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SPACES OF FREEDOM:
POLITICAL THEORY AND INTERPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY

A Dissertation
submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
of Georgetown University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in Government

By

Emily Howden Hoechst, J.D.

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SPACES OF FREEDOM:
POLITICAL THEORY AND INTERPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Emily Howden Hoechst

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ABSTRACT

Politics is hard because it is intersubjective; it requires us to work with others
who are not subject to our control. Liberal democratic politics can be especially
difficult, since democracy demands legitimate agreement among different views, and
liberalism requires that the agreement not be manipulated or coerced. Rawls recognizes
the paradox of intersubjectivity by urging us to practice the very great virtues of
tolerance and mutual respect. Habermas recognizes this predicament when he
acknowledges the fundamental vulnerability of socialized human beings and the moral
need for considerateness between persons. Based on the moral psychology of Kohlberg
and Piaget, both Rawls and Habermas argue that the best way to deal with
intersubjectivity is to create a moral point of view from which multiple conflicting
claims may be assessed. I argue that their reliance on cognitive moral psychology
limits Rawls and Habermas to a problematic and incomplete understanding of both
intersubjectivity and politics.

Interpersonal psychoanalytic theory, in the work of D.W. Winnicott and Jessica
Benjamin, can be used to critique the exclusively cognitive framework relied upon by
Rawls and Habermas. Using Benjamin and Winnicott, I argue that the developmental

psychology underlying Rawlsian and Habermasian theory is not truly intersubjective, and that it will not in the end support the mutual respect, equality, and democratic practice that Rawls and Habermas desire. Because its focus remains intrapsychic rather than intersubjective, cognitive psychology limits its conception of freedom to only one of its many dimensions, that of the internal realm of mental control. I draw on Hannah Arendt's conception of politics as an alternative example (though not an unproblematic one) of the spaces of freedom that Rawls and Habermas overlook. In the final chapters I investigate whether Rawls' political liberalism and/or Habermas' communicative action can accommodate a more robust intersubjectivity and create additional spaces of freedom.

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INTRODUCTION: MORALITY, PLURALITY, PSYCHOLOGY

Democracy is both an ideal and a practice. The ideal resounds in phrases like that of William Tyler Page: "Government of the people, by the people, for the people, whose just powers are derived from the consent of the governed." The ideal surfaces when we are called on to face tyranny and oppression: hear Patrick Henry's "Give me liberty or give me death!" And the ideal seduces us with images of commonality or a common good; picture here Rousseau's general will, or Mill's free marketplace of ideas.

As a practice, however, democracy is difficult. Tocqueville frequently advised that democratic institutions should make each citizen take a part in government in order to moderate excessive tastes.[1] Iris Marion Young writes that "[d]emocracy is hard to love. Perhaps some people enjoy making speeches, or confronting those with whom they disagree, or standing up to privileged and powerful people with claims and demands. Activities like these, however, make many people anxious."[2] Voting is not particularly onerous for most, but one has to take the time to educate oneself on the issues and learn about the candidates. Other democratic practices are more demanding, especially those described as deliberative, which may be particularly hard to love.

In contrast to democracy, we think of freedom as an ideal, not as a practice. If we are free, we have or possess free will, freedom of choice among alternatives, freedom to do what we want. As Fred Alford observes, "[f]reedom is mastery and money, and freedom is sleep and respite. We use the same word for both sets of

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experiences."[3] In a modern democracy, freedom may correspond to special freedoms

(freedom of speech or religion),[4] or it may mean a space protected from governmental

intrusion. If political freedom requires practice, it feels less free, because then it

intrudes on our time for work (money) and sleep. Indeed, this is the classically liberal

understanding of freedom, which Arendt characterizes as follows:

> We are inclined to believe that freedom begins where politics ends,
> because we have seen that freedom has disappeared when so-called political
> considerations overruled everything else. Was not the liberal credo, "the less
> politics the more freedom," right after all? Is it not true that the smaller the
> space occupied by the political, the larger the domain left to freedom? Indeed
> do we not rightly measure the extent of freedom in any given community by the
> free scope it grants to apparently nonpolitical activities, free economic enterprise
> or freedom of teaching, of religion, of cultural and intellectual activities? Is it
> not true, as we all somehow believe, that politics is compatible with freedom
> only because and insofar as it guarantees a possible freedom *from* politics?[5]

If our ideal of freedom is almost always a freedom of choice, then the more

control we have over a situation, the freer we are likely to feel. The problem with

democracy, however, is that it is never supposed to be subject to any one person's

control. Democracy's political space is inhabited by many people who differ from each

other but who must nonetheless work out some kind of agreement on political issues.

We have much less control in politics than we do in other parts of our lives, which can

make it feel like a realm of coercion rather than freedom. If the experience of co-acting

in politics is an anxious or uncomfortable one, we are likely to seek other ways of

democratic participation that aren't so involved with other people. This is precisely the

advantage of interest-based democracy, one that presents democratic politics as a menu
of options from which citizens as "consumers" make their selections. By registering
their preferences for policies or politicians, democratic citizens in this model can
participate in government without the anxiety of confronting and negotiating with other
people. By choosing what positions to "own," moreover, citizens can relieve
themselves of the burden of creating and maintaining a shared, common world.

The disappearance of a public space for politics strikes theorists like Hannah
Arendt as one of the most worrisome developments in modern society. Without a
shared public space, Arendt argues, we lose sight of those things that bind us together
politically, as well as those problems that are most pressing to other members of
society. Without an inclusive and diverse public space, moreover, our ability to generate
new ideas for political problems atrophies along with a shared space for politics.
Arendt firmly believes that without a space for plurality to make an appearance,
political possibilities become narrower and more truncated. And without this space for
appearance, we become more susceptible to authoritarian and totalitarian impulses.

Liberal political theorists like Rawls and Habermas share a concern for the
practice of politics, and present us with their own conceptions of a deliberative public
space. In Rawls' political liberalism, citizens work together to form an overlapping
consensus on matters of constitutional essentials and basic justice. In Habermas' theory
of communicative action, citizens discuss norms of justice with the aim of reaching
agreement in order to guide their concrete political choices accordingly. Both theorists

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rely on a deontology that prioritizes the right over the good and places justice as the highest aim. And both depend on a particular view of citizens that abstracts from their concrete characteristics in order to construct mutual respect and reciprocity.

But neither Rawls nor Habermas confronts the psychological anxiety that political action can generate. Politics involves exposure to otherness in ways we can neither predict nor control. Other people may be like us or very different from us, but in either case we will need their cooperation if we are going to attempt to solve political problems. Politics, as Arendt has taught us, is where humanity in all its plurality makes its appearance. These others, by their very existence, evoke responses and feelings in us whether we wish them to or not. Thus alongside, around, and through the cognitive reasoning postulated by Rawls and Habermas, other psychological processes are always also taking place. Freud identifies them as unconscious processes, and they include those feelings and reactions such as anxiety, aggression, and dislike, but also admiration, attraction, and desire. These reactions, moreover, do not center only on what people say or on the cognitive content of their utterances. They center on the people themselves, triggered by their appearance, voice, actions, demeanor, and other less identifiable traits. These experiences, though perhaps only dimly felt, create an essential connection between politics and psychoanalytic theory. The inner world, writes Jane Flax, "has unconscious and uncontrollable effects on other aspects of human subjectivity such as thought."[6]

If deliberative democratic practice produces fear and anxiety, then Rawls and Habermas will have to face the difficult problem of getting people into the public realm in the first place. Political liberalism can only produce its stable overlapping consensus if citizens bring their reasonable though conflicting comprehensive doctrines to the table. Communicative action can only work its rational magic if participants agree to seek a discursive solution. Rawls and Habermas realize the importance of participation, but they do not view moral motivation as a problem for political theory. They either argue that our "natural sympathy with others" produces a desire to live in a just society (Rawls), or that the failures of motivation are a problem of application rather than justification (Habermas).

Both of these responses are deeply intertwined with psychology. However, all of the political theorists I engage here — Rawls, Habermas, Arendt –firmly reject the relevance of psychoanalysis for politics. For both Rawls and Habermas, Freudian psychoanalysis is both too irrational and too unscientific for political theory. Rawls says that Freud's "speculations about the origins of a sense of justice" suffer from the "defect" of originating under circumstances of conflict, envy and jealousy (read "childhood"), and thus these "earlier and unexamined moral attitudes are likely to be in important respects irrational and without justification."[7] Habermas' resistance to Freudian theory is more subtle, for he is quite at ease with the concepts and vocabulary of psychoanalysis (ego, individuation, oedipal crisis). What Habermas studiously avoids, however, is the Freudian emphasis on aggression and his idea of an unconscious

that is not subject to control. Habermas takes aggression as evidence of the wrong kind of reason. Throughout Habermas' theory, the unconscious is always accessible and open to inspection, indeed, open to discursive discovery. By choosing Piaget, Kohlberg, and Mead as his guiding theorists, Habermas clearly demonstrates his preference for the cognitive and linguistic functions of the ego over the irrational, delinguistified presence of the unconscious.

Arendt will also have no truck with psychoanalysis, but for an entirely different reason. For her, the problem lies in psychoanalysis' interiority, its tendency to focus on the inner self and its fantasies and preoccupations. "Modern psychology is desert psychology," she writes, meaning that all it can do is to "help" us adapt to the lifeless conditions of the modern world.[8] In doing so, it deprives us of "our only hope, namely that we, who are not of the desert though we live in it, are able to transform it into a human world."[9] Arendt fears that the growth of psychoanalytic "solutions" will exacerbate the already problematic tendency of people to withdraw from the public realm into privacy and intimacy. If our concern is only with our inner selves, we may fail to maintain the common, public realm so necessary for the human condition.

Despite their professed independence from psychoanalytic theory, however, all three political theorists I engage here rely to a great extent on people having certain psychological capacities in order to function as citizens. Arendt does not have an explicit theory of child development in her work – she doggedly insists that "politics is for grownups," – but Rawls and Habermas do. They both provide an account of child

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development, which they call their moral psychology, and although there are slight variations between the two accounts, they are strikingly similar in their overall content. Moreover, moral psychology plays an important role in Rawls' and Habermas' political theory. It anchors the concepts of moral judgment, reciprocity, respect and recognition that are central to both accounts.

The moral psychology of Rawls and Habermas is based primarily on the work of Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg, who detail the child's journey from dependence to autonomy via the recognition of the *moral point of view*. The moral point of view, dissociated from any particular context or circumstance, allows the individual to access a set of universal principles that can coordinate opposing views and adjudicate conflicting claims. Both Piaget and Kohlberg embrace a linear, stage model of development, moving from attachment in the early stages to autonomy at the end. They want to explain how a child can come to understand perspectives other than his own and to integrate his claims with those of others. The goal for Piaget and Kohlberg is the familiar Kantian one: moving through tutelage to freedom and self-mastery.

The problem, I want to argue here, is that the *moral* psychology of Rawls and Habermas provides a dubious foundation for a *political* theory. As an explanation of psychological thinking or cognitive reasoning, it fares quite well—Piaget's stages, for example, do a good job of explaining how the child forms progressively sophisticated mental images and representations of objects in the outside world. But as the prominent infant researcher Daniel Stern points out, Piaget's stage model suffers from an

important weakness when we try to extend it beyond subjective reasoning to human interaction. "Piaget's stage model ... accounted for the infant's encounter with the inanimate physical world (with space, time, number, volume, weight, etc.), for which task it had been constructed – but it was inadequate to conceptualize the encounter with the richer and more complicated social-emotional human world composed of self and others."[10]

The difference between how we interact with *things* and how we interact with *people* matters a great deal when we enter the realm of politics. Arendt recognizes this when she talks about the intrusion of *homo faber* into the realm of politcs, the desire to substitute "making" for "acting." Her critique of philosophy alerts us to the tendency to objectify others in an attempt to avoid the difficulties of action. Politics requires that we care enough about what is at stake—this human world – to become involved, to engage with others, to act. Action requires us to do something; to risk moving beyond our personal spaces (both physical and psychological) to confront plurality in the name of politics. It is this enormous risk, I will argue, that makes the security offered by moral psychology so attractive to political theorists. My argument here is that politics understood as a democratic practice requires more than rational understanding or cognitive control. It requires a different and more sophisticated psychology than that provided by Habermas and Rawls.

The lack of attention to plurality and action is why Arendt famously despised psychoanalysis. In this sense, with respect to the psychoanalytic theory of her day, she

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was absolutely correct. But psychoanalysis has changed a great deal since Arendt's time, and many of these changes revolve around two concepts that are important for her as well, namely how we meet and interact with others, and how we develop care and concern for the world outside of ourselves. Partly in response to the individualistic focus of Freud, and driven in no small measure by feminist critiques, the study of self in relation has come to the fore of the psychoanalytic field. Rather than investigating the different mechanisms the self uses to process external stimuli, psychoanalysis is now concerned with the relational field between two (or more) selves. "Roughly speaking, attention has shifted from the intrapsychic world of the self to the interpersonal sphere, to relations between self and other. That is to say, post-Freudian theory focuses on emotional relations *between* human subjects rather than the inner world of the individual self alone."[11]

Interpersonal psychology, in the work of D.W. Winnicott and Jessica Benjamin, offers us a different understanding of mental life, one with exciting implications for political theory. For these two psychologists, intersubjectivity involves recognizing multiple spaces of activity; the interior, mental space of thought and fantasy, the exterior "objective" world, and an in-between space that is neither private and individualistic nor wholly external. This space is co-created by individuals who, though different, can recognize moments of commonality. In Winnicott's terms, it is a space of freedom, one that belongs neither to self nor to other but can be constructed and enjoyed by both. In contrast to the internal world of cognitive processes, intersubjective space

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makes room for multiple subjects and multiple viewpoints. It also makes room for

unpredictability and contestation, which are essential and inescapable ingredients of

intersubjective space.

