives that sought to reduce this alterity.[58]

Regardless of its relative relationship to post-modernity, however, dialogue does "deal with" this fact of otherness by understanding a role for affirmation/recognition at its core. This is not exactly the same kind of recognition meant by Honneth, though it is clearly related. Honneth's program is concerned with a "weak" universal argument for the inherent needs of individuals for intersubjective validation along specific lines (love, rights, solidarity), the absence of which is experienced as disrespect or humiliation. As mentioned in chapter 2, it is a program pitched at the very broad level of an entire social and cultural "order of recognition." Buber's sense of recognition or affirmation of an other is more clearly located in immediate interpersonal relations. It equates to the particular relation in which one is affirmed or granted a status as an equal participant in the co-creation of a dialogue. It is a creative act signified by our turning to them in particular, whom we "mean" when we address them. Without this act of mutual recognition, a mutual granting of "permission to be,"[59] no dialogue can be entered into and no reciprocal engagement between I and Thou can ensue.

The deliberative democratic account of reciprocity and openness to an other's views was something that either had to be assumed in the orientation of participants (an "ought" for each and every potential participant in deliberation, if it could possibly succeed), or could be rationally defended as a product of deliberation and thus could be assumed to motivate participants in a rational discourse (Benhabib's non-vicious circle). They had some inkling this was possible given the "natural" functioning of communicative language in Habermas's theory. But they also had a sense of the very real distortions of such linguistic functioning from the same source in his critical theoretical treatment of the pathologies of late modernity. And yet, something like reciprocity needed to be a part of deliberation if it were to "do" anything transformative. Dialogue solves this difficulty about the source and expectations of reciprocity in offering a theory of openness to the other as an inherent feature of the dialogue itself. It is, in a sense, thrust upon us as we are opened up to our partner. This is reminiscent of the Habermasian story about reciprocity inherent in our relations to an other, but now grounds this in a particular phenomenon of relation that by its nature leaves us in a position to be transformed (potentially) by an other and they by us. And this is not dependent on the type of language used, but on the type of relation entered into – the I-Thou as opposed to the I-It – whatever is said (or not) between the two partners.

Let me make one final point about the relationship between a deliberative and dialogic politics. Nothing about this dialogic grounding of democratic politics means that deliberation is not a vital, even necessary element of a democracy. In fact, it is best to see dialogue and deliberation as complimentary notions. If deliberation properly speaking (the give and take of rationally-grounded reasons towards solving some problem or other)

could not secure itself as a normative foundation for democratic politics, this is not to say deliberation is not a valuable activity. Only now there is reason to see, in phenomenological terms, what often happens when it goes well. We are moved from within an opening up through dialogue to consider new positions and new ideas. This is where the transformative potential resides. And good rationally grounded arguments can be very useful in this process for realizing cooperative, political ends. In fact, such processes of reasoning may even be required if the positions we are moved to are in fact going to be beneficial in the creation of better (more fair, just, and practical) policy. After all, nothing in the nature of a dialogue guarantees good collective policy. To sum the point up: if deliberation is going to work to transform hearts and minds, it needs dialogue. If dialogue is going to be put to work in the service of better democratic politics, it needs to (at least sometimes) facilitate good and productive deliberation about political matters of more general concern.

Criticisms of Deliberation: A Reappraisal in Light of Dialogue

Another way of understanding what dialogue offers deliberative politics is afforded by revisiting the two major critiques of deliberative democratic theory offered at the end of the first chapter. I labeled these, broadly speaking, practical and ontological critiques. The practical critiques were concerned with the applicability of the normative core of deliberative democracy in "the real world." And while I suggested that some major efforts to incorporate the insights of the practical critiques had been made, I also concluded that these critiques were evidence that the application of the normative core of

deliberative democracy was always going to be suspect given the difficulty in sorting out what could properly count as deliberation, and how to then apply this concept to politics. Reasons are tough to sort out, and even tougher to rely on in any consistent way for democratic practice. Thus these critiques, while to a degree able to be mitigated, amounted to a caution in placing deliberation at the center of any democratic theory if it were going to have real practical impact on the quality of politics and social life.

I will only offer a limited defense of dialogue here, as the practical elements of a politics anchored in dialogue occupy the following chapter. But briefly, a dialogic grounding has the advantage of being phenomenologically "real." That is, however rare, it is something we do sometimes experience in our relations to others that gets at the heart of when, how, and why we are moved to new positions and new ways of being. Slowly or suddenly, we are forced to answer for something brought to us by an other, not in the abstract, but in real presence between us and them. As such, the nature of the modern world does not distort this relation, only its frequency. The I-Thou relation is a central feature of human life, which of course was Habermas's claim about communicative action. But with communication one now has to be uncertain about the possibility of communicative action given the rise of instrumental rationality (of the system) and the distortions of money and illegitimate power in the modern era – in short, whether communicative action could be both a critical measure of modern pathologies and simultaneously ground current political practice. Or, one had to consider other forms of communicative practice that could augment (formal) deliberation in order to ensure free and fair exchanges. Dialogue, on the other hand, represents the occasional moments in which such modern pathologies are cut through, at least potentially, in a present relation

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to an other. Thus the effort to constantly sort out what communication "counts" (or not) as deliberation is circumvented by focusing on the event of dialogue that can spring forth between partners – whatever the style or mode of communication unfolds between them.

Now, there is still the matter of attaching what happens through such relations to something politically useful. Again, that will occupy the discussion of institutionalization of a dialogic politics in the next chapter. But at bottom, it would seem dialogue is no worse off than deliberation in terms of a never-ending attempt to get closer to its realization and impact on politics, while "hedging one's bets" and recognizing the role for other political, institutional arrangements to facilitate more just and fair democratic processes. A politics anchored in dialogue still understands that more traditional political activities such as voting, social movements and interest groups will not and should not disappear in the near-term. But like deliberative democracy, a politics anchored in dialogue hopes to change the relative roles and power of these political avenues based on the transformative potential of real meeting both within and beyond "politics as usual." And as I will argue in the following chapter, this opens up opportunities for institutional innovations that might harness the potential of dialogue for better deliberation and better democratic politics that can begin realizing this change.

The ontological concerns about the deliberative core of rational language were, I argued, more damning than these practical critiques. Whether it was for reasons doubting the inherent rationality in communication, or because of brain-body issues in regards to our very ability to function as competent and rational users of language in the first place, these critiques cast serious doubt on whether or not the deliberative democratic model has a sound normative foundation in rational language use. How does dialogue stand up to

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these concerns? As mentioned above, some have argued that Buber and other dialogic theorists have prefigured some of the very post-modern categories that have been used to critique the Kantian-inspired notions of rational debate. As such, dialogue seems more at home in a post-modern-influenced ethics that eschews the "meta-narratives" of rational foundations. Not that a relational ontology is without its own "meta" claim. Still, there is a strong resonance between this rejection of rational language and universalist orientations in favor of dialogue and deference to real embodied others present before us.

The brain-body issues also presents a much smaller problem for a theory of dialogue. Part of this is clear in Connolly's treatment of the techniques of the self and micropolitics in his account of the brain-body issues. While he expressed a distrust of any perfectionist program of deliberative democracy for the difficulties related to our embodied self, he also refuses to conform to the rather limited and crude biological materialism this might lead one to support. Instead, in an argument recalling both Nietzsche and Dewey, he thinks the self can be worked on in ways that are always a bit unclear and unpredictable, but can nonetheless allows us to interact with those brain-body relays and change them, hopefully in desired ways. He returns repeatedly in *Neuropolitics* to film theory. In film, the techniques of directors can play on our affect. They can "do" something there of which we are very likely to be unaware in the moment of its happening. And the conclusion seems to be that if directors can do this to us, so might we do it for ourselves through creative and experimental play with the deeper structures that color our consciousness. While a dialogic politics cannot stop at this "self" work, something analogous can be said about those moments of being opened up in a dialogic encounter.[60] In ways beyond the impact of arguments and rational language that

occur in our conscious brain, we are moved to new positions and ways of being. These fruitful encounters can shape us in ways that we may not be able to predict or know, but which over time (again, recall Buber's description of our eventual need to answer to what was once presented to us by some other in a past relation) can produce new ways of being, even within our very bodies and brains. This is part of what it means to have someone "bodily present" to us, a way in which the depths of our self, bodies included, are available to the influence of an other. As Stawarska puts it with Merleau-Ponty's philosophy in mind: "From Buber's point of view, the interrelation of seeing and being seen, of touching and being touched, is not simply a phenomenon of meaning-neutral sensibility of an animate organism but a site of meaning and value." As such it represents "a philosophy of embodied reciprocity" where "the corporeal reversibility of the senses is predicated upon the reciprocity of I-you relation rather than derived from the individual body." In other words, between two partners in a dialogue physically presented to one another there is "intrinsic communicative import; it [the relation] is laden with meaning and value from the start."[61] This meaning, then, is transmitted not only into our conscious, considering brain, which works through language. It is there, too, perhaps. But, the conscious brain excels at the I-It relation, where it can deal with things in the past at its own speed. The I-Thou encounter is one that can impact us consciously (as we become "aware" in the moment), but also in way that is beyond our conscious appreciation of it. It is, again, a relation of the whole body, perhaps even in the sense required to impact our way of thinking and being in the world as recognized by contemporary cognitive science.

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But just because dialogue seems to fare better on these accounts (according to my arguments, anyway), this does not mean that it is without concerns of its own, thought they are different than those inherent in the deliberative account. A brief appraisal of those concerns follows before turning to a discussion of institutions in the next chapter.

Concerns for a Dialogic Politics

There are some concerns to be acknowledged in accepting this dialogic grounding. First, a deference to the inherent spontaneity of the I-Thou encounter means there are no guarantees of a particular outcome or other, much less the encounter itself even happening. It cannot be forced. And it cannot be scripted or predicted. Whereas the deliberativists following Habermas could hope the inherent rationality of communication could, in a sense, guarantee more rational political outcomes, the dialogic encounter having been de-coupled from any natural functioning of language cannot be quite so assured. However, I have spent a great deal of time suggesting that this guarantee of good relations and beneficial outcomes was elusive to the deliberativists as well. At least with dialogue one gets an account of transformative potential that is not attached to this abstracted understanding of language use that it then cannot depend on to produce the transformations being sought. Though, to be sure, a politics anchored in dialogue must account for the increasing difficulty of having I-Thou interactions in a world inclined towards It relations. But should these relations happen, the nature of the I-Thou precludes some of the more pernicious elements of self-interested, strategic reason as these are by nature I-It activities and failures to enter into dialogue. So, if one cannot guarantee

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rational outcomes, one can at least recognize that within a dialogic encounter, something fruitful in terms of mutual understanding and transformation can be accomplished when and if such relations are entered into.