My argument here is that, because its focus remains intrapsychic rather than

intersubjective, the moral psychology of Rawls and Habermas limits its conception of

freedom to only one of its many dimensions, that of the internal realm of thinking. In

contrast, Arendt's account of politics is much more in tune with interpersonal

psychology like that of Benjamin and Winnicott. Though not without its own flaws,

Arendt's understanding of political space as a realm of contestation among plural points

of view leaves more room for freedom in politics than either Rawls or Habermas.

A politics that incorporates an interpersonal psychology also generates a more

genuine respect for otherness than deontological liberal theory. With a shrinking public

sphere, others become less visible to us — it is harder to see or imagine other points of

view. We often see other people as barriers or limitations on our freedom, but I want to

suggest that this space of plurality offers us a different space of freedom, one free from

our private points of view. Unlike the political space described by Rawls and

Habermas, however, an intersubjective political space will involve more conflict and

contestation, and less recourse perhaps to "rational" argumentation. Because

intersubjective psychology encourages us not to objectify or idealize others, recognizing

them often requires opposing them, in a cycle that Winnicott describes as "destruction

and survival." Through this process, we learn to see others as subjects in their own

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right, as both outside our control and nonthreatening. We can learn the difference

between a respect for persons and a respect for principles.

How does a different psychology change the practice of democracy? I can only

begin to address this in the last chapter here, but it involves a different way of seeing

our ideals and thinking about our practices. Ideals are indispensable to political life;

they inspire and motivate us, guide us in our actions. We may have an ideal that we try

to implement in practice, either in creating laws and institutions, or devising solutions to

problems. Where we get into trouble, however, is in the idealization of other people,

either attributing certain capacities to them or expecting them to be similar to ourselves.

Politics requires us to maintain a space between self and other, one that we may try to

bridge but do not collapse. Intersubjectivity depends on maintaining this space of

freedom.

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[1] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*. Trans. G. Lawrence, ed. J.P. Mayer. (New York: HarperPerennial 1969) p. 442.

[2] Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*. (Oxford University Press 2000) p. 17.

[3] See C. Fred Alford: *Rethinking Freedom: Why Freedom Has Lost Its Meaning and What Can be Done to Save It*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2005).

[4] Alford, *Rethinking Freedom*, p. 43.

[5] Arendt, "What Is Freedom?" in *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*. (New York: Penguin Books 1993) p. 149.

[6] Jame Flax, "The End of Innocence," in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, ed. Judith Butler and Joan Scott. (New York: Routledge Press 1992) p. 451.

[7] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice, Revised Edition*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1999) p.402, 472. All references herein are to this revised work.

[8] Hannah Arendt, "Epilogue," in *The Promise of Politics*, New York: Schocken Books 2005) p. 201.

[9] Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, p. 201.

[10] Daniel Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*. Paperback edition w/ New Introduction (New York: Basic Books 1985) p. xii.

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[11] Anthony Elliott, *Psychoanalytic Theory: An Introduction.* (Durham: Duke University Press 2002) p. 25.

CHAPTER 1: FORWARD FROM FREUD

The field of psychoanalysis is vast and varied. Because much of psychoanalytic theory is generated from clinical practice, it maintains a connection with lived experience that adds richness and depth, but also complexity and difficulty. These complexities work their way into different approaches and schools of thought, each with its own explanatory framework. At times, the discipline seems like an impenetrable thicket of specialist debate, inaccessible to those unfamiliar with its basic concepts or terminology. In this, psychoanalysis is perhaps no different from any other academic discipline, but because what it purports to explain is, well, *us*, the opacity seems especially vexing, if not downright suspicious.

Despite the diversity of views and practices, the basic features of Freud's original concepts continue to anchor much of psychoanalytic theory. The realm of the unconscious is perhaps Freud's greatest and most enduring discovery, though its importance has waxed and waned through successive generations of thinkers. Freud's map of the psyche, consisting of the id, ego, and superego, also continues to influence our thought, though again, theorists disagree on the precise contours of each. And his theories of love and aggression – the eternal battle between Eros and Thanatos – continue to be worked and re-worked as the discipline develops.

To be sure, Freudian theory has come under heavy critical fire, much of it well deserved. Feminist theorists have soundly criticized Freud for his myopia concerning female sexual development and his treatment of femininity as a distorted or diminished

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version of masculinity.[1] Freud's narrow emphasis on infant sexuality has been challenged and fruitfully expanded by object relations theorists to include broader concepts of love and attachment. And relational psychoanalysis has both contested and altered the classical Freudian theory of drives and defenses.

The discipline also faces serious challenges from outside its ranks, especially by those who question its methodology or, more critically, deny that Freudian theory has any scientific basis at all. In the U.S. the rapidly increasing field of biochemistry seems to be supplanting the need for Freudian "talk" therapy or psychological theory. Many of the symptoms that first brought patients to Freud, such as delusions, "hysteria," or psychosomatic paralysis, now find treatment with pharmaceuticals. To many in the scientific community, psychoanalysis suffers from a fatal lack of discipline and objectivity; positing the existence of a dark, inaccessible unconscious that influences human thought and behavior seems dangerously close to magical, superstitious thinking. And the sciences, political science included, have always preferred the presumably finished psyche of adult subjects, and have been content to leave unexamined the psychological development of those adults and whether or to what extent that development influences adult life.

Despite these disputes, however, Freud's fundamental approach remains vital to our attempts to get a firmer grasp on human psychology. Freud takes seriously the experiences of childhood in the formation of adult character and emotions. In his writings on infant sexuality and the Oedipal conflict, Freud draws our attention to the

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monumental task each individual faces in becoming a separate and independent person. In contrast to the idea of a child as a neutral tabula rasa, Freud presents the child as both intensely bonded and conflicted, subject to overwhelming desires and faced with mastering external reality. The Freudian child is locked in a fierce struggle to establish his own identity and independence. How this struggle is resolved—and as we will see even the use of the term "resolved" is contested – has a tremendous influence on adult character and relations with others. For Freud, these early experiences continue to affect an individual's social life throughout adulthood. "[I]n mental life nothing which has once been formed can perish-- ... everything is somehow preserved and ... in suitable circumstances... it can once more be brought to life."[2]

Much of political theory responds to psychoanalysis with a mixture of disdain and apprehension. Freud describes mental and emotional tendencies that are disturbing to theorists trying to build a model of political interaction based on reason, cooperation, and respect. We want to encourage people to talk rather than fight, to resort to minimally civilized debate rather than brute force when they disagree. Aggression, lust, greed, and violence are thus elements we need to control—in the sense of "put someplace else" – not recognize, theorize, or include. To some extent, Freud enables this kind of splitting, because his tripartite model lends itself to compartmentalization. Ego psychology, as we will see, takes this kind of splitting to impressive lengths. In the years since Freud, however, psychoanalytic theory has widened its framework

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considerably, beyond the mental mechanisms that repress desire into an analysis of relationships between individuals.

It is not possible here to attempt a comprehensive survey of psychoanalytic theory from Freud forward.[3] But I do want to selectively highlight certain concepts that are central to our forthcoming discussion of Rawls and Habermas. It is interesting to see how recent developments in psychoanalytic theory have moved in ever-widening circles to include the impact of others on the self, and fascinating to watch the intellectual currents shift from intrapsychic theory to intersubjectivity. This chapter is thus divided into three parts. The first is a basic introduction to three elements of Freudian theory: the tripartite model of id-ego-superego, the drive theory, and the Oedipal construct. The second section introduces Nancy Chodorow's critique of Freudian subjectivity, a crucial move towards a more relational understanding of child development. The third section discusses some key figures in ego psychology and early object relations theory, in order to see how post-Freudian conceptions of individuation and relationships have developed. I leave Winnicott and Benjamin for the next chapter, as we will need to go into considerably more detail in their work.

Again, my aim here is only to give a sense of the contours of interpersonal psychology, in the hopes that this background material will make our discussion of Rawls and Habermas less unwieldy. To look ahead a bit, the broader argument I ultimately hope to make is not only a comparative one, but a critical one as well. The fact that psychoanalytic theory has developed along intersubjective lines since Freud

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does not in itself render Rawls' and Habermas' moral psychology insufficient. They choose Kohlberg, I like Jessica Benjamin, but my preference alone does not matter or constitute a critique. The critique lies, I believe, in the argument that the moral psychology on which Rawls and Habermas rely will not in the end generate or support the political qualities that they themselves value, such as mutual respect, reciprocity, judgment, or a robust democratic practice. Interpersonal psychology, I believe, will do a much better job at moving us in these directions. But first, we need to understand the background psychology.

The Mental Landscape

Freud famously divides the mental apparatus into the three areas of the id, ego, and superego. These three areas interact with one another and with the external world, though the boundaries between them are fluid. Each element interacts with the others, transferring energy or discharging it towards an object, whether internal or external. Nonetheless, each area has its own distinct qualities and contributions to subjectivity that are relevant for our discussions here.

The id, Freud confesses, can only be described in contrast to the ego, and is the seat of instinctual needs present in us from the first days of life. " It is the dark, inaccessible part of our personality; ... [w]e approach the id with analogies: we call it a chaos, a cauldron full of seething excitations."[4] Because the id derives its energy from instinct and never rises to the level of consciousness, it is not subject to the rules of

logic or to the constraints of organization. There is no "before" or "after," no causality; it "produces no collective will, but only a striving to bring about the satisfaction of the instinctual needs subject to the observance of the pleasure principle." Nor does the law of contradiction obtain in the id. "Contrary impulses exist side by side, without canceling each other out or diminishing each other: at the most they may converge to form compromises under the dominating economic pressure towards the discharge of energy."[5] Significantly, the id knows nothing of judgments of value; it does not register good or evil or recognize the constraints of any morality at all. The id exists as instinctual need for satisfaction and the pursuit of pleasure.

In contrast to the id, the ego is the part of ourselves to which we have most direct access; it is what comes to mind when we think "I am." According to Freud, the ego is the home of consciousness. It can receive stimuli both from the external world as well as from the mind and body. "The ego is that portion of the id which was modified by the proximity and influence of the external world, which is adapted for the reception of stimuli and as a protective shield."[6] The ego acts as a filter and mediator between the world and the id; it perceives the world outside of us and evaluates our relationship to it. The ego takes on the burden of self-preservation by processing external stimuli and either avoiding the dangerous ones or adapting to the moderate ones. At the same time the ego allows us to effect change in the external world; according to Freud, the ego chooses whether and how to try to alter externality through activity.

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But because reality is often not subject to control, Freud notes that the ego most often mediates between the external world and the id by "gaining control over the demands of the instincts, by deciding whether they are to be allowed satisfaction, by postponing that satisfaction to times and circumstances favorable in the external world or by suppressing their excitations entirely."[7] The ego thus imparts a measure of organization on the impulsivity of the id, insofar as it is able; where there is chaos, dissonance, and disorder in the id, the ego strives for order, synthesis, and meaning. As Freud comments, "we might say that the ego stands for reason and good sense while the id stands for the untamed passions."[8]

In his later theory Freud adds another structure to the mental landscape. Freud theorizes that following the Oedipal crisis, a part of the ego splits off from itself. At first he thought this odd since "ego is in its very essence a subject; how can it be made into an object? Well, there is no doubt that it can be. The ego can take itself as an object, can treat itself like other objects, can observe itself, criticize itself, and do Heaven knows what with itself."[9] This special agency of conscience and self-observation is the super-ego, which comes into being from the internalization of parental authority. "[Y]oung children are amoral and possess no internal inhibitions against their impulses striving for pleasure. The part which is later taken on by the super-ego is played to begin with by an external power, by parental authority."[10]

During the Oedipal phase, Freud explains, the child must give up his obsessional love for his mother while at the same time dealing with feelings of extreme jealousy and

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hostility toward his father. In the face of these powerful emotions, the child suffers a kind of loss of the idealized parent-child relationship from infancy. To remain connected with his parents, the child reconstructs their authority within his own psyche as a super-ego[11]. The super-ego "observes the ego, gives it orders, judges it and threatens it with punishments, exactly like the parents whose place it has taken."[12] The super-ego is also a source for what Freud calls the ego-ideal, which sets up our goals and aspirations for us and motivates us to action. "There is no doubt that this ego ideal is the precipitate of the old picture of the parents, the expression of admiration for the perfection which the child then attributed to them."[13]

Significantly, despite its genesis in the parental relationship, Freud thinks the super-ego acquires an objective validity beyond the idiosyncrasies of the familial setting. As the child grows, the super-ego expands outward from the parental figures to include other authority figures in the child's life. "In the course of development the super-ego also takes on the influences of those who have stepped into the place of parents—educators, teachers, people chosen as ideal models. ... As it departs more and more from the original parental figures, it becomes, so to say, more impersonal."[14] As an amalgamation of cultural rules and reprimands that the child receives throughout his life, the super-ego "is the representative for us of every moral restriction, the advocate of a striving toward perfection – it is, in short, as much as we have been able to grasp psychologically of what is described as the higher side of human life."[15]

For all its association with reason, then, the ego does not occupy the seat of power, as it were. Instead, Freud repeatedly cautions, the ego is constantly caught between the pleasure-seeking id and the perfection-seeking superego. Add to this the demands of the external world, the "reality principle," and the ego begins to seem positively helpless, forced into a reactive rather than an active role. Freud notes that "the poor ego ... serves three severe masters and does what it can to bring their claims and demands into harmony with one another. ... Its three tyrannical masters are the external world, the super-ego and the id."[16]

The ego is not without resources, however, having at its disposal a myriad of defenses to tensions between the id, super-ego, and reality. Sometimes the ego represses an instinct, or projects it onto something else, or sublimates it by turning it into the service of some other activity (such as work). Occasionally, the ego will allow us to satisfy an urge by rationalizing our desire, thereby manipulating our perception of reality to fit with our wants. But often, the system cannot balance the tensions between drives and conscious choice, resulting in blockages, repression, or neuroses. "Thus the ego, driven by the id, confined by the super-ego, repulsed by reality, struggles to master its economic task of bringing about harmony among the forces and influences working in and upon it; and we can understand how it is that so often we cannot suppress a cry: 'Life is not easy!' "[17]

Freudian Drive Theory

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Although he revised and modified the details of the drive theory over the course of his life, Freud remained firmly committed to the idea that human development was spurred, from infancy forward, by desires that spring from within. "An instinct ... arises from sources of stimulation within the body. ... We picture it as a certain quota of energy which presses in a particular direction."[18] Springing forth from the id, desires and drives demand satisfaction, and the ego must mediate between those desires and drives, the external environment, and the super-ego. Unsatisfied desires produce psychic tension, and the aim of the drives is to find a release or discharge for that tension. Hence Freudian drive theory resembles a closed system, modeled on a kind of balancing of internal hydraulic machinery. Indeed, Freud himself sometimes referred to drive theory as the economic model of psychology.

This systematic approach is easier to grasp if we recall that Freud models the *mental* function of the psyche on the *biological* function of the nervous system. When external stimuli impact the nervous system, it responds by generating muscular movement or other physiological changes. The nervous system reacts to the world by trying to either incorporate or eliminate the stimuli; it "has the task – speaking generally – of *mastering stimuli*."[19] Internal stimuli, such as instincts, require similar processing, but the psyche rather than the soma responds. The conscious ego, occupying as it does the liminal seat between external and internal, attempts always to mediate these excitatory processes. According to Freud, when outside stimuli are powerful enough to "break through our protective shield," we experience trauma, which is "bound to

provoke a disturbance on a large scale in the functioning of the organism's energy and to set in motion every possible defense measure."[20] When our mental apparatus is flooded with stimuli, the problem becomes one of "mastering the amounts of stimulus which have broken in and of binding them, in the psychical sense, so that they can then be disposed of."[21] The binding of stimuli is the mental equivalent of mastering them, bringing them under some kind of conscious control. Hence Freud's now famous pronouncement, "where id is, there ego shall be."[22]

The parallel with the nervous system also helps to explain Freud's commitment to equilibrium in his drive theory. The ego, we recall, is subject to pressure from two sources, both the id and from reality. When either or both make demands on the ego, it produces tension, an excitation or irritation much like stimulus to the nervous system. Freud writes that he has "decided to relate pleasure and unpleasure to the quantity of excitation that is present in the mind but is not in any way 'bound'; and to relate them in such a manner that unpleasure corresponds to an *increase* in the quantity of excitation and pleasure to a *diminution*."[23] The pleasure principle, therefore, seeks "to free the mental apparatus entirely from excitation or to keep the amount of excitation in it constant or...as low as possible."[24]

We reduce tension, Freud explains, by either discharging it into the external world or onto objects, repressing it, or sublimating it to other uses. However, "the relations of an instinct to its aim and object are also open to alterations; both can be exchanged for other ones."[25] In some cases, a person can re-route his instincts into

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socially acceptable forms; a boxer, for example, finds a legitimate outlet for aggression in the ring. In other cases, however, an instinct is directed to another object without any awareness on the part of the individual; think here of a person who turns to food in times of loneliness. But the main point Freud wants to make here is that we want to reduce the tension as much as possible, that it is in fact our ingrained instinct to do so. "[A]n instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces."[26] The experience of tension is uncomfortable not only for us but for other organisms as well; "the most universal endeavor of all living substance [is] ... to return to the quiescence of the inorganic world."[27]

Stephen Mitchell observes that "Freud's concept of 'drive,' perfectly consistent with the intellectual currents of his own time, was of an endogenous force of nature, pushing from within, that only secondarily comes into interaction with the external world."[28] Although these drives aim at objects, the objects themselves do not define the drives; they can only satisfy or frustrate them. Culture, context, or even other people have meaning for the individual only insofar as they become available for drive satisfaction. Mitchell explains that for Freud and many others following him, "[p]sychoanalysis became definitively *intra*psychic, and mental life was understood to arise in each individual, monadic mind, drawn only secondarily into relations with others. Other people were what Freud called 'accidental' factors, attaining importance only through serendipitous linkage with drives."[29]

Freud distinguishes two classes of instincts, both of which have their origins in the id. The first class of instincts, the erotic instincts, include the self-preservative instincts and the uninhibited sexual instincts. Eros is affiliated with the pleasure principle, and is at the same time life-affirming in that it seeks to unite people or to bind things together. Eros strives to "bring about a more and more far-reaching combination of the particles into which living substance is dispersed, … [it] aims at complicating life and at the same time…at preserving it."[30] The second instinct is the Death instinct, and it seeks to destroy those unities formed by Eros. Life proceeds in the struggle between Eros and Death, since Eros wants "to preserve living substance and to join it into ever larger units" and the death instinct seeks "to dissolve those units and to bring them back to their primaeval, inorganic state."[31] When the death instinct is projected outward, it appears as aggression and destruction of objects; but the death instinct can also be projected inward, in the familiar phenomenon of masochistic behavior. "In the case of the destructive instinct we may suppose that its final aim is to lead what is living into an inorganic state."[32]

Freud further complicates matters by noting that "the two kinds of instinct seldom—perhaps never—appear in isolation from each other, but are alloyed with each other in varying and very different proportions and so become unrecognizable to our judgment."[33] Moreover, though it is normally Eros that is affiliated with pleasure, satisfaction of the Death drive is often far from unpleasant. "[I]n the blindest fury of destructiveness, we cannot fail to recognize that the satisfaction of the [death] instinct is

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accompanied by an extraordinarily high degree of narcissistic enjoyment, owing to its presenting the ego with a fulfillment of the latter's old wishes for omnipotence. The instinct of destruction, moderated and tamed, and, as it were, inhibited in its aim, must, when it is directed toward objects, provide the ego with the satisfaction of its vital needs and with control over nature."[34]

Of all the instincts he considers, aggression is the most problematic for Freud. Against a comforting and inspiring Enlightenment image of man as a rational, peaceful being, Freud projects a much more troubling picture. "[M]en are not gentle creatures who want to be loved, and who at the most can defend themselves if they are attacked; they are, on the contrary, creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness. As a result, their neighbor is for them not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him, ... to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and to kill him. *Homo homini lupus*."[35] The instinct for aggression, Freud notes, is not caused by property nor by any other external circumstance. "...[T]he inclination to aggression is an original, self-subsisting instinctual disposition in man, and ... it constitutes the greatest impediment to civilization."[36] Elemental and powerful, aggression drives men apart and casts a pall on the possibilities for political freedom. "It is clearly not easy for men to give up the satisfaction of this inclination to aggression. They do not feel comfortable without it. ...It is always possible to bind

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together a considerable number of people in love, so long as there are other people left over to receive the manifestations of their aggressiveness."[37]

The instinctual drives of love and death enter a climactic conflict in the Oedipal situation. The Oedipal conflict is so much a part of popular culture now that it may seem almost too trivial to discuss. However, the particulars are important for our purposes here, because they are central to our understanding of how a child individuates from his parents to achieve subjectivity and autonomy. Especially now that we understand Freud's views concerning the elimination of psychic tension, the way Freud thinks about the resolution of the Oedipal crisis is particularly important. The Oedipal resolution for males differs significantly from that of females in Freudian theory, which has been the subject of much feminist criticism. This difference is important for my argument here too, so I will delineate each separately.

Male Oedipal Conflict and Resolution

Freud directs our attention to the earliest days of life in order to understand the development of individuality. Although the moment of birth marks a physical separation of the infant from its mother, the child does not immediately comprehend his own separate existence. Adrift in a new world of light, sound, and touch, the human infant at first has no feeling of a self as such, but instead feels merged or united with its primary caretaker, usually the mother. "The infant at the breast does not yet distinguish

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his ego from the external world as the source of sensations flowing in upon him."[38] One of the first mental tasks, then, is to appreciate the difference between what is inside the self and what is outside the self.

Because initially the mother is almost entirely focused on satisfying her infant's needs, it is natural for him to feel or imagine that he is in total control of his environment. The baby perceives his mother as part of him *and* as a source of satisfaction; he may even feel that the entire world is there just for him. His needs are not only met but also anticipated; though he is completely powerless he feels as though his wants move the world. Freud calls this the position of *omnipotence*, sometimes referring to it as primary narcissism. Every infant that is loved and cared for experiences this feeling of omnipotence. It is how the child realizes that his wants make things happen. This disposition, along with the mother's dedication, is how the infant becomes, in Freud's memorable phrase, "His Majesty the Baby."[39]

The infant's omnipotence, his feeling that *he is all there is*, begins to be disrupted by everyday life. When he realizes that he does not control his external world, that the feeling of unity is not constant, he begins to make the distinction between what is "me" and what is "not me." His wishes for things to happen are not immediately gratified as those around him begin to get on with their lives. Thus he learns to distinguish himself from the world "in response to various promptings. He must be very strongly impressed by the fact that some sources of excitation...evade him from time to time—among them what he desires most of all, his mother's breast – and

only reappear as a result of his screaming for help."[40] These evasions, absences, and disappointments make the infant realize that there is a difference between self and not-self. In grasping what is not-self, the child "set[s] over against the ego an 'object,' in the form of something which exists 'outside' and which is only forced to appear by special action."[41] Whatever the infant cannot control is placed outside (not-me), and becomes an object.

However some objects—for example, the breast—are still so necessary that the child still considers them *his* even though they are 'outside.' Freud allows that this dual treatment of objects—as both "outside" but also "mine"—is particularly evident in the relationship with the mother. The first object, the breast, gradually expands in the child's mind until it is part and parcel of a whole person, his mother. She is both internal object and external object, she feeds and cares for him, but she also evades his control, and in so doing causes both extreme pleasure and displeasure. When she resists, the child thinks of her as external, as "not-me." But when she pleases, she occupies prime mental real estate. "By her care of the child's body, she becomes its first seducer. In these two relations [of infant to breast and infant to mother] lies the root of a mother's importance, unique, without parallel, established unalterably for a whole lifetime as the first and strongest love-object and as the prototype of all later love-relations – for both sexes."[42]

By the age of two or three, the child sees his mother as an object outside of himself, yet vitally necessary to his happiness and pleasure. However, his mother does

not always do as he wishes; in particular, she is able to go away and leave him in the care of another. The child desperately wishes to make her stay but cannot control her; this is one way he learns that she belongs to "outside." Thus the child experiences both frustration and love directed at the same object (mother) at the same time; in the languge of drive theory, now there is tension. Freud offers an instructive description of how a child might manage this tension in his well-known account of the "fort-da" game.

Freud observed an 18 month old child who delighted in throwing his toys around—into corners, under beds--while uttering an approximation of "fort," the German word for "gone." Freud surmised that the child liked to make his toys "disappear," and his instinct was confirmed when one day he observed the child playing with a wooden reel with a piece of string tied around it. Holding on to the string, the child threw the reel into his bassinet where he could no longer see it, and cried out "*fort!*" He then pulled the reel out of the bassinet by the string and "hailed its reappearance with a joyful '*da*' ('there'). This, then, was the complete game— disappearance and return."[43]

The theoretical importance of the fort-da game lies in what the disappearance and return symbolizes for the child. Freud observed that although the child was greatly attached to his mother, he was able to separate from her without protest; that is, he did not fuss whenever she left him for a few hours at a time. Knowing that this separation was in fact an emotional event for the child, Freud interpreted the child's game as his way of processing his mother's departure and return. "He compensated himself for this,

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as it were, by himself staging the disappearance and return of the objects within his reach."[44]

Freud offers two interpretations of the child's play as it relates to the mother. On one hand, "[the child] was in a *passive* situation—he was overpowered by the experience [of his mother's absence]; but by repeating it … as a game, he took an *active* part. These efforts might be put down to an instinct for mastery…".[45] Under this interpretation, the child is reasserting his omnipotence, avoiding the placement of the mother "outside" as an object beyond his control by replacing her in fantasy with a toy that he *can* control. But Freud also suggests that "[t]hrowing away the object so that it was 'gone' might satisfy an impulse of the child's, which was suppressed in his actual life, to revenge himself on his mother from going away from him. In that case it would have a defiant meaning: 'All right, then, go away! I don't need you. I'm sending you away myself.'"[46] In this interpretation, the child is actually connecting the toy and his mother in his mind; he is acting out on the toy as he would like to on his mother. In this version, then, there is also an element of fantasy that springs from frustrated mastery, coupled with the internal representation of mother as an object to be controlled.