The concern may be even greater that this, however. Failures to deeply engage with others may even worsen relations. And though this is a failure to enter into dialogue in the first place (as opposed to a product of a dialogue), the experience of this failure can nonetheless heighten tensions. This is an inherent risk in politics, however. But recall that there is an agonistic dimension of dialogue that explains how we might be opened up to an other in real struggle over and against them. Thus this risk carries great potential reward: the possibility of achieving real meeting with an other and the impact of a dialogic encounter with them. This is not a story of an endless agonistic struggle with no apparent hope for resolution. It is instead an understanding of risk associated with taking it upon ourselves to confirm an other, be responsible for them, and to trust them, and hope they will reciprocate, even if they remain an enemy before, during, or after our encounter with them.

Finally, another concern associated with the acceptance of a dialogic grounding to politics is that this would seem to demand a reduction to small-scale politics where less-mediated relations are possible. This represents a practical limitation given the modern complex democracies we live in. And, broadly, I think this is true. But there are institutional arrangements already suggested in deliberative theory (and even already existing in practice created through deliberative reform) that speak to the possibilities here – though we may need to think a little differently about them in light of dialogue. That is the task of the next chapter. For now, though, it should suffice to note that much

of deliberative theory has already moved in the direction of institutionalizing spaces with real political "stakes" that bring people (either as representatives of a larger community, or otherwise) into direct contact with one another. These spaces are meant to produce real meeting and exchange between these citizens, and thus the possibility for dialogue. And, again, though they have not had a theory to explain it up till now, dialogue provides the explanation as to why these spaces seemed so valuable to deliberative theorists in the first place, given the "higher levels" of intersubjective communication that their normative theory usually relies on.

Notes

[1] Maurice Friedman, *Encounter on the Narrow Ridge: A Life of Martin Buber,* (New York: Paragon House, 1991) 3-54.

[2] See: Paul Mendes-Flohr, *From Mysticism to Dialogue: Martin Buber's Transformation of German Social Thought,* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989) 13-48.

[3] Several works from this period attest to this mystical orientation. See for instance: Martin Buber, *Ecstatic Confessions: The Heart of Mysticism,* Mendes-Flohr, ed., (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996). The early elements of his relational approach developed in this context, and according to Maurice Friedman his dialogic theory was prefigured in *Daniel,* another work from this 'mystical' era. See: Maruice Friedman, *Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976) 55-64.

[4] There are several works on Buber's early work and the transition into his dialogic theory beginning with *I and Thou.* His Hassidism is certainly a principle source, but so were sociological theories of Simmel and Dilthy, the philosophy of Feurebach, Kierkegarrd, and Nietzsche, the teachings of the Tao and the concept of wu wei, and also the influence of his friend Gustav Landauer and events surrounding the emergence of WWI (which included the death of a student and a chastising by Landauer for Buber's early support of Germany's entrance into the war that blamed his "peculiar metaphysics"). See: Mendes-Flohr, *From Mysticism to Dialogue, Martin Buber's Transformation of German Social Thought*; Friedman, *Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue,* 27-56; and Laurence J. Silberstein, *Martin Buber's Social and Religious Thought: Alienation and the Quest for Meaning,* (New York: New York University Press, 1989) 136-9.

[5] For an account of the uptake of Buber's thought by Rogers, see: Kenneth Cissna and Rob Anderson, *Moments of Meeting: Buber, Rogers and the Potential for Public Dialogue*

(Albany: SUNY Press, 2002). This book will also be a critical resource below in adapting Buber's dialogic philosophy into something democratically useful.

[6] Although not overflowing with references to Buber, Friere's work on dialogic education owes clear inspiration to Buber. See: Paulo Friere, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 2007).

[7] King's usage of Buber was in part, no doubt, because of his audience (clergy, both Christian and Jewish) and their likely awareness (and respect) for Buber. But, it is worthy to note that King knew him well enough to cite him. And no doubt his doing so furthered Buber's impact. King utilizes Buber to claim that Southern discrimination treated blacks as an It, rather than as a Thou. This, perhaps, gives a hint of the emancipatory potential in Buber for democratic politics, again making his absence from the literature incredibly surprising. See: Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter From a Birmingham Jail," In: *Why We Can't Wait* (New York: Penguin, 2000) 64-84.

[8] Friedman, *Encounter on the Narrow Ridge,* 436-60.

[9] I don't want to overstate this. There has, of course, been some secular interest in Buber recently, especially in communications theory. And I will draw on these works throughout this chapter. But any researcher doing searches on Buber are likely to pull up a fairly consistent secondary literature on Buber's thought amongst Religious Studies, and in particular Jewish Studies literature. This can be compared with a much smaller (at least recently) secondary literature in more secular studies of philosophy, educational theory, psychology, with only minimal (bordering on zero) work by political theorists.

[10] Buber's work was influential on its own, but also as part of a small handful of dialogic philosophers that emerged in the early 20th century, including (among others) Franz Rosenzweig and Eugene Rosenstock-Hussey. For an excellent treatment of many of these authors, see: Beata Stawarska, *Between You and I: Dialogical Phenomenology,* (Athens: University of Ohio Press, 2009).

[11] For a couple of the essays by Levinas in which Buber figures prominently, see: Emmanuel Levinas, "Martin Buber and the Theory of Knowledge," In: *The Philosophy of Martin Buber,* Schilpp and Friedman, eds. (La Salle: Open Court Publishing, 1991) 133-50; Levinas, "Apropos of Buber: Some Notes," In: *Outside the Subject,* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993). There was also a brief exchange between Buber and Levinas regarding the status of the other that demonstrates some of their key differences, see: Sydney and Beatrice Rome, eds., *Philosophical Interrogations,* (New York: Holt, Reinhardt and Winston, 1964) 23-29. Also, its notable that there have been some efforts to bring Levinas's ethical program to bear on Habermas and his politics. See: Stephen Hendley, *From Communicative Action to the Face of the Other: Levinas, and Habermas on Language, Obligation, and Community,* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2000).

[12] For an account of these criticisms (and a vindication of Buber's dialogic philosophy

against these criticisms) see: Stawrska, *Between You and I,* 148-50, and 162-73.

[13] See, Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* Weinseimer and Marshall, trans., (New York: Crossroad, 1989). See also: Stewart, Zediker, and Black, "Relationships Among Philosophers of Dialogue," In: *Dialogue: Theorizing Difference in Communications Studies,* Anderson, Baxter, and Cissna, eds. (Thousand Oakes, SAGE Publications, 2004) 35-6. There was also, of course, a significant amount of exchange between Gadamer and Habermas on the proper place for hermeneutics, but Buber's potentially important and mediating role in this dispute (as a philosopher of dialogue and communication with the other) never comes up. For an account of the Habermas-Gadamer exchange, see: Robert C. Holub, *Jürgen Habermas: Critic in the Public Sphere,* (New York: Routledge, 1991) 49-77.

[14] See for instance: Martin Buber, "The Validity and Limitation of the Political Principle," In: *Pointing the Way: Collected Essays,* Maurice Friedman, trans. (Amherst: Humanity Books, 1999) 208-19.

[15] See: Martin Buber, *Paths in Utopia* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996). See especially the final two chapters on the crisis of modern times, regarding the rise of the central state and its dissolution of community, as well as his epilogue on the system of Jewish communes in Israel as "an experiment which did not fail," at least from his point of view writing in 1949.

[16] A note on translation: The Kaufmann translation, though preserving the originally translated title of the work as *I and Thou,* translates the German "Du" into the more familiar English word "You." There are some good reasons for this. The term "thou" is considered archaic and overly formal in English. So, in a sense the nature of personal relation seems to stand in contrast to this more formal word, which may arouse the feeling of distance, as if the relation exists with someone with whom you cannot be too intimate. Certainly this is not the case in Buber's understanding of the *Ich und Du* relation. Intimacy, in fact, captures something entirely appropriate to this relation to an other. At the same time, I think there is something to be said for retaining the word "Thou" despite this potential confusion. "Thou" gives the reader pause to consider there is something more going on here than everyday pronominal language can account for. Saying, "hey, you there," is not what it means to speak I-You in this sense. So whereas the formality of "Thou" is off-putting, it functions to give pause for considering what in particular it means to say "thou" as opposed to a more mundane "you" to someone. Or, put another way, it highlights something about how the I-Thou relation is different compared to how I often interact with others – a greater separation with the I-It relations we mistake in the modern world for I-You relations. Thus, in what follows I have decided to use "Thou" in my own formulations. However, because I am quoting from the Kaufmann translation, direct quotes will appear with "You." This is awkward, perhaps, but hopefully the reader can consider them synonymous for the purposes of this work. That is, one can imagine the possibility that within the I-Thou relation, one might well turn and say, "You" or "Thou" with their "whole being" and they would "mean" the same thing, so long as its "with their whole

being."

[17] Martin Buber, *I and Thou,* Walter Kaufmann, trans., (New York: Touchstone, 1971) p. 56.

[18] *Ibid.* 69.

[19] *Ibid.* 59.

[20] *Ibid.*

[21] *Ibid.* 61.

[22] *Ibid.* 62.

[23] *Ibid.*

[24] Buber, in fact, differentiates the understanding of I-Thou 'experience' and the experience of objects, which we only gather by 'going over the surface' of an object, in a superficial way. For a discussion of his understanding of the superficial nature of 'experiencing' see his "Religion as Presence" lectures in: Martin Buber, *The Martin Buber Reader: Essential Writings,* Asher Biemann, ed., (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002) 169-172. In *I and Thou,* Buber makes a play on the German word for experience (erfahren) and its similarity to the verb meaning 'to drive or go' (fahren) in order to highlight how experience remains only at the surface, which we 'go' or 'travel' over. See Kaufmann's note in *I and Thou,* p. 55.

[25] Buber, *I and Thou,* 67.

[26] Although, something like limited I-Thou relationships can exist in situations where perfect reciprocity cannot be obtained, such as with educators and pupils, or therapists and patients. This, in some sense contradicts the above quote about reciprocity, and was indeed a later thought added in a afterword to *I and Thou* published well after the work initially appeared. Still, Buber indicates that some kind of I-Thou must obtain for education and/or therapy to truly work, just not a relation that is fully reciprocal if teaching or healing is to be accomplished. The teacher and therapist must remain somewhat distanced to accomplish their respective task. See: Buber, *I and Thou,* p. 178-9.

[27] Seyla Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002) 106-7.

[28] Seyla Benhabib, "Toward a Deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy," 78-9.

[29] Buber, *I and Thou,* p. 66.

[30] It is here we might see where Levinas was most clearly inspired by Buber's project. In

answering our call to encounter the other directly we assume a responsibility to them, a call that we (should) feel obligated to answer.

[31] *Ibid.* 68.

[32] This is another place where the overlaps with theorists such as Arendt and Habermas are clear. Buber's critical-theoretical story about the rise of the It relation is comparable to Arendt's "rise of the social" or Habermas's colonization of the lifeworld by the system.

[33] The preceding paragraph is drawn from *I and Thou,* 76-81.

[34] *Ibid.* 69-75. Buber treats these two examples of the primacy of the I-Thou in the opposite order that I do (as should be clear from the page numbers). This is because he thinks the better explanation and evidence for his claim is with children. But for the sake of transitioning into a discussion of his ascension of the I-It, it made sense to reverse the order here.