The perceived loss of the mother intensifies for the little boy as he approaches the Oedipal conflict. Although he is aware of the difference between "me" and "not-me," he still has to deal with the tension of conflicting feelings for his mother. Freud theorizes that gender becomes the primary mode of differentiation here. In Freudian theory, the boy's discovery of his male sexuality leads to fantasies of sexual union with

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his mother, while at the same time he is also becoming more and more aware of the presence of the father. The boy jealously observes the father's control of the maternal body, and although "his father has hitherto...been an envied model to the boy, owing to the physical strength he perceives in him and the authority with which he finds him clothed," his father now becomes "a rival who stands in his way and whom he would like to get rid of."[47] As his jealousy reaches a fever pitch, the boy fantasizes the death of the father; "his identification with his father takes on a hostile coloring and changes into a wish to get rid of his father in order to take his place with his mother."[48]

However, the boy soon recognizes that he cannot compete with the superior (phallic) power of the father, and moreover he fears retribution in the form of an imagined threat of castration (the "castration complex"). In order to escape these fears, the boy renounces his primary erotic desire for the mother and represses it into the unconscious. Although the mother must be "given up" in the resolution of the Oedipal conflict, her place in the child's mental landscape does not remain unoccupied. "Its place may be filled by one of two things: either an identification with his mother or an intensification of his identification with his father. We are accustomed to regard the latter outcome as the more normal; it permits the affectionate relation to the mother to be in a measure retained."[49]

What is important to note here is that the child only achieves his freedom through the intervention of the paternal figure. Individuation occurs when the child fully places the mother outside of himself as an object, even though he remains tied to

her through ambivalent feelings of love and rejection. This uneasy state persists until the father appears to contest the child's possession of the mother, at which point the boy switches his primary identification over to him. In this way the father breaks up the maternal dyad.

As discussed above, Freud believes the psyche operates to reduce tension to the lowest possible level. Since the boy both fears and loves his father, this tension needs to be resolved by the ego. Here is where Freud finds the genesis of the super-ego. The boy wishes to defy the father but cannot completely give him up as an ideal; separating from him (in competition for the mother) is both a source of strength and a source of loss. Born out of the Oedipal crisis, the superego resolves the tension by internalizing the (real or imagined) punitive and commanding nature of the father, especially in relation to the mother—"you may not have her, she belongs first to me."

The father serves as the first and strongest model of authority but the superego adapts to incorporate other authority figures throughout the child and adult's life. "As the child grows up, the role of father is carried on by teachers and others in authority; their injunctions and prohibitions remain powerful in the ego ideal and continue, in the form of conscience, to exercise the moral censorship."[50] Insofar as the superego takes on the injunctions and authority of those other than parents, Freud says it "becomes, so to say, more impersonal."[51] The superego is thus the most direct link between individual psychology and the socio-political ideals of ethics and morality, and it manifests itself in harsh demands for obedience to ideals and personal perfection. The

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price of separation for Freud is submission, even if it is submission to an internalized authority.

The story of female development is considerably different. In particular, Freud argues that this moral element within the super-ego is diminished or even absent in women. To understand why this is so, we turn to his explanation of female sexual development.

Female Oedipal Conflict and Resolution

Freud begins by stating that we are "obliged to recognize that the little girl is a little man" at about ages two and three. Both little girls and little boys take their mothers as their first love objects, but in the Oedipal phase the little girl must shift her affections toward her father and away from her mother. (Freud assumes a norm of heterosexuality here). For a time prior to this shift, when the little girl is attached to her mother, the father is for her also a troublesome rival for the mother's time and attention. But because the little girl never desires to possess her mother *sexually*, she is not propelled into jealous competition with her father the way a boy would be. As a result, Freud notes, a girl's initial attachment to her mother can last much longer than a little boy's. When maternal rejection does occur, however, the girl's change of affection from mother to father is extreme; for females, "[t]he turning away from the mother is accompanied by hostility; the attachment to the mother ends in hate."[52]

Why should this be so? Freud explains that little girls do experience a castration complex as do little boys, but that the content of the complex for girls is significantly different. The castration complex begins when girls notice that they do not have a penis and attribute great significance to this. "They feel seriously wronged, often declare that they want to 'have something like it too,' and fall a victim to 'envy for the penis'"[53] (These now familiar explanations have been the most irritating to modern and feminist readers). Freud argues that the little girl "continues to hold on for a long time to the wish to get something like it herself...her self-love is mortified by the comparison with the boy's far superior equipment...".[54] In the face of this disappointment and frustration, the girl turns to her mother for support, only to learn that she too lacks the longed-for member. "[G]irls hold their mother responsible for their lack of a penis and do not forgive her for their being thus put at a disadvantage."[55] This is why, according to Freud, the girl's rejection of her mother is so much more vitriolic. "With the discovery that her mother is castrated it becomes possible to drop her as an object, so that the motives for hostility ... gain the upper hand. This means, therefore, that as a result of the discovery of women's lack of a penis they [women] are debased in value for girls just as they are for boys and later perhaps for men."[56]

The girl thus shifts her object-choice to her father, and entertains in fantasy a wish for a baby by him; this is her Oedipal complex. However, her hostility toward her mother is re-activated, as now she is in competition with her mother for her father's attentions. Moreover, she does not fear "castration" from her mother the way the boy

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fears it from his father, perhaps because she considers herself already castrated or because she does not attribute that much power to her mother. It is here Freud feels many women get "stuck" in their development. The boy has great incentive to give up on his desire for his mother because he fears castration from the superior power of the father. The girl has no such incentive and so is caught in the triangular relationship of mother, child, father. For the boy,

> [u]nder the impression of the danger of losing his penis, the Oedipus complex is abandoned, repressed, and, in the most normal cases, entirely destroyed and a severe super-ego is set up as its heir. What happens with a girl is almost the opposite. ... the girl is driven out of her attachment to her mother through the influence of her envy for the penis and she enters the Oedipus situation as though into a haven of refuge. In the absence of fear of castration the chief motive is lacking which leads boys to surmount the Oedipus complex. Girls remain in it for an indeterminate length of time; they demolish it late and, even so, incompletely. In these circumstances the formation of the super-ego must suffer; it cannot attain the strength and independence which give it its cultural significance.[57]

The Oedipal crisis for both boys and girls involves strong emotions—jealousy, envy, possessiveness, hatred. To his credit, Freud does not shrink from these experiences. However, his developmental theory leaves little room for the expression of these difficult feelings. The main task of the ego seems to be finding a way to redirect these passions toward less threatening or dangerous objects; this is precisely what Freud has in mind when he talks about sublimation. But is pushing these feelings away—outward, underneath, onto something else—the only alternative?

In Freudian theory, the child develops his strong super-ego based on the internalization of paternal authority. But this internalization does not occur without

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psychic costs. The son's resentment and fear of his father remain alive, if unexpressed, even after the détente is declared. Freud offers a counterintuitive explanation for what happens to these feelings, bringing us around full circle to the element of aggression. Since the boy cannot confront his father, he turns these instincts back upon himself. "His aggressiveness is introjected, internalized; it is, in point of fact, sent back to where it came from — that is, it is directed toward his own ego. There it is taken over by a portion of the ego, which sets itself over against the rest of the ego as super-ego, and which now, in the form of 'conscience', is ready to put into action against the ego the same harsh aggressiveness that the ego would have liked to satisfy upon the other, extraneous individuals. The tension between the harsh-super-ego and the ego that is subjected to it, is called by us the sense of guilt; it expresses itself as a need for punishment."[58]

Freudian Intrasubjectivity and Chodorow's Challenge

The reason for going into such detail about Freudian developmental theory is two-fold. First, it provides the necessary background against which we can understand later developments in psychoanalytic theory; now that we have the basic concepts laid out, it will be easier to understand the ways in which thinkers like Winnicott and Benjamin modify them later on. Second, however, as this account makes clear, Freud's understanding of individuation and subjectivity is distinctively solipsistic. The child confronts emotional crises and fears on his own, using only his own mental resources to

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resolve them. Freud does not consider the interpersonal aspects of individuation, particularly when it comes to the child's relationship with the mother figure. As we will see, this has important consequences for how the Freudian subject sees other people, and also for Freud's conception of freedom.

As noted earlier, Freudian drive theory operates like a kind of hydraulic system. The ego tries to manage tension by satisfying, delaying, or repressing desires and by regulating our responses to the impingements of the reality principle from outside ourselves. When drives build up we can discharge them onto an object, or sublimate them in some other pursuit. The object has meaning for us, then, by being a target of our instincts. Freud does not theorize about a reciprocal discharge, or about how the object might respond to or receive our actions. Our relationships to others are always subject to our internal representations of them, as Freud does not theorize any space between two subjects.

The individual ego, as Freud understands it, is built out of the *loss* of the primary love object, the mother. This loss occasions frustration and rage, and also an internalization of her in an attempt to hold onto that primary relationship. The Oedipal conflict marks the point at which the child switches his identification from mother to father, and also the beginnings of the super-ego. But this Freudian account glosses over an important possibility for the developing child. Although the child mentally places the mother "outside" his own mental control, and thereby recognizes her as an object, *he does not ever recognize her as a subject in her own right.* This crucial step forms the

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basis for some of the strongest critiques of Freud, most notably that of Nancy Chodorow.

Chodorow begins, as does Freud, with the understanding that both boy and girl children experience themselves initially as merged with the environment in general and with the mother (or mother-figure) in particular. Separation-individuation is the task of drawing the mental line between subject (self) and object (other), of developing body ego boundedness and a feeling of inside the body versus outside the body. Like Freud, Chodorow grants that separation develops though experiences of frustration or loss of control of the mother, and that these frustrations are necessary for the child to perceive the outer world as separate rather than as an extension of self. But instead of treating separation as an endogenous drive, Chodorow notes that it is from the outset a relational event. "Differentiation happens *in relation* to the mother ... [it] involves, in particular, perceiving the mother or primary caretaker as separate and "not-me," where once these were an undifferentiated symbiotic unity."[59]

But, Chodorow adds, individuation means more than separating me from not-me. Healthy separation, she argues, means distinguishing me from *you,* where *you* are a separate subject with your own selfhood. In Freudian theory, individuation is complete once the child is able to place the mother "outside" himself. However, even though the mother becomes "not-me," she never seems to become a "you," a subject with her own desires. "[A]dequate separation ... involves not merely perceiving the separateness, or

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otherness, of the other. It involves perceiving the person's subjectivity and selfhood as well. ... It must precisely involve two selves, two presences, two subjects."[60]

The ability to perceive the other as a self requires a relation to others that Freudian theory does not address. First and foremost, this recognition of the other involves the ability to see the other as something more than a source of gratification for one's own needs or an object to be controlled. "Recognizing the other as a subject is possible only to the extent that one is not dominated by felt need and one's own exclusive subjectivity. Such recognition permits appreciation and perception of many aspects of the other person... ."[61] Second, such recognition also requires the ability to see that the other has her own desires, needs, and wishes. This kind of perception is difficult, however, when the child is focused so intently on both separating from and rejecting the mother.

Chodorow thus draws a theoretical distinction between *differentiation* and *difference*. Difference, argues Chodorow, is ego definition by negation. I define myself solely as that which I am not. By emphasizing difference, one separates from the other while continuing to objectify her. Differentiation, on the other hand, involves recognition that the other is both "not-me" and "you," a person with her own subjectivity. It allows one to be both separate from and related to another at the same time. The differentiated self need not emphasize difference in order to feel whole or secure. "This view suggests that no one has a separateness consisting only of 'me' – 'not-me' distinctions. Part of myself is always that which I have taken in; we are all to

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some degree incorporations and extensions of others. Differentiation is not distinctness and separateness, but a particular way of being connected to others."[62]

Chodorow remarks that although a self focused on difference, on "who I am not," may seem stronger, more sure, and more independent than others, in fact the reverse is more likely to be the case. Creating arbitrary boundaries and continuing to assert one's separateness may actually reflect a lack of security in one's sense of self. "The more secure the central self, or ego core, the less one has to define one's self through separateness from others. Separateness becomes, then, a more rigid, defensive, rather fragile, secondary criterion of the strength of the self and of the 'success' of individuation."[63]

Chodorow's larger point here is that the Freudian picture of individuation is incomplete. A child's realization that the mother is "not-me" does not ensure that the child sees her as a "you," a separate subject. It stops the developmental theory short of attaining reciprocal relations with others, leaving the child (and later the adult) caught within the intrapsychic dichotomy of me and not me. This kind of binary thinking, we will see, is a hallmark of intrapsychic experience. Later theorists (including Benjamin) call this phenomenon *splitting*, and are quick to point out that it is a common mental operation, one of the many ways our minds organize experience. As a first impression or reaction to a new situation, splitting is quite normal. A rigid adherence to binary categories, however, is extremely problematic. Such an approach signals that a person may not be able to see beyond his own point of view, to appreciate the complexities of

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intersubjectivity. At bottom, such rigidity may represent the mental position of omnipotence, a refusal to give up one's mental impressions and an insistence that the world conform to those expectations.

Freudian theory is shot through with examples of this kind of binary thinking. Individuation is defined as separating "me" from "not-me;" maternal and paternal power are forever opposed; gender is based on the presence or absence of male genitalia; the two primary drives are Eros and Thanatos. Again, by itself, splitting into opposing categories like this is not problematic. But when we observe that this splitting accompanies a developmental theory that does not emphasize intersubjectivity, we can begin to suspect that it is evidence of the dominance of intrapsychic functioning.

In this context, Freud's description of the "Fort-Da" game takes on a different and more ominous meaning. The child has successfully objectified the mother, but still wants to subject her to his control. He experiences both anger at her disappearance and delight in her return, but he is still dependent upon her for many things and must passively await her decisions. In response, the child does not act out against the mother —recall Freud's comment that the child rarely cries upon his mother's leaving—but takes refuge in the gratifying world of objects. Here he can revive his feelings of mastery by "controlling" the mother (wooden toy) and acting out his fantasies upon her. Whatever else is going on, the primary function of this game is to reassert the child's omnipotence.