[35] *Ibid.* 117.

[36] *Ibid.* 97.

[37] *Ibid.*

[38] *Ibid.* 98-99.

[39] Martin Buber, "Foreword," In: *Between Man and Man,* Ronald Gregor-Smith, trans. (New York: Routledge, 2002) IX.

[40] Martin Buber, "Dialogue," *Between Man and Man,* 3.

[41] *Ibid.* 5.

[42] *Ibid.* 12.

[43] *Ibid.* 18.

[44] *Ibid.* 22.

[45] *Ibid.* 23.

[46] *Ibid.* 31-33.

[47] *Ibid.* 37.

[48] Martin Buber, "Elements of the Interhuman," In: *The Knowledge of Man: Selected Essays,* Maurice Friedman and Ronald Gregor-Smith, trans. (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press International, 1988) 65.

[49] *Ibid.* 69.

[50] *Ibid.* 69-70.

[51] *Ibid.* 71.

[52] *Ibid.* 75.

[53] *Ibid.* 76.

[54] See: Maurice Friedman, *Encounter on the Narrow Ridge,* 368-70.

[55] Kenneth N. Cissna and Rob Anderson, *Moments of Meeting: Buber, Rogers, and the Potential for Public Dialogue* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002) 174-5.

[56] I have Benhabib's attempt to join discourse and care ethics in mind here. See: Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics,* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

[57] Buber, "Dialogue with Carl Rogers," *Knowledge of Man,* 168.

[58] See: Cissna and Anderson, *Moments of Meeting,* 190-207. See also their concluding remarks (along with Leslie Baxter) in: Anderson, Baxter and Cissna, eds., *Dialogue: Theorizing Difference in Communication Studies,* esp. 262-3.

[59] Buber, "Dialogue with Carl Rogers," *Knowledge of Man,* 167.

[60] And there would certainly be some worthy suspicion for the director who would utilize techniques to attempt to shape our impressions and perceptions relative to any real I-Thou relation to a film or other work of art. One major element of a theory of public dialogue for Cissna and Anderson was a "suspicion of technique" for producing certain results. Still, the idea is that if "techniques of the self" get beneath the surface, so to might an embodied experience of relation to an other, and I think it is probably especially the case that our dialogic experiences can do so.

[61] Stawarska, *Between You and I,* 170-1.

CHAPTER V

INSTITUTIONALIZING A POLITICS ANCHORED IN DIALOGUE

In the previous three chapters I have argued for a normative core of dialogic politics for deliberative democracy. Up to this point, however, I have been chiefly concerned to examine the problem from the theoretical point of view. This concluding chapter is meant to ground that discussion in terms of the institutions and practice of democracy. Just as deliberative democratic theory has found it necessary to make a practical turn as it seeks to be relevant to contemporary politics, so too must a politics anchored in dialogue find practical realization if it is to advance deliberative theory in any meaningful way.

The chapter proceeds by first briefly discussing the desirability of taking a focus on small, formally institutionalized spaces for dialogue and deliberation. Following this, I outline what differences might exist between the "new" model of deliberative democracy centered on a dialogic politics and the "old" model of deliberative politics anchored in rational processes of communication, especially when thinking about the design and implementation of institutions for citizen engagement. This is the last bit of theory to be accomplished before turning to actual empirical examples. Following the line of thought pursued in chapter two (that many deliberativists already rely on an implicit theory of dialogue), I try to show that many attempts at the institutionalization of deliberative democracy already make use of spaces for dialogic meeting. This shows the realization of a dialogic politics for better deliberative democracy is in a sense already underway in the practical designs of deliberative opportunities for citizens. But this is not the only sort of

institutional design recommended by a focus on dialogue. Other spaces organized to produce dialogue – and consciously avoid anything resembling deliberation – can also have political benefits that the overall model of deliberative democracy would find desirable. Thus I offer a specific example of institutionalized democratic participation along these lines: The Restorative Listening Project in Portland, Oregon, which was designed as a dialogue-centered response to growing racial tensions and gentrification in the city's NE neighborhoods.

Institutionalizing Dialogue

The Limits and Benefits Inherent in Thinking About Institutions

In a recent article on deliberative democracy and the role of rhetoric, Simone Chambers argues that there has been a "split" in contemporary deliberative democratic thinking between what she calls "deliberative democracy" and "democratic deliberation."[1] The former is the longstanding view of theorists such as herself and Habermas that deliberation is an activity largely reserved to the semi-anarchic processes of communication inherent in the everyday interactions within the "mass" public. These interactions more or less indirectly influence the political process itself through public opinion and the publicity of issues and ideas then "taken up" by those with administrative power. That is, communicative processes facilitate opinion-and-will formation through the informal institutions of the public sphere and must be "converted" into administrative power (as Habermas understands it) in the "formal" institutions of government.[2]

Theorists of "democratic deliberation," on the other hand, have abandoned thinking about this mass public in favor of considering small-scale opportunities for deliberation, often with a direct connection to decision-making authority. These are more or less direct efforts at institutional design with the normative model of deliberative democracy as a sort of guide for achieving a better quality process of decision-making (not only opinion and will formation). Chambers thinks accounts of this sort are on the rise at the expense of actual theories of deliberative democracy and the communicative processes of the mass public. The preference for smaller institutionalized spaces means that deliberative democrats have largely "abandoned" thinking about those everyday interactions in public (she offers conversations at the mailbox about the state of a public park as an example). Instead, theorists of "democratic deliberation" focus only on very small, controllable settings that they hope might produce something approximating the normative goals of deliberative theory. Whatever the benefits realizable in this narrow setting, the worry is that the conversation at the mailbox remains "untouched" by these efforts at the institutionalization of deliberative norms.

I think Chambers has made too much of this distinction between deliberation of a mass public and the conscious creation of institutions as mini-publics. I will argue in a moment that such mini-publics and mass public participation are more connected then Chambers seems to think. But her differentiation between that which is everyday social practice and that which takes place in particular institutionalized settings remains an important one. Chambers sees deliberation as something that could and should be a part of commonplace communicative practice in public life. After all, discursive processes are based on communicative action, which is just such a foundational practice to our very

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social existence (if one is inclined to agree with Habermas on this account, as Chambers is). Dialogue must be thought of similarly. Dialogic encounters are not necessarily the stuff of democracy and politics in its most practical variations. Dialogue (hopefully) occurs on any number of occasions in "daily" life, about any number of topics (or no particular topic at all), between any number of particular people (or a person with nature and/or things around them). And though there may be politics in these interactions (given our sufficiently broad understanding of the term in contemporary political theory) this is not the sort of politics one can "do" much about in the here and now. Any practical theory of politics concerned with the on-going business of collective self-governance needs to consider something more immediately achievable. That means looking toward improving institutional practice to accommodate the normative insights of a politics rooted in dialogue – though this comes, of course, at a cost. Anyone who seeks to institutionalize dialogue for the purposes of better democratic politics will have comparatively less to say about the phenomenon of dialogue within and across an entire community that is anchored in personal and social life – despite there being clear political importance for encouraging (as Buber would put it) a "Thou-saying" spirit throughout a community. Relative to the broader understanding of dialogic politics offered in the previous chapter this is undoubtedly a restriction in scope. But it is one that I think is necessary when considering the immediate and practical impact of dialogue for contemporary democratic politics. In short, then, this chapter will work towards the application of politics rooted in dialogue within the (limited) framework of institutional possibilities in complex modern democracies. It is thus an application of dialogue to

"democratic deliberation" rather than "deliberative democracy" according to Chambers'
distinction between these terms.

But along with these limitations of scale and scope, there are also some
advantages to looking at deliberation and/or dialogue as it might actually be practiced
towards better democratic ends. The work of Archon Fung, for instance, demonstrates
several advantages of focusing on what happens in actual circumstances of deliberation
between citizens. His *Empowered Participation* focuses on institutional reforms that
invested citizens with real power through participation in institutions that held some
direct sway over local schools and policing in Chicago. Looking at these actual practices
of citizen participation offered new and different insights into the possibilities of
deliberation when compared with the more abstract and ideal theory describing
deliberation. He writes:

> First, many theorists have thought that fair deliberation requires demanding and
> rarely realized preconditions – as economic or social equality, wealth, or shared
> values and a homogenous culture, for example. By examining deliberation in the
> context of Chicago's poor and often conflicted neighborhoods, this investigation
> explores whether the often distant ideal of deliberative democracy can be applied
> fruitfully to urgent contemporary public dilemmas. Second, the conceptual
> development of deliberative political theory has come at the expense of
> investigating the practical institutional forms that might realize the ideal in actual
> organizations and agencies.[3]

In short, Fung's study realized that deliberation could work in these difficult settings and
thus could valuably inform deliberative theory. Of course, Fung understands these
institutions and the participation in them as deliberative according to more or less classic
formulations of the model. But refocusing on dialogue, one might still insist there are
similar benefits to looking at actual institutions and actual political engagement by
citizens where dialogic moments have played a meaningful role. That is, there is a hope

for seeing the real and immediate impact of dialogue for democracy in practice in actual institutional settings where citizens participate (to some real extent) in collective self-rule. A focus on real interactions between citizens and officials in institutions is decidedly less abstract and utopian then theories that remain attached to major necessary changes at the level of entire social cultures (either towards better deliberative practice or towards a greater place for dialogic relation in lived experience).

Further, such institutional attempts to realize a greater impact of deliberative processes and dialogic meeting can "spillover" into those broader social and interpersonal interactions in positive ways. Contra Chambers' overdrawn distinction, there is, in fact, some reason to think that what happens in constructed institutions feeds back on the everyday interactions beyond them. According to those that have studied the impact of participation in civic enterprises and deliberative forums, greater senses of political efficacy and a continued desire to engage with other citizens can result from participation in deliberation.[4] Deliberative designs that rely heavily on a dialogic core may have an even greater spillover effect of this sort. So, perhaps it is not entirely an either/or in terms of thinking about institutions and the immediate and practical possibilities of dialogue and deliberation. The extent to which more dialogue and better deliberation characterize the activities of the entire community in its everyday public interactions may have a strong relation to the building of capacities for these activities in the citizen body itself through institutional innovation. The conversation at the mailbox may turn out to be more deliberative (in the broadest sense) because one or both of the conversers have experienced some successful event (possibly sponsored by their local city government) where real dialogue emerged.

Institutionalizing Deliberation vs. Institutionalizing Space for Dialogue

Beyond keeping the limits of institutional settings in mind, there are some immediate concerns for realizing the potential of a focus on dialogue in democratic institutions. The spontaneous nature of dialogue, the fact that it cannot be fully planned out or controlled, that it cannot be forced upon a particular other, that no guarantees can be given regarding its results – all of this would seem to make a politics dependent on a dialogic core unfit for institutionalization. More so, certainly, than the more typical theory of deliberation with its more structured (perhaps restricted is the proper word) vision of public argumentation. However, institutions can be constructed that open up space for dialogue that might have positive impacts on what these institutions can accomplish. But thinking in terms of dialogue and not (only) deliberation will make a difference in how the institutions take shape and operate.

Deliberative theory fails to make sense of institutional practices on both a normative and a descriptive level. Because deliberative benefits are based in the value of public reasoning as a means to achieving more rational and legitimate public opinion and will, deliberative theory recommends institutions that facilitate the inclusion and debate of arguments as a means towards moving to greater understanding between participants and better (more rational) positions/outcomes. That is, institutions that approximate the appropriate conditions for unleashing the benefits of a Habermasian-influenced ideal democratic procedure. Early theorists of deliberative theory seem inclined exactly towards this understanding – even those that had moved "beyond" the institutions of the

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public sphere (mass media and social movements, in particular) to consider organizations tied directly to decision making authority. As I have been arguing, this is a normative failure in that it places all its transformative potential in a process of communication that cannot fully deliver. Even when deliberative practice in institutions seemed to demonstrate something other than deliberation was central to the work being done, deliberativists have often continued to frame their value in deliberative terms – thus the descriptive failure of the theory to understand what about the institutions in question was valuable to producing better democratic outcomes. Let me offer some brief examples.

John Dryzek was one of the first of the early deliberativists to look specifically at institutions as a means for unleashing the potential benefits of discourse for democracy. His "discursive designs" have a clearly deliberative orientation towards unleashing rationality through the exchange of reasons and arguments. Dryzek suggests three guiding norms of institutional design: that only the force of better arguments should be granted authority, that no barriers to participation of interested parties should exist, and that no "autonomous formal constitutions or rules" should exist.[5] Further, he thinks that participation in discursively designed institutions requires communicatively competent individuals and should require the "embodiment of communicative ethics in rules of debate."[6] All this leads Dryzek to describe a discursive institutional design as "a social institution around which the expectations of a number of actors converge [where] [t]he focus of deliberations should include, but not be limited to, the individual or collective needs and interests of the individuals involved. Thus the institution is oriented to the generation and coordination of actions situated within a particular problem context."[7] In other words, these institutions should serve the function of bringing citizens into

communicative interactions, in order to unleash their collective (communicatively generated) rationality, in the service of some particular political problem(s). Formulating needs and interests as arguments backed with reasons, then, produces a better policy process so long as this discursive institution can retain some critical distance from the state itself, thus resisting co-option.

More contemporary efforts at institutionalizing deliberative norms have often reproduced something similar to Dryzek's original link between institutional practices and communicative rationality as the transition to formal deliberative practice is considered. Consider Archon Fung's account of ideal deliberative participation. He describes several elements of an ideal deliberative process as demonstrated by the activities of local residents through their involvement in institutions attached to governance of local police and schools. Fung describes a five-step process for solving collective problems through deliberation. First, a problem must be identified and prioritized, however vague this may be in its initial stages. Then, "a proposal, justification, and selection of provisional strategies" for solving the problem ensues once a particular problem has been defined and agreed upon. This second step involves a "complete proposal" with set tasks, divisions of labor, and set expectations in regards to benefits from accomplishing particular tasks. The proposed solution must then be implemented. Following this, a process of monitoring and evaluation can assess the success (or lack thereof) of the solution for the particular problem. The fifth and final step is "reiteration" where the information produced in the prior steps can be incorporated into further efforts to solve the chosen problem (or redefine in some way the problem itself).[8] As an ideal, this captures much of the thrust of deliberative attachment to a process of

public, practical reasoning. The effort to define a common problem and propose and justify solutions happens through a process of public exchange of some sort. Usually, the public input is gathered with an eye towards the inclusion of as many perspectives in the community as possible, but it is especially based on an effort to include as much relevant knowledge as possible regarding the nature of the problem to be solved and the most productive ways to solve it. Fung's addition, then, is to see this process "play out" in actual trial and error of policy-making towards solving collective problems. But real deliberations often stall out exactly at the first two stages. Settling on the exact nature of a problem or problems to be addressed collectively, and then coming up with solutions that all can accept. In the cases Fung studies, this stage was shorted by either limiting the topics citizens could refer to in deliberation, or by beginning with a relatively bounded problem (police activity within a particular "beat"). Within these confines, new consensuses are expected to emerge from the public reasoning process of citizens and administrators. And so this very practical approach to envisioning a place for deliberation offers little beyond a gesture towards the possibilities inherent in good public deliberation along the lines articulated by deliberative theory.[9] To be sure, Fung's work adds important insights to how the messy practice of deliberation has actually worked, surprisingly among some of the poorest and most difficult conditions imaginable (in diverse and economically disadvantaged communities); and further, how deliberation might be practiced in relation to matters of practical governance, with strong administrative involvement and lots of accountability throughout the process of creating and implementing collective decisions. The process by which collective definitions of problems and collective solutions are to be made, however, remains in practice cut off by

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the strict constraining of topics and issues to be deliberated on by the public;[10] or, when

articulated in theoretical terms, tied to deliberative theoretical conceptions (public

reasoning) of a familiar sort. Thus institutions benefit by unleashing deliberation about

very narrowly defined concerns (as decided by administrators), which then works through

the power of collective rationality and public reasoning processes to produce (over

several iterations) better policy for solving collective local problems.

A final example of a deliberative understanding of institutionalized public

engagement, and a telling one relative to the case of the Restorative Listening Project I

will offer below, might be drawn from Gutmann and Thompson's defense of Truth

Commissions on deliberative terms in *Why Deliberative Democracy?*. Gutmann and

Thompson offer a democratic defense of these commissions (they have South Africa's

Truth and Reconciliation Committee in mind) that demonstrates just how awkward a

deliberative theory lens can be to certain (politically valuable) institutions that do not

actually fit that theoretical framework. They argue that justifying Truth Commissions can

be done according to a principle of democratic reciprocity (the same principle as

explained in chapter 1) and thus as a practice in support of deliberative democracy. That

is, the Truth Commission functions as a "trial run" for the give-and-take of moral

argumentation based in mutual respect for others and their positions. They defend the

institution of the Truth Commission accordingly:

> A commission that accepts reciprocity as a justification also practices what it
> preaches about the democratic society it is trying to help create … Reciprocity
> serves as a guide not only for a future democracy, calling on citizens to justify
> their political views to each other, but also for the commission itself, calling on
> commissioners and testifiers to practice some of the skills and virtues of the
> democratic society they are striving to create … More generally, sincere efforts
> on the part of citizens to offer an account of their political past closely resemble
> the most basic activities in the kind of democratic politics to which a healthy

democracy aspires: sharing one's political point of view with one's fellow citizens in an effort to persuade them at least of its reasonableness, and potentially of its rightness. The very activity of providing an account that other citizens can be expected to understand as reasonable (even if not right) indicates the willingness of citizens to acknowledge one another's membership in a common democratic enterprise.[11]

The existence and practice of a Truth Commission, then, is justifiable (and normatively valuable) largely because it provides opportunities for instituting and building norms of deliberative practice, which is aimed at a public argumentation of moral positions from a orientation of mutual respect. Again, even in this unique setting where what is most important about the process of reconciliation initiated by this commission is far from deliberative, the deliberativist reading remains tied to the argumentative possibilities being practiced in this institution.

These examples make clear the tie to standard deliberative norms that reproduce the core of a rational linguistic exchange, usually coded as "public reasoning" when thinking about deliberative practice. As such, the spaces envisioned for institutionalizing discourse are meant to reproduce, above all, the exchange of arguments and justifications by all affected in order to arrive at best decisions (as policy), be it a full-fledged consensus or something just short of this. Communicative rationality and impartial norms of respect are to reign, and institutional designs are best if they produce and protect these activities.

Dialogue does not need to tie itself to rational argumentation in the same way to realize politically useful outcomes. Instead, institutions should not be oriented (only) to incorporating as many arguments as possible for each and every participant to consider, nor should they necessarily even organize around some immediate problem for which

immediate solutions are sought. Recalling Buber's description of a technical dialogue in the previous chapter reminds us that institutions established along these lines may still foster moments of dialogue, but they will have much more to get past in order for real meeting to emerge. And analyzing those institutions that do not fit with a conception of rational exchange on the wrong terms may miss what is politically valuable about them, not to mention risk undervaluing them entirely. So what kind of institutional space does dialogue envision?

Cissna and Anderson (drawing on their study of the Buber-Rogers public dialogue) envision an important role for institutions in putting dialogue at least potentially in the service of democracy. They argue that dialogue is "facilitated by structuring potentially dialogic spaces, both geographic and attitudinal, and not by arranging or mandating the dialogue itself."[12] They rely on a metaphor of "a clearing" in order to show what must be (and can be) accomplished as a means to facilitating dialogic possibility: a space where real meeting might occur because people are inviting and supportive of experiment and play with relations, interactions, and ideas, rather than oriented towards a back-and-forth defense of respective positions. And this requires a certain openness in terms of goals and designs for the "outcomes" of any dialogic space. As such, facilitators become crucial to guiding and supporting engagement between participants in some institutionalized discussion, however it emerges (if it does). But facilitators cannot direct or will the participants to particular outcomes. Along these lines, they approvingly quote William Isaacs, a member of the MIT Dialogue Project:

> [Isaacs] has discovered that although suspending defensiveness and exploring reasons for change are important, these cannot be his goals as a facilitator. Rather, he writes, the 'central purpose' of a dialogue session 'is simply to establish a field of genuine meeting and inquiry (which we call a container) – a setting in which

people can allow a free flow of meaning and vigorous exploration of the collective background of their thought, their personal predispositions, the nature of their shared attention, and the rigid features of their individual and collective assumptions.'[13]

There is a broadly deliberative (or at least communicative) element to this arrangement, in which the discussion of assumptions, values and norms can be undertaken. But the focus is entirely different. A clearing in which this conversation can unfold (but may not) allows for the possibility of engagement between participants with one another. This is not a space organized only for solving particular problems or generating new policy and direction. The restrictions are few and the guidance is necessarily minimal (only so much as is necessary for "the clearing" to remain possible). And each group member is asked to participate as persons, not simply as participants or stakeholders offering some necessarily contestable point of view.

Already, then, I think we have a sense of what a dialogic politics requires of an institution that might be different from what is suggested by a more traditional deliberative theory, even though (as we shall see) many (even most) practitioners of deliberative democracy have implicitly gone the route of facilitating dialogic meeting as a means to better deliberative practice.