The formation of the superego also reflects the intrapsychic nature of Freud's theory. Because the child does not conceive of his parents' separate subjectivity, his internal representations of them continue to dominate his experience. He sees the mother as a dangerous, enveloping entity to be escaped. He sees the father as a powerful but punitive presence. Even in his acceptance and internalization of paternal authority, his idealizations of both parents continues in fantasy, uninterrupted by reality. The superego, the sense of morality and conscience, is thus born out of a fear of punishment for desire.

Post-Freudian Theory: Ego Psychology and Early Object Relations.

After Freud, psychoanalytic theory began to develop along several different tracks. Practitioners and scholars focused on different pieces of the Freudian corpus, some remaining relatively close to the original concepts and others departing dramatically from them. For our purposes here, we are primarily interested in the development of ego psychology and object relations. Both purport to move beyond Freud's intrapsychic framework toward a theory that takes relationships into account.

Ego psychology focuses specifically on the steering capacity of the ego in the face of both subconscious drives and external reality. Anna Freud's pioneering book *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence*[64] presents the formation and growth of the ego as a response to the original symbiotic relationship between infant and mother. Although the infant and child must move through successive stages of separation from caregivers and others throughout life, the ego can mobilize a range of defenses to this

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separation and thereby preserve its independence. For Anna Freud, the path to independence consists in the ego gradually disengaging itself from relationships. Heinz Hartmann broadens the range of ego functions such that the ego is less defensive than in A. Freud's theory and more primary and autonomous. Hartmann argues that the ego controls such mental processes as thought, language, perception, and memory, and that these capacities normally operate in everyday life without the underlying aggression or conflict theorized by Freud. The ego in Hartmann's theory becomes the locus of self-mastery and adaptation to environment. "By upgrading the powers of the ego in the face of its defensive struggles with external reality, Hartmann attempts to emphasize the capabilities of the individual self for insight and reason."[65]

Erik Erikson further refines ego psychology in his work on identity formation and basic trust.[66] Erikson theorizes that the emergence of a self is rooted in the experience of basic trust, a fundamental condition of the relation between infant and mother. In order to establish a sense of self, the infant must learn to cope with its mother's absences and develop trust that she will return. Given that a mother's absence causes extreme anxiety, however, basic trust is an enormous emotional achievement. There must be a relatively stable relationship between mother and child in order for this to occur; that is, she must reliably and consistently earn the basic trust of her child. Provided that basic trust is established in infancy, the child and later the adult are free (through ego development) to construct their own world in relation to their cultural

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surroundings. Our independent and autonomous ego can only arise out of this initial

relation of trust with the mother figure.

Not surprisingly, Erikson's work provides a bridge between classical Freudian

theory and later object-relations theory. In a sense, Erikson works within the Freudian

framework while at the same time pushing beyond it. Erikson emphasizes that the

ego's main project is the integration of identity. When this project falters, however, the

ego becomes a victim of pathologies that Freud would have classified as instinctual

drives. "Rage, for example, can result from an individual's blocked sense of mastery.

… In Erikson's terms, aggressiveness can be a defense against a sense of identity

diffusion."[67]

For Erikson, our sense of selfhood and our faith in others emerges within a space of

coexistence between child and caregiver. Trusting in the reliability of the mother

allows us to trust, by extension, the external world.   By drawing our attention to the

interplay between infant and mother, Erikson moves a few steps away from the mostly

internal, hydraulic model of drives and defenses towards a more interpersonal

understanding of child development.

Erikson's thought has often been criticized, however, for diluting the conflict

and struggle of individuation and for turning a blind eye to "the split and fractured

nature of repressed desire."[68] The adaptive functions of Erikson's ego overshadow the

force of such instincts as aggression, making them seem incidental rather than central to

development. Although Erikson fruitfully develops the relationship between identity

formation and cultural context, he views society as essentially beneficial for ego development, autonomy, and trust. In sharp contrast to Freud, who continually reminds us of the tension between individual desire and social life, Erikson's emphasis on the ego's adaptive—and therefore controlling—functions allows him to bracket any disruptive tendencies.

Despite its emphasis on identity and trust, some theorists felt that ego psychology was still too isolationist in its approach, and that a better track would include work on how an individual develops in relation to significant others in her environment. This relational approach included thinkers such as Erich Fromm, Harry Stack Sullivan, and Margaret Mahler. Mahler's work on separation and individuation, for example, explains that the subject develops along a (more or less) linear track from the original oneness or merger with mother toward independence. She theorized that, during the period of time between infant symbiosis and independence, the child traverses the "rapprochement" subphase, a time when the child experiences intense conflict between the desire for attachment and desire for autonomy. Mahler's observational work showed that children vacillate between security and adventurousness during this phase, venturing out to explore their world on their own but then returning (physically) to the mother for "emotional refueling." The mother's task, during this time, is to support these early forays into autonomy but also continue to provide a stable base to which the child can return. "The rapprochement subphase is seen by Mahlerians as *the critical period* of character formation. Its crucial conflict

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between separateness and closeness, autonomy and dependency, are repeated throughout development ... ."[69] Despite this interpersonal approach, however, Mahler's approach has widely been held to remain tied to a Freudian view of the isolated ego. For in Mahler's view, the hallmark of success for the individual is the progressive *disengagement* from attachments. Autonomy means moving away from relations with others, and it was this underpinning belief that drew the attention and criticism of object relations theorists.

In response to a linear move away from relationships, object relations theory posits a different starting point. The general thesis is that subjects do not seek detachment, but that instead they are *object-seeking*, meaning that people need and search for connections with others from the very beginning. Object relations theory thus focuses on how the individual's inner psychic life develops in relation to external objects, both people and the environment. The most familiar theorists in object relations come from the British school of psychoanalysis, including W.R.D. Fairbairn, Melanie Klein, Harry Guntrip, D.W. Winnicott, and Michael Balint.. Here I want briefly to discuss the American psychologist Heinz Kohut and his version of selfobjects, and Melanie Klein's account of love, hate, and reparation.

Broadly speaking, object relations theorists view the self as developing in emotional dialogue with others. The internal structuring of the psyche is not given, but is rather the outcome of interpersonal activity and exchange. We seek relations with others, then, not as an outlet for drive satisfaction but because this is how we

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reciprocally constitute ourselves and others. Relationships with others, starting with the

mother figure, construct our psyches. We continually incorporate others into ourselves,

and such internal representations of others influence and shape our identities.

Significantly, object relations theory shifts its focus away from the Oedipal conflict to

the pre-Oedipal period of the mother/infant dyad.

Object relations also begins with the idea of a merger in the earliest months of

life between the infant and mother, a mode often called "primary identification." In this

state, ego (child) and object (mother) are inextricably linked. Problems in selfhood

emerge, therefore, when early relationships with primary caretakers are inadequate or

harmful. If the mother figure does not meet the infant's needs, "the emerging child will

attempt to overcome the pain of frustration by ego-splitting and internal fantasy

substitutes. Typically, this involves splitting the pre-Oedipal mother into good and bad

objects."[70] Such splitting, however, can impede healthy development of the child's ego,

which remains caught in the tension between fantasy and reality, unable to establish a

firm core self. Elliott explains:

> For object relations theorists, the late modern age creates severe disturbances in
> object relating. Particularly for Fairbairn and Balint, the destructive nature of
> modernity impacts upon the nurturing mother-infant tie too early, thus
> preventing the establishment of a core sense of self and trust in human
> relationships. This can lead, in turn, to a lifelong search for primary love
> through substitute fantasy objects.[71]

While object relations enriches our understanding of development in connection with relatedness, it does have its weaknesses. To begin with, "there is an implicit assumption in object relational perspectives that the unconscious is an epiphenomenon—internal fantasy objects being merely derived from failures in real environment relations."[72] Fantasy, in this understanding, is not creative or generative but remedial; it is what we turn to in order to escape from frustrations with our relations with others. Unconscious processes, then, are impediments to human development. They distort or derail our relations with "real" others, and so presumably are to be minimized or bracketed. This move should be familiar to us from ego-psychology, which also relies upon the ego's cognitive control over unconscious desires such as aggression.

Kohut presents a different kind of object relations, but ends up with a similar kind of problem. Like other object relations theorists, he acknowledges the central importance of other people as outside objects for the developing subject. Kohut theorizes that others, not just the mother but siblings, friends, peers, spouses, and children, perform the invaluable service to us of being what he calls our *selfobjects*. We relate to these others as selfobjects in different ways, but always via the psychological mechanism of transference. This means that we project onto the selfobjects certain feelings, responses and reactions of our own. Sometimes we see in them the qualities that we would most like to have ourselves, thereby offering us an ideal towards which to strive. Sometimes we ask selfobjects to recognize us for who we are and reflect our

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strengths and ambitions back to us. Kohut calls the first relation an "idealizing

selfobject transference," and the second relation a "mirroring selfobject transference."[73]

Significantly, Kohut's developmental theory does not rely on a progressive

detachment from relations with others, as does, say, Mahler's view. "Development …

is characterized not by the abandonment of the need for selfobjects but by a

transformation of them."[74] Our original experience of "perfect harmony between self

and world," a primary narcissistic equilibrium, is established in the early relationship

with the mother/selfobject. This "archaic" relationship is the breeding ground for the

development of our self-esteem and our system of ideals. Kohut explains that as we

mature, we develop more sophisticated ways of interacting with selfobjects in order to

replace the "archaic" selfobjects of childhood. We can distinguish between idealizing a

person and attempting to merge with them completely; we can accept occasional

mirroring but not demand it constantly in order to feel whole.

The difficulty with viewing others as selfobjects, however, is that they continue

to have value for us only insofar as we can use them to support our own identities. The

transference of Kohut's theory "involves consuming the other, using him up,

metabolizing him, so that the other becomes part of myself. … The unique otherness of

the other, except insofar as it can be appropriated, is rejected—not acknowledged.

…To deny the otherness of the other means that the other is conceptualized and valued

strictly in terms of how he serves my ends."[75] Indeed, if the selfobject does not

adequately serve those ends, Kohut observes, the subject responds with a "narcissistic

rage, rage at another who refuses or is unable to be a perfectly responsive selfobject."[76]

If we cannot get what we need from others, we feel injured or even attacked. The fact

that others may have needs or ends of their own does not enter our mental landscape.

Narcissistic rage denies separation and otherness, seeing them as a threat to our

wholeness and completeness. The disposition to see others as selfobjects reflects a

subconscious fantasy that wants to see the entire world as a reflection of oneself. Thus,

narcissistic rage is "relentless and unforgiving, being aimed not at real persons but at a

world that fails to cooperate with one's fantasies."[77]

Melanie Klein offers an elegant account of separation and individuation, one

that does take both fantasy and aggression into account. The crucial moment for Klein

occurs when the child becomes aware that his feelings towards his mother conflict; that

he both loves her and hates her at the same time. These opposing feelings, Klein says,

originate long before the Oedipal crisis, in the first year of life. Based upon her

extensive clinical work, Klein theorizes that infants experience intense and violent

fantasies of destruction, of attacking and destroying the maternal figure, while at the

same time suffering extreme anxiety about such fantasies and a pervasive fear of

retaliation and persecution. The only way for the infant to manage these fears, Klein

says, is to split the mother into good and bad objects. The splitting is defensive, aimed

at maintaining contact with the "good" parts of the mother and distancing or denying

any relationship with the "bad" parts. This paranoid/schizoid position persists unless

good objects and feelings predominate over bad ones. At that point, Klein theorizes, the

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child can move beyond the defensive mode of splitting into a relationship with the whole object.

The whole object relationship involves seeing the mother as one person, containing both the elements of good and bad from the child's point of view. Klein argues that the child develops the capacity to maintain both the loved and the hated image of the mother in his mind at the same time. The child experiences intense guilt and sorrow over her destructive wishes (this is Klein's "depressive position"), but also has the opportunity to atone for these fantasies by making reparations. While anxiety and guilt continue to play an important part in the child's life, for Klein the child's ability to recognize the conflicting feelings is the developmental achievement.

As we will see in the next chapter, however, the ability to hold together an image of mother as both good and bad still remains within what Benjamin would call an intrapsychic framework. Although Klein recognizes that the image of infinite goodness associated with the mother figure is false, she does not move beyond the child's internal representations of her towards a view that accords her a separate subjectivity. Seeing the other as both an internal and external object is the central achievement of intersubjectivity, which can only come about through a process of destruction and survival. We take up this developmental process in the next chapter.

[1] See for example Juliet Mitchell's attempts to rehabilitate Freud along feminist lines in *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (New York: Basic Books 1974); see also Karen Horney, *Feminine Psychology* (New York: W.W. Norton 1967), Dororthy Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur* (New York: Harper and Row 1976).

[2] Paul Roazen, *Freud: Political and Social Thought.* 3rd Edition (New Jersey; Transaction Publishers 1999) p. 216.

[3] For an excellent synopsis of psychoanalytic theory and a lucid and penetrating discussion of its iterations since Freud, see Anthony Elliott, *Psychoanalytic Theory: An Introduction* (Durham: Duke University Press 2002).

[4] Freud, "The Dissection of the Psychical Personality," in *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis.* Trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton & Co. 1965) p. 91.

[5] Freud, "The Dissection of the Psychical Personality," p. 92.

[6] Freud, "The Dissection of the Psychical Personality," p. 94.

[7] Freud, "The Psychical Apparatus," in *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis.* Trans. and Ed. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton & Co. 1949) p. 15.

[8] Freud, "The Dissection of the Psychical Personality," p. 95.