A Note on Two Notions of Dialogue

What I am calling dialogue (as laid out in the last chapter) needs to be distinguished from an increasingly common usage of the term in the literature on deliberative practice. Because, at one level, it is uninteresting to say that dialogue has occupied a central place in many deliberative designs, since several authors have

explicitly utilized the term "dialogue" as either a component of or a complement to deliberative processes, though usually without defining this term or indicating any noteworthy difference. One of the few efforts to consciously distinguish it from deliberation is made by Levine, Fung and Gastil's concluding discussion in *The Deliberative Democracy Handbook.* Here they indicate that dialogue is a different kind of public talk, which is distinguishable from the more problem-solving, argumentative forms that deliberation often takes. They think dialogue can be useful as a "first step" towards deliberation when "bridging linguistic, social, and epistemological chasms between different subgroups of the potentially deliberative body" is necessary.[14] Agreeing with this view of dialogue, Katherine Cramer Walsh's *Talking About Race,* understands "civic dialogue" as a part of an overall "deliberative system."[15] But it can be distinguished from deliberation, properly speaking, in several elements. According to her account: dialogue is focused on "improved understanding" (as opposed to decision-making and/or agreement); treats inclusivity, inequality, and difference as topics of discussion (rather than bracketing difference, or fixing it by pre-arrangements of participants); functions without the requirement of publicity in favor of confidentiality and a sense of a "safe space;" encourages emotional expression (as opposed to reasoned debate); urges common good and mindfulness of the community, but without orientation towards consensus or broader desire to include all affected.[16]

On the surface, nothing is wrong with these accounts. Indeed, as I have defended it dialogue is a useful component to a deliberative process exactly because it opens up possibilities for dealing with deep, seemingly intractable differences by making meaningful connections between very different others possible. But dialogue described

by Levine et. al. and Walsh seems more linked to a technique of communication, or a particular type of public conversation among others. Nothing in these accounts captures the interpersonal encounter of the sort described by Buber. Thus, dialogue described in this way reproduces a similar mistake committed by deliberativists relative to more argumentative forms of communication. Levine et. al. and Walsh see dialogue as defined in certain patterns and types of communication that can produce by way of proper procedure "accommodation, reconciliation, mutual understanding, or at the very least, informed tolerance" where the "general method" of dialogue can create (hopefully) a situation where "each subgroup understands how the others think, talk, and reason."[17] Instead, dialogue must be understood not as a master-able art of communication, but an (occasional) happening – an event that occurs between people in relation when and where it happens.

Why does this distinction matter? As described by Levine, Fung and Gastil, and also Walsh, dialogue is being thought about in non-Buberian terms. It is instead a type of talk structured by certain communications and management techniques. It is a practice for overcoming difference through proper institutional arrangement and rhetorical mastery by facilitators and/or participants. As such, it is something to be produced, willed, and accomplished by some on some others. Handbooks exist for dialogue of this type, directed at mediators, managers and councilors. Goals can be set and accomplished and the techniques of dialogue are a means to these ends. These understandings of dialogue function just like deliberation, only better (or more appropriate in certain contexts). Their accounts of an ideal type of communication fare no better than deliberation, whose norms and idealizations all-too abstract, even utopian (recalling the practical critiques of

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deliberation in chapter 1). Also, in these accounts, the phenomenal aspect is entirely lost. Communication of the right sort, not the orientation towards one another by the particular communicators, does the work. Applying this account of dialogue to institutional design means seeking to consciously construct and facilitate spaces to produce dialogue of some pre-envisioned sort. As such, spaces oriented this way are potentially an obstacle to real meeting between participants in a dialogue, as Buber would presumably argue.

This is an important distinction for understanding what happens in dialogue and how to think about providing space for it to occur. But, at the same time, I do not want to overstate this distinction. There is a real place for institutional design and facilitation in producing spaces congenial to dialogue that is benefitted by this orientation – at least in that it has moved away from a strict focus on deliberation. Maintaining a focus on communicative practice will likely limit the possibilities for Buberian dialogue, of course. But even without the proper understanding of dialogue, there is something to build on in these authors' turn towards non-deliberative communication. Anderson and Cissna, for instance, imagine institutional designs not unlike those suggested by many envisioning these non-deliberative reforms. Certainly, this orientation towards dialogue of the one sort (conversations directed at mutual understanding or personal expression) are more likely than other (say, more deliberative) arrangements to succeed at opening up "clearings" for Buberian dialogue. In the following section, I turn towards a few examples of such spaces that facilitate dialogue within the deliberative literature. These spaces have been relied upon to facilitate better deliberation, though without a clear theory as to how or why.

As I outlined in chapter 2, James Fishkin's Deliberative Opinion Poll had built in an important element of small-group, face-to-face deliberation where deliberators often experienced their most epiphanous moments (and statistically, produced the biggest change when compared with the other elements of the event). I argued in chapter 2 that this was indicative of something that went beyond deliberation and pointed towards a concept of dialogue. Fishkin, it turns out, is not alone in having done this. By examining a few more examples of this dialogic core already present within deliberative institutions we can go further into outlining the particular features of a practical application of dialogue into institutions.

Citizens Juries are another deliberative design that has received some attention by deliberative theorists and practitioners. Created by Ned Crosby in the 1970's and administered by his Jefferson Center (a non-profit organization based in Minneapolis), these meetings were designed to "enhance reason and empathy among citizens as they discussed a public policy matter or evaluated candidates."[18] These groups focused first and foremost on a "high-quality process" that seeks (like the Deliberative Opinion Poll) to randomly select citizens according to the demographic make-up of the group in consideration (a town, city, nation, etc), but consist of no more than 24 people – the "largest possible" size while maintaining quality deliberation. They also made sure opportunities to meet in smaller groups of 4 to 6 people are made available. Further, facilitators were trained to both help the quality of deliberation (ensuring no one dominates the discussions, for instance) and also to help those brought in to provide

expertise and information answer jurors' questions simply and directly. The process was

allowed to continue as long as possible while still being able to secure participation of the

invited jurors. One week was given to complete the deliberations, with the jurors being

paid $150 a day for their time. Finally, Crosby and Nethercut also suggested that for this

process to work, "Jurors must be welcomed to the process and made to feel at home. It

takes an hour or more to explain the basics of the process, outline the issue to be studied,

and allow the jurors to introduce themselves and ask questions."[19] All in all, these

Citizen's Juries produced some impactful examples of deliberation and transformation of

opinions and wills. One example recalls a Jury convened to look at balancing the budget

during the Clinton years and offer the results up to citizens and lawmakers. The jurors

voted 17-7 to impose a $70 billion tax increase, against the initial preferences and ideas

of many of the participants at the outset. Also, research on the project in 1990 found that

the Citizen's Jury findings and candidate recommendations had the potential to change

somewhere between 5-10% of the vote when they were sent to prospective voters,

indicating the potential impact of this process beyond its particular meetings.[20] The

model, while having largely died out in the U.S., has continued with some noteworthy

results in Australia used on a large scale to influence public policy.[21]

What is interesting about this process is the attention paid to the actual meeting

and speaking of jurors to one another in a space that is meant to be as inviting and

comforting as possible. The key to good deliberations on this model, then, is less about

getting as many arguments out there and as much information as possible to the

deliberators (though it does aim at this), but is about person-to-person engagement

regarding the topic at hand. Even in terms of the generating of information through expert

witnesses, Crosby and Nethercut note that "During the first ten years of experimentation, it became clear that the best way to present information to the randomly selected jurors is to have witnesses express their own views, rather than relying on written information or even on staff presentations summarizing different points of view. It is also important to give jurors time to question witnesses directly."[22] Opportunities, then, for dialogue are given space to unfold even in the process of becoming informed as each argument comes from the personal views of some real person sitting in person with the jury. These mechanisms to facilitate high-quality deliberation, then, look very much like facilitating dialogue in the service of this better deliberation.

Another example of contemporary deliberative institutional design with a clear dialogic element is the Study Circle. The contemporary design of the Study Circle emerged in 1989, but was based on an institutional innovation originating in the 19th century in the United States and popularized in Swedish government throughout the 20th century. The most recent version of the Study Circle was the product of philanthropist Paul Aicher and the Study Circles Resource Center (now known as Everyday-Democracy). It has since been used for a variety of purposes (from race relations issues to the creation of educational policy) in a variety of communities.[23] The design of these study circles are meant to specifically encourage "a marriage of deliberation and dialogue," though this is largely understood as dialogue in the sense of a communication style as described by Levine, Fung and Gastil, where it is meant to encourage "constructive communication, the dispelling of stereotypes, honesty, and the intention to listen and understand the other."[24] Still, in the name of this "marriage," Study Circles work as follows: the circles (if there are many organized around the same topic, it is

called a "study circle program") are designed to be a diverse group of eight to twelve people who meet for several two hour sessions. These people set their own ground rules for discussion, though they are led by an "impartial facilitator who helps manage the discussion." The process "starts with personal stories" of each of the participants.[25] This method is meant to produce a diverse, community specific (given that local communities can alter aspects of the design, as well as the control each circle has over the rules of discussion), opportunity for face-to-face deliberation amongst citizens organized to solve some local problem or other.

Like the design of the Citizen Jury, these Study Circles have created a space in which citizens can work on local problems, deliberatively, but always in settings that are small, face-to-face, and personalized to the particular citizens involved. This creates space for dialogic opportunity where participants can (at least hopefully) find themselves in moments of dialogic meeting with fellow participants and thus open to transformative moments throughout the group discussion. This is seen as critical to the overall quality of the process of deliberation and problem-solving in these Study Circles. And thus, they represent another case in which the possibilities for dialogue are central to the possibilities for good deliberation.

There are other examples of deliberative institutional innovations that contain designs that can better facilitate dialogue.[26] But the upshot here is that even those institutional designs interested in something like deliberation have often relied on a core of dialogic opportunities of the kind described in the previous chapter. For the design of deliberative institutions, then, the lesson is that these spaces that are a "clearing" for dialogue are beneficial to deliberative processes as a whole. And if I have convincingly

argued for a Buberian conception of dialogue here, then the reasons why should be clear. Opportunities to engage meaningfully with one another can open citizens up to moments of dialogue where real transformative moments might be experienced. These moments, when and if they are experienced, open participants up to receive new points of view and incorporate them into their own thinking in ways that compelling arguments and information alone can simply not offer.

But beyond these more or less clearly deliberative designs, there are spaces that do not quite fit the deliberative model at all. In fact, I think only a theory of politics anchored in dialogue can lend support to their designs. I turn to one such institutional design in the following section where something like Buberian dialogue, and not deliberation, or even dialogue as structured communication in the immediate service of deliberation, seems to be central. This has had some politically noteworthy consequences of the sort deliberativists cannot help but praise, despite there being little connection to a proper theory of deliberation.

Beyond Deliberation; Or, Dialogue in Practice: The Restorative Listening Project

The above examples show how institutions aimed at deliberation can benefit by making dialogue possible in their designs. But there is also a way of institutionalizing a space for dialogue that can have political benefits beyond what a deliberative theory can recommend. These institutions, rather than orient themselves towards solving particular problems through inclusive political debate or argument, rely on the normative power of dialogic meeting to open citizens up to transformative interactions in the presence of one another. And though they are often organized around some local tension or particular

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problem, they are not designed for generating policy in any formal way. Instead, any political change stems from the changed attitudes and understandings of participants themselves, not necessarily through the power of better arguments (the attempt to debate or make counter arguments often palpably disrupts the process), but because of the opportunity to engage directly with their fellow citizens, hear their stories, tell their own, and (hopefully) get caught up in those moments of meeting made possible in dialogue.

To better explain this sort of institutional design, I want to look in depth at an example that took place in Portland, Oregon. It was arranged as a means of addressing racial tensions that had sprung up in relation to a process of gentrification, experienced to a large degree in the city's NE neighborhoods. This was the Restorative Listening Project. It was a clear example of an institution that was not deliberative in design, but based around opportunities for dialogue. The dialogue this institutional space facilitated through the efforts of the city government has made a significant impact in the lives of many citizens and on the relationship between local government and its citizens and neighborhood communities more broadly.

Portland has a long and proud tradition of civic activism. Whereas other urban areas saw their civic activity decline steadily after the boom of the late 60's and early 70's, Portland's citizens stayed politically engaged. Portland was so unique during this period that it receives its own chapter in Robert Putnam's *Better Together.* There he sought to uncover, "What magical elixir boosted Portlanders' civic engagement and social capital so astonishingly in the twenty years after 1974 [the year that Portland's neighborhood association system was created]?"[27] One of the answers to this puzzle was the responsiveness of city institutions to the active citizenry. Portland city government

had made great strides in responding and adapting to its citizen demands throughout the

period Putnam studied. But in the 1990's and early 2000's, much of this vigor had waned.

The city became increasingly less concerned with community empowerment and more

concerned with "livability concerns" and city services (housing inspections, combating

noise violations, etc.). And strong population growth, especially in minority

communities, changed many community relationships to the old neighborhood system,

creating many alternative sites of community building outside of the political ones

historically pursued by active Portlanders. Gaps between "classic" activist citizens, the

communities they claimed to speak for, and the institutions of city government threatened

to end Portland's enviable run as a poster city for grassroots governance.[28] In response to

this, the city recently refocused its efforts to expand and include citizen participation with

renewed focus on involving those citizens that had historically not been heard from.

This refocusing happened largely due to the leadership of Mayor Tom Potter who

served from 2004-2008. Potter expanded the budget for Portland's Office of

Neighborhood Involvement (ONI), the institution that linked the city government to the

neighborhood association system. He initiated a panel of 18 volunteers called

"Community Connect" to study and recommend ways to reinvigorate community

involvement and solicit new ideas for community-city interaction. By 2006-7, the ONI

was charged with implementing many of these suggestions, again with a renewed

emphasis on a greater diversity of public input.[29]

The focus on systematically including more input from traditionally

disenfranchised populations was long overdue. Though Portland can be proud of its

history of civic activism, its history in dealing with minorities is considerably more

checkered. In addition to the disconnect between under-represented groups and traditional civic activists, Portland suffers many of the unfortunately typical urban problems associated with race and class. And on many measures they are doing worse than other urban areas. A recent report by researchers at Portland State University and the Coalition of Communities of Color indicated that Multnomah County (the county containing the greater Portland metro area) is doing worse than other urban areas on several measures comparing whites and communities of color including: income disparity (communities of color on average earn about half of what whites earn), poverty levels, educational attainment, experiences of harassment, unemployment, and juvenile detention rates. Further, city and county services were failing to address these issues while racism was going largely unnamed and unchallenged in public.[30] As one recent Portland Tribune article describes it, Portland's racism is "subtle and under the radar," which in effect means it often goes unchallenged even in the face of such immense disparities institutional failures.[31]

And so partly in response to these increasingly evident community divisions, and partly with the increased resources available to the ONI to encourage greater community involvement, the "Effective Engagement Solutions Program" was created. This program was created within the ONI with the mission of hiring a staff person with, "strong facilitation, mediation, and intercultural communication skills" to "facilitate collaborative approaches to resolving chronic community conflicts," and to conduct "high-stakes community meetings," to encourage "community dialogues on challenging subjects."[32] They hired Judith Mowry as program coordinator. She proceeded, along with two other community leaders (Celeste Carey and John Canda), to create the Restorative Listening

Project to deal with issues of race and gentrification in NE Portland – one major site of "chronic community conflict."

Gentrification in NE Portland has happened in waves. Due to redlining practices throughout the early and mid 20th century, the city's relatively small African-American population was housed almost exclusively in the city's NE neighborhoods, centered in the Albina district. As the city envisioned major development projects, the neighborhoods that were bulldozed were generally in this area. The proposed expansion of a hospital, the construction of a coliseum and an Interstate bridge, led to the destruction of neighborhoods and the communities that had developed in them without any invitation to the black community to participate in these decisions. More recently, a new phase of gentrification has seen young professionals, usually white, moving into the NE neighborhoods. They have spurred development in the form of the construction of condo buildings and the remodeling and refurbishing of old homes. They are driving up property values, and bringing new businesses that have replaced many of the African-American owned businesses that had previously existed in the area. Much of this new influx of young professionals was the result of the city of Portland's concentrated effort to bring in professionals in the "creative services" industry, which they had become a national leader in.[33] Music production, movie and sound editing, software, and other high-tech and creative enterprises grew in the 1990's and early 2000's, with much of this growth (new buildings and new housing) happening in the city's Pearl district. Soon, however, the housing prices in this district had grown so steep that these young professionals were forced out and into the much more affordable NE neighborhoods. With them (and their middle and upper-middle-class incomes) came the services and

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businesses associated with this group: bike shops, wine bars, upscale grocery stores, vegan eateries, etc. Within a relatively short period of time, the entire feel of the NE neighborhoods had changed. Many families that had been in those neighborhoods for generations were confronted with an entirely foreign population, if they hadn't been pushed out altogether. Further, "the traditional community"[34] had witnessed city involvement in the NE neighborhood unlike anything they were used to in generations past. City sponsored events such as the "Last Thursday" street parties (a once a month event with vendors, live music, and food), increased police presence, and the windfall of investment dollars previously seen as inaccessible to populations that had been there for years. All of this led to growing tensions between these young whites, the city leadership, and the "traditional" black families.

In order to deal with these tensions, The Restorative Listening Project began organizing and sponsoring community meetings arranged by local community leaders. It was consciously modeled on the concept of "restorative justice" with the intention of dealing with the "relational aggression" that had been bubbling under the surface for some time. Its mission statement reads:

> The Restorative Listening Project is based on the principle of Restorative Justice which says that only when those most impacted are heard, acknowledged and efforts have been made to repair the harm can the community be made whole again. Once the following questions are answered - What happened?, Who was harmed?, How were they harmed?, and How can the harm be repaired? - we can identify ways to move forward.[35]

Rather than be focused on making policy to combat gentrification, or even creating new rules governing local neighborhood events and city-neighborhood relations, this meeting was meant to put citizens together in order to get them thinking and talking about race and gentrification. As such, it was in no clearly discernable way a deliberative

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institutional design. As such, it is a rare and unlikely institutional design to be made by a

city government. As author and well-traveled public speaker Nathan McCall remarked in

a presentation at an early meeting, "In all my travels … Portland is the only place having

these kinds of discussions."[36]

The meetings were to be held in various locations – a local college, churches and

community centers. They were initially planned for a year. They generally featured local

African American residents, usually with longstanding roots in the community, but also

occasionally experts on some element of race relations and/or gentrification, as the

principal speakers. They were asked to tell their stories before (what turned out to be)

largely white audiences. The usual format then gave space for a large-group question-

and-answer session following the presentations. They finished with a break-up into small

groups called "listening circles" for "processing." At the beginning of the meetings an

explanation of the purpose for the event was usually given, sounding more or less like

this:

> People want community, yet they build fences and walls go up. This has created a
> grieving, hurt and angry Black community, who see an unfair and unjust
> distribution of resources, and see their own families being forced out of the
> neighborhood. The problem is compounded by a largely oblivious white
> population that comes in, and in their words, takes over. What results is a
> 'relational aggression' and it is easier to talk about our relationships to things than
> to one another. So, we talk about how the groups have different experiences of
> bicycles, strollers, dogs, coffee, stores, and bigger things like access to home
> improvement loans, police surveillance, and losing the local gathering spot.[37]

Some notable changes in behavior have occurred in those that participated in the

meetings. Two particular areas of major conflict revolved around dogs and front porches.

For many black residents the white residents' propensity to have large dogs (often seen as

guard dogs by black residents), their failure to keep them on leash or to clean up after

them, and their treatment of the dogs relative to their neighbors was a major source of tension in the community. It had become a repeated concern in the sessions, prompting the organizers to devote three individual session to the issue. As one participant in the Restorative Listening Project meetings explained it, "We see you treating your dogs better than you treat us, our kids, our elders. You talk to your dogs like they've done something to deserve respectful treatment and then you pass me on the street and can't look me in the eye or say hello."[38] The statement was met with challenge and resistance from a white woman when it was delivered. But the message had resonance, if not for that particular woman, then for others. Some white residents have taken special care to clean up after their dogs and, perhaps more importantly, to stop and say hello to their neighbors.[39]

Another particular area of concern that emerged from these meetings was the role of entertaining on the front porch as a symbolic act indicating one's belonging to a community. The tendency for the young white people moving into the neighborhood was to host their gatherings and spend their free time in the fenced backyards. A longstanding community tradition, however, was to utilize the front porch for such gatherings as a sign of one's desire to interact with and, in a sense, invite one's neighbors to join in. The reclusive move to the backyard, coupled with incidents in which local black youth drinking and interacting on front porches and in front yards were met with fear, suspicion, and even calls to the authorities, symbolized either that these white people were too good for their neighbors, or scared of their neighbors, or both. The traditional community's sense of loss for their own community made this symbolic unwillingness to be a part of the neighborhood especially insulting. These became central themes for the

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presenters, both the sense of loss of the former community and the perceived insult that whites were committing by not interacting with their neighbors. As such, a "mantra" was offered by one of the organizers, based on the testimonials of several participants for both white and black residents: "Use your the front porch" because that's where "everything comes together."[40] And just as with the dog issue, this seems to have had an effect on at least some participants in these meetings. According to testimonial by one white participant who attended the meetings and reflected on one of the guiding principles of the project – that the one who strikes the blow doesn't know the force of the blow, only the one who has received the blow knows the force: "I [strike a blow] when I don't say hello … when I don't sit on my front porch. And I understand that … I understand the power of these small things [brought up] in this Listening Project. So, it's been a wonderful experience and a humbling experience."[41]

Emily Drew, a sociologist who did participant observation research on these meetings, noted some inherent limitations for the overall success of this project: a lack of corresponding efforts at combating structural racism that continued to perpetuate the harms of gentrification, and a strong current of "white denial" among white participants and audience members. But these meetings also produced some notable successes in terms of making breakthroughs, at least for those willing to listen "without white ears."[42] Drew writes:

> As African Americans produced knowledge about whiteness, and many white people struggled to listen to and accept this expertise, the majority of people who participated in the RLP dialogues consistently learned about gentrification and, perhaps more importantly, they began developing or deepening their awareness of racism. Although white people and people of color characterized this antiracist consciousness differently, my data provided evidence of people becoming more deeply aware of racism, having strong feelings during and after the dialogues, and experiencing some healing from the effects of racism.[43]