[9] Freud, ""The Dissection of the Psychical Personality," p. 73.

[10] Freud, "The Dissection of the Psychical Personality," p. 77.

[11] Although I reference the parents' authority here, as we will see later in our more detailed discussion of the Oedipal complex it is actually only the father's authority that the child internalizes in the superego.

[12] Freud, "The Internal World," in *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis.* Trans and ed. James Strachey. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company 1949, pp. 94-95.

[13] Freud, "The Dissection of the Psychical Personality," p. 81.

[14] Freud, "The Dissection of the Psychical Personality," p. 80.

[15] Freud, "The Dissection of the Psychical Personality," p. 83.

[16] Freud, "The Dissection of the Psychical Personality," pp. 96-97.

[17] Freud, 'the Dissection of the Psychical Personality," p. 97.

[18] Freud, "Anxiety and Instinctual Life" in *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis.* Trans. J. Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton & Co. 1965) p. 120.

[19] Freud, "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes" in *The Freud Reader,* ed. Peter Gay (New York: W.W.Norton and Co. 1989) p. 565. Hereafter "The Freud Reader."

[20] Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," in *The Freud Reader,* Peter Gay, ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co. 1989) p. 607.

[21] Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," in *The Freud Reader,* p. 607.

[22] Freud, "New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis" trans. James Strachey. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co. 1965) p. 100.

[23] Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" in *The Freud Reader,* p. 595.

[24] Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," in *The Freud Reader,* p. 625.

[25] Freud, "Anxiety and Instinctual Life," p. 120.

[26] Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," in *The Freud Reader,* p. 612.

[27] Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," in *The Freud Reader,* p. 625.

[28] Stephen A. Mitchell, *Relationality: From Attachment to Intersubjectivity.* (New Jersey: The Analytic Press 2000) pp. x and xiii.

[29] Mitchell, *Relationality: From Attachment to Intersubjectivity* p. x, xiii.

[30] Freud, "The Ego and the Id," in *The Freud Reader,* p. 645-646.

[31] Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents.* Trans. and ed. James Strachey. (New Yori: W.W. Norton & Co. 1961) p. 77.

[32] Freud, "The Theory of the Instincts," in *An Outline of Psychoanalysis.* p. 18.

[33] Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents,* p. 78.

[34] Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents,* p. 81.

[35] Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents,* pp. 68-69.

[36] Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents,* pp. 81-82.

[37] Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents,* p. 72.

[38] Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents,* p. 13.

[39] Freud, "On Narcissism: An Introduction" in *The Freud Reader,* p. 556.

[40] Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents,* p. 14.

[41] Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents,* p. 14.

[42] Freud, "An Example of Psycho-Analytic Work" in *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* p. 70.

[43] Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" in *The Freud Reader,* p. 599.

[44] Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" in *The Freud Reader,* p. 600.

[45] Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" in *The Freud Reader,* p. 600.

[46] Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" in *The Freud Reader,* p. 600.

[47] Freud, "An Example of Psycho-Analytic Work", in *An Outline of Psychoanalysis,* p. 71

[48] Freud, "The Ego and the Id" in *The Freud Reader,* p. 640.

[49] Freud, "The Ego and the Id" in *The Freud Reader,* p. 640.

[50] Freud, "The Ego and the Id" in *The Freud Reader,* p. 643.

[51] Freud, "The Dissection of the Psychical Personality," p. 80.

[52] Freud, "Femininity," in *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis.* Trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton & Co. 1965) p. 151.

[53] Freud, "Femininity," p. 156.

[54] Freud, "Femininity," pp. 156-157.

[55] Freud, "Femininity," p. 154.

[56] Freud, "Femininity," p. 157.

[57] Freud, "Femininity," p. 160-161.

[58] Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents,* p. 84.

[59] Nancy Chodorow, "Gender, Relation, and Difference in Psychoanalytic Perspective" in *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory.* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1989) p. 102.

[60] Chodorow, p. 103.

[61] Chodorow, pp. 103-104.

[62] Chodorow, p. 107.

[63] Chodorow, p. 107.

[64] Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence.* (London: Hogarth Press and Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1937).

[65] Elliott, *Psychoanalytic Theory: An Introduction.* p. 28.

[66] See Erik Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co. 1963); *Identity and the Life Cycle* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co. 1980).

[67] Roazen, *Freud: Political and Social Thought.* p. 236.

[68] Elliott, *Psychoanalytic Theory: An Introduction.* p. 71.

[69] Peter Fonagy, *Attachment Theory and Psychoanalysis.* (New York: Other Press 2001) p. 74.

[70] Elliott, *Psychoanalytic Theory: An Introduction.* p. 30.

[71] Elliott, *Psychoanalytic Theory: An Introduction.* p. 30.

[72] Elliott, *Psychoanalytic Theory: An Introduction.* p. 31.

[73] C. Fred Alford, *The Self In Social Theory: A Psychoanalytic Account of Its Construction in Plato, Hobbes, Locke, Rawls, and Rousseau.* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1991) pp. 24-35.

[74] Alford, *The Self in Social Theory,* p. 28.

[75] Alford, *The Self in Social Theory,* p. 29. This is why, in his work, Alford uses Lacan to "decenter" Kohut.

[76] Alford, *The Self in Social Theory,* p. 25.

[77] Alford, *The Self in Social Theory,* p. 30.

CHAPTER 2: WINNICOTT, BENJAMIN AND INTERSUBJECTIVE SPACE

Although D.W. Winnicott is classified as an object relations theorist, the real

strength of his work lies, ironically, in his transformation of the other from an object

into a subject. His developmental theory is genuinely interpersonal, including both the

child's and the parent's point of view. Winnicott does not treat development as

complete once the child can distinguish self from object, nor does he rest content with a

split image of good mother/bad mother in the child's mind. Instead, Winnicott wants to

explain how we can come to see others as independent selves, outside our control and

yet related to us. His focus opens outward toward a shared reality in which both the

child and parents can participate. This dual appreciation of both an "outside" and an

"other" allows Winnicott to theorize a capacity for care and concern, not just for other

individuals but also for the wider society of which one is a part.

This shift in focus from the personal to the interpersonal allows Winnicott also

to move beyond the binary distinction of self and other to a consideration of the shared

space between people. "In psychoanalytic writings and in the vast literature that has

been influenced by Freud there can be found a tendency to dwell *either* on a person's

life as it relates to [external] objects *or else* on the inner life of the individual."[1]

Winnicott wants to identify a potential space between internal and external, a shared

space between two subjects. Winnicott, like psychoanalysts before him, chronicles the

child's psychological movement between me and not me, but he has a more detailed

and dynamic description of how this occurs. During the separation and individuation

phase, the small child can begin to recognize an area between himself and others that is not under his magical control, but which he nevertheless shapes and affects. This transitional space, in which the child perceives things that are both of himself and not of himself, is the beginning of a shared space between mother and child that is not dominated by either one. Winnicott calls this a space for play, and despite the lighthearted connotations of the word, "play" has important and serious implications for how we conceive of social and political interaction. A space between subjects allows the child to appreciate the extent to which reality can be co-constructed and shared. It teaches the child that what is real and what is imaginary, though related, are different. Lastly, although this space may often be a site of struggle and defiance, it is also the site of reparation and "contributing in," the rebuilding of relationships over time.

Winnicott's theory is not without its weaknesses. In his early work he tends to idealize this mother-child bond, and this is a theoretical difficulty as well as a critical observation. His understanding of aggression and anger is more than a little confusing, especially in relation to his central concept of destruction and survival. In his later work Winnicott becomes more realistic in his appraisal of motherhood, and his theory of aggression is extremely helpful even with its unresolved issues. But it is Winnicott's ideas of destruction and survival that are most important for us here. They alone create the space between persons that is so critical for political spaces of freedom.

In the first half of this chapter I present a detailed discussion of Winnicott's developmental theory and the space of freedom he theorizes between mother and child.

In the second half I address Benjamin's application of Winnicott to other relationships beyond the initial dyad, and her expansion of the space of freedom to include others well into adult life. In addition to her work on Winnicott, Benjamin also illuminates for us the problems that arise if the process of destruction and survival cannot occur. Without that process, she argues, the child remains bound to his mental projections and fantasies, unable to see external reality and to appreciate the difference between self and other. This is more than a developmental problem, she writes, because it allows the child to retain the intrapsychic framework and its elements of complementary thinking, splitting, and fantasies of omnipotence. A child who has never had to recognize the mother as a separate subject loses the opportunity to practice intersubjectivity.

Benjamin pushes Winnicott's conclusions beyond child psychology into the wider world of society and, I shall argue, politics as well. Benjamin understands that the developmental project of separation and individuation, coupled with our discovery of intersubjectivity, is vitally important to our capacities as citizens. "Denial of the mother's subjectivity, in theory and in practice, profoundly impedes our ability to see the world as inhabited by equal subjects."[2] To see why this is so, we turn first to D.W. Winnicott.

Holding and "I Am"

One of the first things to notice about Winnicott's theory is the way mother and child reciprocally constitute each other. "[T]here is no such thing as an infant, meaning,

of course, that whenever one finds an infant, one finds maternal care, and without maternal care, there would be no infant."[3]   Winnicott notes that the human infant enters the world in a profound state of initial dependence that has psychological significance both for the infant and the mother, but not in the way we encounter in either Freudian theory or ego psychology. Even before the Freudian infant's separation of self from object, and well before the Oedipal crisis of two or three years old, the infant must first become aware that he is a self. For Winnicott, it is the initial organization of "I Am" that comprises the first essential developmental task.

In the earliest days of life, the infant is completely dependent upon the mother for both physical and psychological care. The Winnicottian infant, like the Freudian infant, enters the world with no comprehension of what is "me" and what is "not-me;" he feels merged with his environment, which for all practical purposes enters his consciousness through the mother (or mother-figure). Since he cannot perceive the boundaries between himself and the world, he is not even aware of himself *as* a self. This awareness, according to Winnicott, is the first unique gift of the mother to her child.

Winnicott's picture of the mother/infant dyad is very different from Freud's understanding. Although Freud recognizes the initial feeling of merger, for him it is an experience fraught with tension and anxiety from the very start. The Freudian mother tantalizes and disappoints; she both cares for the infant body and "becomes its first seducer," only to be relegated to the position of outside object and rejected during the

Oedipal crisis. Chodorow nudges us toward a more relational understanding by noting that the infant needs to recognize the mother not just as "other" but also as "you," but she does not sketch the specifics of the relationship during and after that recognition, and she downplays the mother's tremendous contributions to the infant's self-organization. Winnicott, however, confronts head on the enormous influence that a mother has on her child. Before seduction, even before recognition, must come *integration*, the feeling that "I am" a person in this world. The primary caretaker, usually but not always a woman, imparts this feeling during the first few months of life; she bestows humanity on her child. Noting that modern (Western) culture does not typically emphasize this fact, Winnicott offers an explanation:

> Is not this contribution of the [ordinary] devoted mother unrecognized precisely because it is so immense? If this contribution is accepted, it follows that every man or woman who is sane, every man or woman who has the feeling of being a person in the world, and for whom the world means something, every happy person, is in infinite debt to a woman. At the time when as an infant (male or female) this person knew nothing about dependence, there was absolute dependence.[4]

Building up a sense of "I am" begins in what Winnicott calls the *holding* phase. The term *holding* refers not only to the mother's physical act of cradling her infant in her arms but also to the psychological act of containing her infant's mind before it is fully formed. When a new mother administers hourly and daily physical care to her infant she is actually also shaping the psyche. Because the child does not yet have a sense of self, he cannot (mentally or physically) protect himself against all the new

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sensations he encounters. He needs his mother to help process these sensations and to protect him from the world as he encounters it. "The mother makes an active adaptation to the infant's needs, and at the start this adaptation can be remarkably complete. The mother knows, instinctively as people say, what need is just about to become pressing. ...[I]n the giving of physical satisfactions, she enables the infant psyche to begin to live in the infant body."[5] By fulfilling and even anticipating her child's needs, the mother keeps disorienting and disruptive sensations to a minimum. Winnicott calls the mother's intense focus on her child the "primary maternal preoccupation."

The term *holding* also encompasses how the mother sees her child. The infant is not yet an integrated unit, and as the mother holds the infant she holds together a person who is yet to be but who is in the process of becoming. She is there each day, helping the infant integrate and manage all the feelings, sensations, excitements, and pleasures that come at him but which he cannot register or hold himself. The mother holds the infant physically and by treating him as his own person already. "She sees her infant as human at a time when the infant is incapable of feeling integrated."[6] At the same time, by her reliable presence and the continuity of her care, the mother becomes more and more visible to her child. He begins to recognize her by her voice, her touch, her smell, and the contours of her face, characteristics that do not alter substantially from day to day. Gradually, the infant begins to notice that parts of her (face, breast) belong to another person, and that her body is separate from his own.