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And, in particular, a new consciousness of the effects of gentrification and white

behaviors on the "traditional" community emerged, sporadically, but directly as a result

of the experiences had at the meetings:

> Several of the white participants that I interviewed reflected upon one of the
> RLP's purpose questions: 'Is this who we wish to be?' and noted their
> embarrassment and guilt about behaving in ways that contributed to the harm of
> people of color. One shared that the project profoundly shaped her thinking about
> race because she realized that she would never even known how many ways her
> behaviors have been affected by race, but that the dialogues made her realize they
> all were. 'I don't think I can get rid of it all, all of my racism, that is. But for the
> time being, I just want to be less damaging.'[44]

Other stories emerged from these meetings indicating similar transformative

experiences, though often with a great deal of discomfort and awkwardness. A *New York*

Times article on the Restorative Listening Project details a story from one of the meetings

where a woman expressed gratitude to a presenter for explaining the difficulties

surrounding home improvement loans for many blacks. She claimed to have come to

understand "why all the houses weren't fixed up." She then announced her confusion

over whether to call the folks in the room Black or African-American. One audience

member responded "Donna." But a few days later when asked about the meetings, this

particular woman indicated, "I've chewed on that meeting like I've never chewed on a

church sermon or anything my entire life," and that she hoped to be able to continue open

and honest discussions on race with local blacks.[45]

The transformative potentials in these meetings are not relegated only to whites

who listened to stories of gentrification's harms. Some local black residents also

experienced transformative experiences related to the meetings. Drew noted several

instances of black participants refining their own understandings about the operations of

racism and about the history of their neighborhood. Further, a healing catharsis of sorts was experienced by some who took the opportunity to describe their own suffering aloud to the audience, especially a white audience.[46] An article in the *Oregonian* (the main newspaper in the Portland area) details the story of Charles Ford, a black, 78-year-old community leader in NE Portland when the Restorative Listening Project began. At that time he had an intense distrust, even hatred of white folks, which a great deal of past experience had justified. But interactions with two white folks in particular – an assistant police chief who sought to look after him, and Judith Mowry who sought his input and participation in the Restorative Listening Project – "broke the ice." He eventually spoke at a meeting, receiving a standing ovation for his participation. The theme of his talk was about "getting over it" and interacting with your neighbors and within your community.[47] When asked if he'd be willing to participate again he said, "I'd be glad to join Judith anytime. We're headed down the same road."[48]

These are politically important changes relative to neighborhood/community life in these NE neighborhoods. And real changes in understanding and behavior, especially by newer white residents, have at least sometimes been the result of these opportunities to see and hear their neighbors speak. Beyond this immediate impact, there could well be larger political benefits to these sorts of institutionalized meetings. As I argued above, dialogue that springs forth in these mini-public settings can resonate into new ways for citizens to relate to their neighbors and to their larger communities. This changed understanding and orientation can start to build political inertia that would not otherwise be present – just as deliberativists have been convincingly arguing, if based on the wrong understanding of the process at work.

Evaluating the Restorative Listening Project: A Deliberative Success Without

Deliberation?

I have argued throughout this chapter that spaces for the emergence of dialogue between citizens – a place for "politics anchored in dialogue" to occur between them – is necessary for successful institutional designs aimed at better deliberation. Further, some dialogically-inspired institutional designs that cannot be properly labeled "deliberative" can also be crucial to realizing better democratic politics. The Restorative Listening Project, detailed above, was such an institution. The unique attempt to bring people together to discuss the harms of gentrification without any particular or immediate designs on making or changing policy allowed a space to open up between participants in which they could be impacted simply by being in the presence of one another, hearing stories, and becoming personally acquainted with others and their experiences of harm.

Nothing in this institutional design created formal deliberation. In fact, the open challenging of the "facts" of presenters or audience members was discouraged – though such challenges did happen and were perceived by many as an interruption of the process. In a sense, this restriction worked to keep those seeking to retreat away from being impacted. By resorting to challenges and arguments – to "It" the presenter as another "angry black person" or "ignorant," (or some other reduction) indicates a refusal to fully engage with the presenter in question. It was, though it was not understood in these specific terms, an effort to allow the possibility that an I-Thou relation might emerge between participants by keeping the clearing open to such moments of meeting.

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This is also why the design to have speakers present their stories to an audience that, at first, was only supposed to listen was an effective design. Though it may seem anti-dialogic to restrict the free give and take of responses (and in the sense of dialogue as a particular type or process of communication, it was), this had the effect of permitting sufficient engagement between the audience and the speakers to unfold without challenge, interruption, or contestation that might act as silencing – that could act as the defeat of dialogue by monologue. And, of course, opportunities were created for this more free exchange (in question and answer periods and the listening circles) once the personal stories had (hopefully) been received.[49]

This, I am arguing, is an institutional design capable of reaping the rewards of dialogue for the sorts of ends that deliberative theory seeks. In this particular case participants in the Restorative Listening Project benefitted from new awareness of the harms created in gentrification, and could muster up a desire to work on their own behaviors from the impact of their experiences in the project. In fact, there was a theme reminiscent of Buberian dialogue articulated both in relation to the procedure of the meeting itself and the interactions between participants, but also as an element to be achieved among the members of the community at large. It was articulated most strongly by one of the co-organizers, John Canda, who often referred to the importance of being looked in the eye, being acknowledged and engaged by his neighbors. The active resistance to engagement was one of the major harms that his new neighbors perpetuated. And it was understood as a potential barrier to repairing harms and building community. As he put it:

> It's back to the social and personal consciousness that I want to be the best person
> I can be, and I want to bring the best out of people I'm dealing with, and in order

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to do that we HAVE TO acknowledge each other. You have to look at me. If you look away from me because you think you're better, because you think I don't matter, right away we're going to be very limited in how we communicate. I can go from a one-word answer to a paragraph. It just depends on if I feel you value me as I value you.[50]

This, I think, is indicative of exactly why dialogue is a necessary component for a politics that is based in direct citizen engagement; because, without the proper engagement, the turning towards one another, answers to questions will never reach their fullest potential and any attempt at politically productive dialogue will be stunted from the outset.

In terms of evaluating the Restorative Listening Project, Emily Drew saw their efforts as consciously constructing local African-Americans as "experts and knowledge producers," making their stories and experiences the focus of the proceedings and problematizing white behaviors as harmful to local residents. She also labeled the meetings as a "strategy" of dialogue aimed at "community formation" and "anti-racist place-making."[51] I would disagree slightly with the terms of this characterization of the Restorative Listening Project (more on this in a moment). But on these terms, Drew's conclusions about the success of the Project were ambivalent. Though there were clearly some successes in terms of individual transformations (of understanding, and in limited respects, of behaviors), Drew contends that the Project falls short in its ability to address structural causes of these racial harms. It may even reproduce established patterns of social exclusion, putting African-Americans in a position of performing a "racial spectacle" that confirms stereotypes and removes whites from any sense of wrong-doing:

> as long as the white audience members do not have to take responsibility for their own behaviors and feelings, an opportunity for antiracist consciousness can quickly become racial spectacle. When the power dynamics in the dialogues mirror familiar social patterns in which oppressed people must explain to their oppressors the very conditions of their oppression, white people become limited

in their ability to clearly see themselves and thus become … "collaborators" with the system of racism.[52]

Further, as a strategy for dealing with racism and gentrification, the Restorative Listening Project falls short so long as these underlying causes remain untouched. In fact, Drew argues:

> If white residents are now picking up their dog's waste, and not calling the police on their African American neighbors when they have a party on their front porch, this does not mean that the ongoing economic and racial oppression of gentrification has ceased. Because they have not addressed the actual problems that led to the relational aggression in the first place, this will likely be an ongoing battle in which white residents are just "waiting it out" and African American residents must continue to assert their right to place.[53]

All these concerns about the limited impact of the Restorative Listening Project are legitimate concerns, to be sure. Despite them, Drew holds out hope that the project will move into an effort to address these underlying structural issues in order to make its impact more lasting in the quest for "anti-racist place making."

But, I would argue, that this analysis is in part limited by the terms on which Drew understands the project. First, understanding the African-Americans who shared their stories as "knowledge producers" is in part correct. They were indeed placed in a position to share their stories as the recipients of the racial harms caused by gentrification. As such, their perspective was privileged in the room. But to understand them as simply as "knowledge producers" is to undersell the unique element involved with putting particular people, with particular stories in front of a group. Thus they did not serve as sources of general information about the nature of gentrification and the potential links to racial injustice, but stood up as particular people recounting their own stories about injustices that they had experienced. The knowledge produced, then, was

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not some set of propositions about the harms of gentrification or racial prejudice, able to be alternatively accomplished by a series of pamphlets published by these people and distributed to doorsteps. It was instead a series of opportunities to connect to real people with real experiences that might impact listeners through this encounter. The knowledge production, then, was in some ways a secondary aspect of the opportunity presented for the transformative impact of being in the presence of these others and hearing their stories.

Second, understanding the Restorative Listening Project as one amongst many "strategies" for making "anti-racist" community makes the conclusion about its limited impact too easy to draw. After all, since no direct effort to combat structural injustices was built into the meeting, it would seem that this institution stopped short of the "ultimate goal" of solving the problem of racial injustice in these neighborhoods. But the effort to empower citizens themselves to form connections, build community, and address, cooperatively, the difficulties associated with gentrification was engaged in precisely because other efforts had failed and this was perceived to be a "chronic conflict" in the community. Indeed, it is a single limited strategy, but one that has enormous potential to work through a problem from the ground up that had previously been failed to be addressed at all. After all, it is difficult to see how to 'make' white folks in the community accountable to their behaviors and their complicity in a system of oppression if not through these sorts of conversations. Any 'top down' solutions to address structural matters causing gentrification, if it lacks sufficient 'on the ground' support from the white community, is likely doomed to cause anger and resentment (not to mention further distance from the "traditional" community members they live beside).

The wider payoffs of attacking structural issues and larger political matters will, hopefully, follow.[54] But at a minimum some kind of "momentum" has been created towards this. It could even be partly understood as a growing discourse about the effects and harms of gentrification, as well as a growing discourse about communal norms and social rituals being constructed by the residents of NE Portland – not to mention the direct modification of harmful behaviors by some of the new residents of the neighborhoods. But this growing discourse has been connected to the meaningful experiences of participants, bodily present before others in Restorative Listening Project meetings. Its further transmission into the broader community will benefit from these experiences, no doubt. Op-eds in the local paper can help, but a politics of real, direct meeting of citizens who carry these experiences at the Restorative Listening Project with them will go much farther towards combating the problems in the NE neighborhoods.

Responding to a question about the Restorative Listening Project as being "just talk," Judith Mowry said explains the potential for this kind of meeting to have bigger political spillovers:

> The reason the policies aren't what they need to be is that we don't have the political will in the majority white paradigm to make them so. What I believe is that if we actually get it, if we are actually willing to look at it then we will become passionate about creating that equality. There is nothing like sitting in a room with someone like Lisa Manning [an African American participant in the meetings] and hearing her experience. You walk out changed and you walk out feeling like it's no longer this abstraction of some black community. It is people valuing each other and starting to figure it out. And we can do that.[55]

This was a theme that often actually emerged in the meetings themselves – how to apply what was experienced in the meetings to "outside" life, both in terms of changed behaviors (using the front porch, supporting businesses owned by "traditional" members

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of the community, etc.) and to continue the conversation at home, in coffee shops, in church, and so on. Echoing this point was an exchange between audience members at one of the Restorative Listening Project meetings. A white audience member, sympathetic to some expressed frustrations about the lack of tangible progress by the community in dealing with racial tensions, asked what the presenters thought it would take to get these conversations "to the coffee house, to my church, to my friends. That is *the* question for me." A member of the traditional black community in the audience expressed hope that it would not take anything tragic, such as another incident of police brutality directed at an African American youth. He addressed the questioner and said that to avoid this tragic scenario, "*you* have to do it," referring to the work that needed to be done to spread the conversations into the larger community.[56] There is no way to know whether this call was answered, but I think this certainly rings of a potential moment for meaningful (and politically useful) dialogue between these two audience members.

Perhaps, then, there are limitations to the immediate political results a program like the Restorative Listening Project can offer in terms of solving immense problems like gentrification. But it remains very difficult not to classify it as a deliberative success. A conversation about race, white privilege, and a connection between both city policy and individual behaviors that contribute to the harms of gentrification have all been articulated – and has produced some observable changes in understandings and actual behaviors of citizens. And, again, all this without anything that looks like formal deliberation. Dialogue, however, certainly seems to be at the center of what this institution has been able to accomplish, and may yet be able to accomplish.[57]

The upshot of this section, then, has been to suggest that alternative institutional designs that do not "look" like deliberative designs can accomplish a great deal of success on deliberative terms. This is because (just like many typical, successful deliberative designs) they allow a space for dialogue to unfold between engaged citizens. The Restorative Listening Project was one such design. But other arrangements are certainly possible. What is clear is that facilitating dialogic experiences should be an explicit goal of those interested in promoting effective shared governance, deliberation, and citizen engagement.

Notes

[1] Simone Chambers, "Rhetoric and the Public Sphere: Has Deliberative Democracy Abandoned Mass Democracy?" *Political Theory,* vol. 37, no. 3 (2009) 323-50.

[2] For examples of this way of understanding deliberative democracy, see: Jürgen Habermas, "Three Normative Models of Democracy" In: *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political,* Seyla Benhabib, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 21-30. See also: Seyla Benhabib's understanding of the "two tracks" of deliberative democracy in: "Toward a Deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy," from the same volume.

[3] Archon Fung, *Empowered Participation: Reinventing Urban Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) 17.

[4] See: Lyn Carson and Janette Hartz-Karp, "Adapting and Combining Deliberative Designs," *The Deliberative Democracy Handbook,* Gastil and Levine, eds. (San Francisco: Wiley and Sons, 2005) 134-6; see also: John Gastil "Is Face-to-Face Citizen Deliberation a Luxury or a Necessity?" *Political Communication 17* (2000), 357-61; Simon Niemeyer, "The Emancipatory Effect of Deliberation: Empirical Lessons from Mini-Publics," *Politics and Society, vol 39, no 1* (2011) 103-40.

[5] John Dryzek, *Discursive Democracy: Politics, Policy and Political Science,* 41.

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] *Ibid.* 43.

[8] Fung, *Empowered Participation,* 58-60.

[9] Perhaps not surprisingly, Fung cites Habermas and Gutmann and Thompson in explaining his ideal deliberative procedure.

[10] *Ibid.* 76-9.

[11] Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Why Deliberative Democracy?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) 180-1.

[12] Cissna and Anderson, *Moments of Meeting,* 175.

[13] *Ibid.* 176.

[14] Peter Levine, Archon Fung, and John Gastil, "Future Directions for Public Deliberation," In: *The Deliberative Democracy Hanbook,* 282.

[15] This notion of the "deliberative system" is following Mansbridge's use of the term where all the other stuff (notably everyday talk) that surrounds formal deliberation counts as part of this system of deliberation. See the section on Mansbridge in chapter 3 above.

[16] Katerine Cramer Walsh, *Talking About Race: Community Dialogues and the Politics of Difference,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007) 39-47.

[17] *Ibid.* 283.

[18] Ned Crosby and Doug Nethercut, "Citizens Juries: Creating a Trustworthy Voice for the People," In: *The Deliberative Democracy Handbook,* 112.

[19] *Ibid.* 115.

[20] *Ibid.* 116.

[21] See: Carson and Hartz-Karp, "Adapting and Combining Deliberative Designs," In: *The Deliberative Democracy Handbook,* for a comparison of this Citizen Jury process and a "televote."

[22] Crosby and Nethercut, "Citizens Juries," *Ibid.,*113.

[23] Patrick L. Scully and Martha L. McCoy, "Study Circles: Local Deliberation as the Cornerstone of Deliberative Democracy," In: *ibid,* 199-212.

[24] *Ibid.* 202.

[25] *Ibid.* 200.

[26] See for instance: Lawrence R. Jacobs, Fay Lomax Cook and Michael X. Delli Carpini, *Talking Together: Public Deliberation and Political Participation in America,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009) 118-51.

[27] Robert D. Putnam, Lewis M. Feldstein, and Don Cohen, *Better Together: Restoring the American Community,* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 2003) 244.

[28] Paul Leistner, 2008, "Hopes and Challenges of Democratic Governance: Lessons from Portland, Oregon," Paper prepared for the National League of Cities conference: *Democratic Governance at the Neighborhood Level: What Have We Learned?* (available online: http://www.portlandonline.com/oni/index.cfm?c=38596&a=228157)

[29] Amalia Alercon de Morris and Paul Leistner, "From Neighborhood Association System to Participatory Democracy – Broadening and Deepening Public Involvement in Portland, Oregon," *National Civic Review,* vol. 98, no. 2 (2009) 49-51.

[30] A. Curry-Stevens, A. Cross-Hemmer, and Coalition of Communities of Color, *Communities of Color in Multinomah County: An Unsettling Profile,* (Portland: Portland State University, 2010).

[31] Jennifer Anderson, "Racism in Portland: What are we Doing?," *The Portland Tribune* (Jul 1st, 2010).

[32] "From Neighborhood Association System to Participatory Democracy," 52.

[33] This is a story offered at a Restorative Listening Project meeting by Carl Talton, executive director of the Portland Family of Funds who spoke on the history of gentrification, See: "Development of Gentrification in N/NE Portland (Restorative Listening Project #4)," (2010; Flying Focus Video Collective).

[34] This is a term increasingly used to describe the African American community that had lived in the NE area of Portland at least since the Vanport flood in 1948, which destroyed a black community that had existed near the Columbia River that had been built for shipyard workers recruited from around the country.

[35] Restorative Listening Project Website, (http://www.portlandonline.com/oni/index.cfm?c=45627&)

[36] Nathan McCall, "Nathan McCall: The Effects of Gentrification (Restorative Listening Project #1)," (2008; Flying Focus Video Collective).

[37] Emily M. Drew, "Listening Through White Ears: Cross-Racial Dialogues as a Strategy to Address the Racial Effects of Gentrification," *Journal of Urban Affairs,* vol. 4, no. 1 (2011) 101.

[38] Drew, "Listening Through White Ears," 108.

[39] This is alluded to in the Drew article and was mentioned to me by Judith Mowry in a personal conversation, though there isn't any "hard data" on the number of attendees who changed their behaviors in this way.

[40] Celeste Carey, "Porches and Smiles (Restorative Listening Project #2)" (2009; Flying Focus Video Collective).

[41] This quote is from a testimonial by John Cunningham, available through the OregonLive.com special coverage page dedicated to testimonials from Restorative Listening Project participants. It can be found online at: www.oregonlive.com/special/index.ssf/2008/04/speak_listen_heal_index_page.html

[42] Drew, "Listening Through White Ears." This is a running theme in the article, referencing a line used by a participant in a listening circle portion of a Restorative Listening Project meeting. It was directed (by a white woman) at her fellow participants who were refusing to appreciate the stories of black participants as personally implicating their own behavior.

[43] *Ibid.* 109.

[44] *Ibid.* 110-11.

[45] William Yardly, "Racial Shift in Progressive City Spurs Talks," *New York Times* (May 29th 2008), available online: http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/29/us/29portland.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1&ei=5087& em&en=63fee218058cf972&ex=1212206400.

[46] Drew, "Listening Through White Ears," 110.

[47] His presentation was recorded and can be seen in: "Porches and Smiles (Restorative Listening Project #2)."

[48] S. Renee Mitchell, "A Successful Crossing of the Racial Divide," *The Oregonian* (April 17th 2008), available online at: http://www.oregonlive.com/special/index.ssf/2008/04/a_successful_crossing_of_the_r.html .

[49] Laura Black has argued that personal stories are uniquely able to put people into dialogic moments, a la Buber, and productive for public dialogue in ways articulated by Anderson and Cissna. See: Laura W. Black, "Deliberation, Storytelling, and Dialogic Moments," *Communication Theory 18,* (2008) 93-116.

[50] From a collection of testimonials attached to *The Oregonian* story on the project. These testimonials are available online: www.oregonlive.com/index.ssf/2008/04/speak_listen_heal_index_page.html.

[51] Drew, "Listening Through White Ears."

[52] *Ibid.* 112.

[53] *Ibid,* 113.

[54] An interesting test of this is currently playing out in these same NE neighborhoods with the attempt to alter an arterial to include larger lands for bike traffic. The city response to the call by (mostly white, middle class) residents to provide this change was prompt and positive, leading to something of a backlash by local African-American residents who resented the change (and the city's response to the demands). However, local media reported on some of the history of such city planning activities, and the process of gentrification as a whole, in relaying this issue to the broader public, citing the activities of the Restorative Listening Project in doing so. Whatever the outcome of this "bike lane issue," then, it would seem that something of a larger context has been provided in thinking through land use and planning decisions in these neighborhoods. See: Sarah Mirk, "It's Not About the Bikes: Pinning the North Williams Uproar over Bikes Misses the Point – and the History" *Portland Mercury,* Februrary 16th, 2012, www.portlandmercury.com/portland/its-not-about-bikes/Content?oid=5619639.

[55] Interview on NPR's *Tell Me More,* June 3, 2008. Transcript available online at: http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=91102444.

[56] "Turning Point (Restorative Listening Project #5)" *The Restorative Listening Project* (2011; Flying Focus Video Collective).

[57] The Restorative Listening Project has ceased to exist in its original form, no longer focusing specifically on issues surrounding the harms produced by gentrification. But its work continues under a new title (The Restorative Action Project) and has an explicit focus on seeking to actively repairing the community harms that have previously been described through the meetings. Judith Mowry continues to oversee and facilitate meetings and presentations for this institution.

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