Because so much of an infant's sensory input is through touch, he very early becomes aware of the "limiting membrane" of the surface of the skin. As she grows, the infant perceives her own skin as a position between her "me" and his "not-me," and so begins to understand the difference between inside and outside herself.[7] She also slowly learns how to manage stimuli on her own, sometimes without the mediating presence of her mother. "...[T]he integrating tendencies of the infant bring about a state in which the infant is a unit, a whole person, with an inside and an outside, and a person living in the body, and more or less bounded by the skin. Once outside means 'not-ME' then inside means ME, and there is now a place in which to store things. Now the infant's growth takes the form of a continuous interchange between inner and outer reality, each being enriched by the other."[8]

A large part of the mother's holding involves creating a setting in which she interacts with her baby. The external environment is an important part of the relationship itself. Where, when, and how things happen between the mother and infant affects the quality and the closeness of that initial bond. Winnicott gives an exquisitely detailed description of this in *The Child, the Family, and The Outside World.*

> When I see in what a delicate way a mother who is not anxious manages I am always astounded. You see her there, making the baby comfortable, and arranging a *setting* in which the feeding may happen, if all goes well. The setting is a part of a human relationship. If the mother is feeding by the breast we see how she lets the baby, even a tiny one, have the hands free so that as she exposes her breast the texture of the skin can be felt, and its warmth – moreover the distance of her breast from the baby can be measured, for the baby has only a little bit of the world in which to place objects, the bit that can be reached by mouth, hands, and eyes.[9]

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Winnicott's description here reminds us that the space between mother and child is quite small at first. Along with milk (or formula, if bottle-fed; Winnicott had no problem with women choosing not to breast feed), the baby is offered a small piece of the world, the touch of skin, a view of his mother's face, the sensation of assuaging hunger. Even if the feeding takes place in public, for those few minutes the infant's world shrinks to just that space between mother and child.[10]

Finally, the physical and emotional aspects of holding give the infant her first and crucial sense of security. Essential to this early period of holding is a sense of continuity in events and surroundings. The mother is needed as someone who appears each day, who is consistently and reliably present, and who meets the infant's needs in an empathetic rather than mechanistic way. In order to make the mental leap of perceiving oneself as a separate person, the infant must have a secure background from which to operate. But because each child is different, environmental reliability has to be customized on the basis of a living relationship with the child. "The mother adapts to the needs of her baby and of her child who is gradually evolving in personality and character, and this adaptation gives her a measure of reliability. The baby's experience of this reliability over a period of time gives rise in the baby and growing child to a feeling of confidence. The baby's confidence in the mother's reliability, and therefore in that of other people and things, makes possible a separating out of the not-me from

the me."[11] Under satisfactory circumstances, then, in security of infant care that is good enough, the infant can start to live a personal and individual life.

If the circumstances are not satisfactory, the result is not only frustration (which, as we will see, is an inevitable and even necessary part of development), but a kind of psychic disintegration. Winnicott urges us not to think yet of a baby as some*one* with drives and desires; anxiety in the early stages is not the more sophisticated kind of anxiety we call separation anxiety or castration anxiety, but the more primitive anxiety of annihilation. The baby is a new being "who is all the time *on the brink of unthinkable anxiety*. Unthinkable anxiety is kept away by the vitally important function of the mother at this stage."[12] Winnicott theorizes these unthinkable anxieties as including feelings of "going to pieces" or "falling forever;" or "having no relationship to the body, or having no orientation."[13] When these feelings predominate, it becomes extremely difficult to grow into a feeling of self, a feeling of psyche indwelling in soma.

To prevent this kind of anxiety the mother learns how, in Winnicott's memorable phrase, to feed her infant "the world in small doses."[14] This task has both a defensive and a proactive element. On the defensive side, a mother does her best to protect her baby from too much stimulation, so that he does not feel overwhelmed or frightened. By holding her infant, she regulates the aspects of reality that are allowed to enter the baby's zone of privacy, and shields him (if she can) from harmful or unnecessary intrusions. On the proactive side, a mother actively introduces her infant to the world bit by bit, by giving him things to look at, hold, mouth, and explore, or by

taking him on walks or outings, or introducing him to new people or foods. "In extremely subtle ways the mother is introducing the world to the baby, to a limited extent, by warding off chance impingements, and by supplying what is needed more or less in the right way and at the right time."[15] Both of these efforts together protect the infant as a human concern, his "going on being." By feeding the world in small doses, the mother allows her baby to begin to develop a sense of security and trust in the environment as well as an understanding of his place in it.

We can now see why, in his descriptions of maternal preoccupation, Winnicott at times seems to over-idealize the role of mother. She is almost perfectly attuned to her child, able to anticipate his needs and fill them; she devotes herself entirely to his care and his development. At times it seems that Winnicott does not even allow a mother the luxury of being cranky; if she is tired or anxious, he expects that a "mother waits till she recovers her poise before she takes up her baby. ... Over and over again a mother deals with her own moods, anxieties, and excitements in her own private life, reserving for her baby what belongs to the baby."[16] Such selflessness is not only overly idealistic, but potentially harmful as well. First, it artificially insulates the child from his mother's feelings, which he needs to be able to see in order to recognize her as a separate person. Second, such a picture of self-sacrifice denies the mother's very real feelings of ambivalence; of moments of joy and exhilaration as well as frustration and anger. If we are truly concerned with the mother's subjectivity as well, we cannot

shrink from these negative reactions. Winnicott's primary maternal preoccupation seems too good to be true.

But elsewhere in his writings Winnicott is bracingly honest about the difficulties of being a mother. However necessary the primary maternal occupation may be, there is no doubt that its demands can take their toll on the mother figure. Winnicott understands this and pays attention to the difficulties that mothers can face. "[T]he care of small children can be irksome, and this is true however much the children are loved and wanted."[17] Winnicott accepts that the intensity of the bond might generate strongly negative feelings as well, and that mothers at time may feel as though they hate their children. A mother may find that having a child is not at all what she imagined, that she is unprepared for the workload and emotional exhaustion. "Gradually the mother discovers that the child treats her like an unpaid servant and demands attention, and at the beginning is not concerned for her welfare. ... The mother is expected to love this baby wholeheartedly at the beginning, lock, stock, and barrel, the nasty bits as well as the nice bits and the mess included. ...And the baby's excited love is cupboard love and after satisfaction has been obtained the mother gets thrown away like an orange peel."[18] These painful feelings, he writes, are completely normal and deserve recognition despite their ugliness .

As we have seen, the closeness of this initial bond means that the space between a child and its mother is very small, perhaps almost claustrophobic, at first. Winnicott describes the way infants and small children take up residence in the innermost space of

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the mother. For a time at least, mothers have their privacy invaded and turned inside-out. There is "an awful tendency of the small child to get right in the centre where mothers keep their secrets."[19] Even though the child needs this kind of access for a short while only, for the mother of small children "there is only the present experience of having no unexplored area, no North or South Pole but some intrepid explorer finds it, and warms it up; no Everest but a climber reaches to the summit and eats it. ... Nothing of her is sacred. ... Her handbag knows all about this."[20] Given all of this, Winnicott asks, "Who would be a mother? Who indeed, but the actual mother of children!" The length of service can seem interminable, and the responsibility overwhelming. She is, after all, trying to raise a child who at present fits in with the rhythms of the family but who ultimately will be independent enough to leave it. It falls to her to do the necessary and unpleasant modeling and disciplining, boundary-setting and restraining. "The mother has a shrewd idea all the time that if she fails her baby at the start there will be a long period of paying for it, whereas if she succeeds she has no reason whatsoever to expect gratitude."[21]

Nonetheless, Winnicott remains firm in his belief that this compressed space, though difficult at first, is essential for both mother and the developing child. "[T]he mothers who come off best are the ones who can surrender at the beginning. They lose everything. What they gain is that in the course of time, they can recover, because their children gradually give over this perpetual staking of claims and are glad that their

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mothers are individuals in their own right, as indeed they themselves quickly become."[22]

From Holding to Omnipotence

The primary maternal preoccupation allows the child to feel for a while that she is in complete control of her environment. From the infant's point of view, her mother's adaptation seems like magic. The baby hungers and food appears, she cries and is comforted. She is bored or lonely and a toy or rattle appears; she feels cold or isolated and is picked up, warmed, and held. Good-enough maternal adaptation allows the baby to feel for a time that the world is there just for her. Following Freud, Winnicott calls this a feeling of *omnipotence,* which though illusory is extremely important for development. "Omnipotence is nearly a fact of experience. The mother's eventual task is gradually to disillusion the infant, but she has no hope of success unless at first she has been able to give sufficient opportunity for illusion."[23] Because the child can't yet tell me from not-me, she thinks that her wishes bring things into being. The child does not realize that the mother supplies what is needed--the breast, the bottle, the touch, the toy. The infant has "the *illusion* that there is an external reality that corresponds to the infant's own capacity to create."[24] This is the illusion of omnipotence.

Omnipotence allows the infant to begin to feel like a self. Only a child who thinks he makes things happen (when actually someone else does) can begin to

experience a "me" that he can later contrast with "not me." Winnicott phrases this phenomenon in terms of "going on being." "The mother who is able to give herself over, for a limited spell, to this … task, is able to protect her infant's going-on-being. Any impingement, or failure of adaptation, causes a reaction in the infant, and the reaction breaks up the going-on-being."[25] If over time these reactions become the rule rather than the exception, the feeling of going-on-being can be persistently disrupted. Then the developing child experiences fragmentation, profound insecurity, and even psychopathology. A child who loses this sense of agency can become listless and apathetic, emotionally disconnected from those around him. He won't even expend the energy to cry, for crying is an act of hope that someone will respond. Under ordinary circumstances, however, there can be a good basis for "a build-up of body ego," in a child "able to continue to have a self with a past, present, and future."[26]

The illusion of omnipotence ideally lasts only a short time, however. As the infant grows, the mother's task becomes one of gradually disillusioning him, of disabusing him of the feeling of omnipotence. To some extent she cannot help this, for however much she feels bonded to her child, and he to her, there are always two persons in the mother-infant dyad.[27] The mother is an independent subject and she communicates her independence whether she wishes to or not. Despite the intensity of maternal holding, there are subtle differences in how she responds to her infant day to day, in how she speaks to him or holds him, how quickly she comes when she cries, how she changes him and feeds him. There is an ongoing process of learning and

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adjustment between the two. "The good-enough 'mother' (not necessarily the infant's own mother) is one who makes active adaptation to the infant's needs, an active adaptation that gradually lessens, according to the infant's growing ability to account for failure of adaptation and to tolerate the results of frustration."[28]

The mother must be strong enough to start this process of disillusionment, even though she knows that her child will be disappointed, frustrated, and angry. She must also be strong enough herself to begin to separate from her child, to begin to build up her own "outside" life again as well. Good enough mothering requires not just attunement and loving care, but also firmness and the ability to say No, and to weather the storm of protests and tantrums that may follow. She must be prepared for the appearance of anger and even aggression, realizing that these are not signs of a breakdown but are in fact a necessary part of separation and individuation. However difficult it is, "…the mother gives time for her infant to acquire all sorts of ways of dealing with the shock of recognizing the existence of a world that is outside his or her magical control."[29]

Even though the mother plays an extraordinary role in her child's development, Winnicott repeatedly insists that most women are able to fulfill this role without special training or education. One his main projects as a pediatrician was to resist the increasing professionalization of parenthood, arguing that most ordinary people, regardless of income or education, were capable of good parenting. He encouraged mothers to follow their instincts with their infants, reminding them that being a good

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mother does not require special training or education, only love and a modicum of reliability. One of the phrases most frequently associated with Winnicott is that of the "good-enough" mother or "ordinary devoted mother," and he is genuine in his belief that most women fall into this category.[30] In this sense, he is a very democratic psychologist.

The Transitional Object and Transitional Space

Once the mother begins to lessen her adaptation, several things begin to happen at once. It is not as though she sets out purposefully to frustrate her child, but in all practicality the primary maternal preoccupation cannot and ought not be sustained for long periods of time. She cannot help but frustrate her child, simply by being another subject, and it is fitting and necessary that she should do so. She begins to stretch the time between feedings, for example, as the child becomes better able to wait, or to delay slightly when he fusses, to see if he can find a way to entertain himself. These disappointments or frustrations gradually reveal to the infant that, lo and behold, the world is not actually under his magical control. The mother, who up to now has been a source of comfort and food and all-that-is-good-ness, can now also be a source of major frustration.

Realizing that the mother is outside his magical control causes the child to feel a deep and sometimes overwhelming sense of loss. Now he feels a different kind of anxiety, a fear of separation, for once he realizes he cannot make his mother stay, it

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occurs to him that she might leave him for good. For her own part, the mother does her best to minimize these separations and reassure her child about her love and care. But there is no getting around the fact that separation has in fact begun, and with it the important psychological process of transitioning to independence.

Winnicott adds to this process his idea of the transitional object. In the process of separating out, Winnicott notices, children often take to a special item or kind of item— a stuffed animal, blanket, bit of clothing, etc. – and invest that item with special significance. The parents soon become aware of the child's preference for it, say, at bedtime or in times of worry or stress. This object can ease the pain of separation, and so it is tempting to think of it as simply a stand-in for the mother. At times it may be, but it also is an object in itself, in the space in between mother and child. The object is important to the child on multiple levels. First, it is constant, as we hope the holding environment has been, and is reassuring in its constancy when other things in the child's environment are changing. Second, it is different from the infant, either in texture or size or color, all of which are aspects of its being "not me." These aspects, Winnicott says, "give room for the process of becoming able to accept difference and similarity."[31] Third, the object is "affectionately cuddled as well as excitedly loved and mutilated," nonetheless the object "must survive instinctual loving, and also hating and, if it be a feature, pure aggression."[32] Although the object is part of the external world from our point of view, from the child's point of view it is neither purely external nor internal. This is why Winnicott famously says "[i]t is not the object, of course, that is

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transitional. The object represents the infant's transition from a state of being merged with the mother to a state of being in relation to the mother as something outside and separate."[33]

The transitional object "stands for" many things in the child's mind, and this is extremely important for a child's developing sense of self and other. He is beginning to notice that this object arouses different feelings at different times; although he doesn't yet think in these terms, he is beginning to see it as a symbol for other things. "The acceptance of symbols gives elbow room to the child in his or her living experience. For instance, when infants adopt some special object for cuddling very early on, this stands both for them and for the mother."[34] This acceptance of something as a symbol for something else opens up a space for play, play with ideas and play with other objects. "Play, based as it is on the acceptance of symbols, has infinite possibility in it. In enables the child to experience whatever is to be found in his or her personal *inner psychic reality,* which is the basis of the growing sense of identity. There will be aggression there as well as love."[35]

Finding this aggression along with love is a tremendous discovery on the part of the child. However, in Winnicott's understanding, aggression is never simply a pure, destructive drive. There are different kinds of aggression, some fused with hate and anger, others merely associated with activity and will. Although not entirely without ambiguity, Winnicott's account of aggression is much more flexible than Freud's concept of it as an endogenous death drive. Perhaps most importantly, it clears the path

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for his theory of destruction and survival, which is central to the theory of spaces of freedom we are interested in here.

Aggression, Destruction, and Survival

Aggression occupies a unique position in Winnicott, and in many ways his theory is a re-writing of Freud's original theory of aggression. To begin with, Winnicott identifies what he calls *primary* aggression, which is present at the start but is not allied with rage or hate. Primary aggression is an instinct toward motility rather than passive stillness; it is a life force that urges the infant to face the world. "What will quite soon be aggressive behaviour is ... at the start a simple impulse that leads to movement and the beginnings of exploration."[36] If it is destructive, it is by accident, the way a baby might kick a toy while playing on the floor or grab and pull hair or earrings while being held. "...[T]he important thing to note about this instinctual aggressiveness is that although it soon becomes something that can be mobilised in the service of hate, it is originally part of an appetite, or some form of instinctual love. It is something that increases during excitement and the exercise of it is highly pleasurable. Perhaps the word *greed* conveys more easily than any other the idea of original fusion of love and aggression."[37]

Early on, the child tests himself and his environment, using his body to touch and explore what is "out there." The mother is most often the target of these impulses, which appear when the infant attacks and empties the breast, grabs and gums the moms'

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face or fingers, excitedly grabs and pulls her hair or kicks her in the belly. These aggressive impulses are part of excited loving, but Winnicott says we should see no anger or rage associated with them. "It is an important part of what a mother does, to be the first person to take the baby through this first version of the many that will be encountered, of attack that is survived."[38]

Contra Freud, primary aggression for Winnicott is not a manifestation of a death drive or an urge toward quiescence. Winnicott wants us to see that in the beginning, aggression can be an affirmation of self, action, and life. In Freudian theory, aggression is only a result of frustrated mastery, rage at the intrusion of reality into the fantasy world of omnipotence. Winnicott wants us to see that aggression has multiple meanings. "[A]ttack in anger relative to the encounter with the reality principle is a more sophisticated concept, postdating the destruction that I postulate here. *There is no anger* in the destruction of the object to which I am referring, though there could be said to be joy at the object's survival."[39]

Once the mother begins to disabuse the child of his illusion of omnipotence, however, this "excited loving" is indeed accompanied by anger, rage, and hate. Winnicott vividly describes the rage and aggression that an infant feels when he begins to realize the world does not conform to his demands. Although the child's rage is frightening, the reaction of the adults around him help him see the limits of his destructive urges.

It is healthy for a baby to get to know the full extent of his rage... You know what he looks like. He screams and kicks and, if he is old enough, he stands up and shakes the bars of the cot. He bites and scratches, and he may spit and spew and make a mess. If he is really determined he can hold his breath and go blue in the face, and even have a fit. For a few minutes he really intends to destroy or at least to spoil everyone and everything, and he does not even mind if he destroys himself in the process. ... It can be said, however, that if a baby cries in a state of rage and feels as if he has destroyed everyone and everything, and yet the people round him remain calm and unhurt, this experience greatly strengthens his ability to see that what he feels to be true is not necessarily real, that fantasy and fact, both important, are nevertheless different from each other.[40]

By being there to recognize the child's frustration and yet remaining whole in the face of it, the mother and other adults take on a more solid existence in the child's view. They begin to represent the outside world for the child; they confirm for him that they are separate from what he feels inside. When the child pushes against them, physically and emotionally, he is testing the boundaries between himself and the world. Passive receptivity cannot do this for him. He must actively probe and test what is out there, sometimes with anger, sometimes with active inquiry. For Winnicott, whether fused with anger or not, "[a]ggression is always linked ... with the establishment of a clear distinction between what is the self and what is not the self."[41]

Here we come to the most important contribution of Winnicott's theory. In order for the child to accept that omnipotence is an illusion, he must be able to recognize that other objects are actually outside of his magical control. This recognition is not without cost, however; the child feels frustration, anxiety, and anger as his world changes around him. The child will (indeed, must) express these feelings, sometimes

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aggressively, sometimes violently. If he does not, they remain buried within, reverberating in the child's continuing sense of omnipotence. "In this way, actual aggression is seen to be an achievement."[42] Winnicott considers childhood aggression pivotal for recognition of otherness, for the ability to distinguish between internal feeling and external reality. The aggression is not *reactive* only but also *constructive*. "It is generally understood that the reality principle involves the individual in anger and reactive destruction, but my thesis is that the destruction plays its part in making the reality, placing the object outside the self."[43]

Winnicott's theory of destruction is unique in two respects. First, it represents a different way of seeing objects and moving among them. More than a response to a "narcissistic injury," destruction is how the child engages the new things he encounters in his widening world. He is moving between two worlds, his internal world of perception and fantasy, and the "real" world out there, not under his command. The child is trying to find his way while still retaining some feeling of agency and power. To do this, he must consistently test the boundaries of inner and outer. He must figure out what characteristics come from his own ideas about an object and what ones belong to the object outside of that. Winnicott calls the phenomenon *destruction* not because the child's actions are wrong or evil but because they can alter or impact the person at whom they are directed. The subject's ability to "find externality" depends upon the object's ability to survive, to withstand a confrontation, negation, or conflict. "The word 'destruction' is needed, not because of the baby's impulse to destroy, but because

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of the object's liability not to survive, which also means to suffer change in quality, in attitude."[44] The object needs to stand firm, remain whole and intact, in order for the child to realize that it has no control over the object. "It is important that 'survive' in this context means 'not retaliate.'"[45] If the child can continue to dictate the object's responses, he remains caught in the illusion of omnipotence.

To describe these two different ways of seeing an object, Winnicott uses the (ungainly) terminology of *object relating* versus *object usage*. This terminology is especially awkward because we are used to thinking as object usage as a bad thing. In the Kantian sense we associate using someone as treating her as a means rather than an end. Winnicott has exactly the opposite meaning in mind. For him, we *relate* to an object based on our own internal ideas of it; we *use* an object when we treat it as a separate entity in its own right. "Object-relating is an experience of the subject that can be described in terms of the subject as an isolate."[46] Object usage, on the other hand, must take into account the nature of the object, "not as a projection, but as a thing in itself."[47] Winnicott says for a subject to use an object the subject must accept the independent existence of the object, its externality. Significantly, relating comes very naturally, but "to use an object the subject must have developed a *capacity* to use objects."[48]

Developing this capacity requires having a firm enough sense of what is self and what is not self to appreciate the externality of the other subject. "In the sequence one can say that first there is object-relating, then in the end there is object-use. ... [I]n

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between relating and use is the subject's placing of the object outside the area of the subject's omnipotent control; that is, the subject's perception of the object as external phenomenon, not as a projective entity, in fact recognition of it as an entity in its own right."[49] What helps us place the object outside is the cycle of destruction and survival, the testing of boundaries between inside and outside. Winnicott's odd and playful explanation is somewhat helpful here. "This change (from relating to usage) means that the subject destroys the object. ... [A]fter 'subject relates to object' comes 'subject destroys object' (as it becomes external); and then may come *object survives destruction by the subject.'* ... A new feature thus arrives in the theory of object-relating. The subject says to the object: 'I destroyed you' and the object is there to receive the communication. From now on the subject says: 'Hullo object! 'I destroyed you!' 'I love you.' 'You have value for me because of your survival of my destruction of you.'"[50]

Winnicott explains that the child experiences a great deal of anxiety at these destructive wishes, which are after all aimed at the most important person in his life. He worries; what if he should succeed in destroying her?[51] If his destructive attempts cause her pain or fear, if she is weak or always capitulates to his desires, then she ceases to be the real external subject that he needs for her to be. In order for him to bear that anxiety, the mother must survive as an external subject in her own right, but she can still help the child to process that fear. "The destructiveness, plus the object's survival of the destruction, places the object outside the area of objects set up by the subject's

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projective mental mechanisms. In this way a world of shared reality is created which the subject can use and which can feed back other-than-me substance into the subject."[52]

The mother's holding function has now altered somewhat. Now she does not so much hold her infant's subjectivity together, but is instead there to catch and hold the child's aggression and anger without retaliating. Winnicott refers to this maternal function as the *container* function, because she is able to receive and contain the negative emotions projected by her infant without either submitting or retaliating. At this point it may seem that Winnicott is embracing a worrisome passivity in his picture of the mothering function. The expectation that it is the mother's job to act as a container for discharge has troubling overtones for those of us familiar with feminist theory or empirical evidence on domestic violence. For one thing, it seems to give the child permission to use the mother (in the common sense of the word) as an emotional punching bag rather than as a friend or partner. The expectation that she will not retaliate seems much too idealistic, and seems to ask her to assume a subordinate position. As Benjamin will help to show, this kind of idealization is indeed one of the main weaknesses of Winnicott's theory. However, Winnicott also expects the child to take on some responsibility for his anxiety, by recognizing the mother as a separate, external subject and recognizing also the space between the two.

As the child matures, Winnicott argues, constructive desires come to complement the destructive ones, but not, as we saw in Klein, in reparation for the harm the child may have done. Winnicott's notion of contributing in does not mean that the

child attempts to heal the other person, but he does try to restore the relationship between the two. "There is a growing confidence that there will be opportunity for contributing-in, ... a confidence which makes the infant able to hold the anxiety."[53] Once mother and child can inhabit a shared space, both can have the opportunity to make mistakes and to make amends when things go wrong. Because we can accept responsibility for destructive side of our nature, and have confidence that we can recover from disruption, we have more freedom to interact with each other and less anxiety about the outcome.

Winnicott illustrates for us the way an intersubjective space can hold the relationship between mother and child in his case description of a small boy who was troubled by a long period of separation from his mother.[54] When the boy was seven years old his parents brought him to Dr. Winnicott to be evaluated for a psychological disturbance. When the boy was four years old his mother had had to be hospitalized for depression for over two months, during which time he was cared for by his aunt. After that time he became emotionally labile, prone to sudden mood changes and compulsive behavior, like licking people and things. He frightened those around him by threatening to cut himself or others up into little pieces. And, most significantly of all, he had developed an obsession with string.

Whenever his parents would go into a room in their house they were liable to find that he had joined together the chairs and tables with string, or to find a cushion attached to the fireplace with a long piece of string. In his interview with Winnicott, the

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boy drew several pictures of strings; lassos, yo-yo strings, a string in a knot. Winnicott

felt that the boy was dealing with his anxiety over his mother's absence through the use

of string, trying to keep things connected as one might try to stay in touch with a friend

over the telephone. Winnicott urged the mother to broach the subject with her child,

which, though skeptical, she agreed to do.

The mother later reported back to Winnicott that the conversation had been

remarkable. Upon talking with her son, she found him "eager to talk about his relation

to her and his fear of a lack of contact with her."[55] She said they spoke in great detail

about her absence, not only during the time when she was physically hospitalized, but

when she was depressed and preoccupied and seemingly remote from him. After this

conversation, and similar others following it, the boy's obsession with string stopped.

A few months later, however, the string play resumed, just before the mother was due to

go into the hospital for a minor operation. She took the opportunity to talk to him

again, saying "I see from your playing with string that you are worried about my going

away, but this time I shall only be away a few days." After this conversation, the new

phase of playing with string stopped.

It is easy to see how the string occupied a transitional space for this small boy,

something that he felt on some level would keep him connected to his mother and keep

him safe from the anxiety he felt. But I include this story for another reason as well,

and that it the sharp contrast between this boy's use of string and the child's treatment

of the toy in Freud's "fort-da" sequence. We can recall that what Freud took from his

observation was that the wooden spool represented the mother for the child, which he could cast away or make return as he pleased. In this way, the child was beginning to come to grips with the reality principle, manifest in his mother's ability to go away. In Winnicott's story, however, the meaning is markedly different. The string for him not only represented the mother but also the child's anxiety about her absence. And, true to his commitment to shared space, Winnicott urges the mother to *talk to her child* about his feelings, to communicate across that space in order to reassure him of her continuity. The resolution is not intrapsychic but intersubjective, relying on participation of both parent and child.

This is why the cycle of destruction and survival is so important. "[B]ecause of the survival of the object, the subject may now have started to live a life in the world of objects, and so the subject stands to gain immeasurably."[56] Not only is there room for play, there is room for movement between inner representations and external reality; there is room to contact others' subjectivity. The child now has access to multiple spaces that he can use, think about, and enjoy. Realizing that others are outside, Michael Eigen explains, "culminates in quickening and enhancing the subject's sense of aliveness. It opens the way for a new kind of freedom, one *because* there is radical otherness, a new realness of self-feeling exactly because the other is now felt as real as well."[57] In his new appreciation of external space, the child can continue his discovery and exploration of novelty and difference from infancy, while at the same time maintaining a vivid inner life of feeling and fantasy. Winnicott is particularly good on

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this point; if all goes well, by the age of 5 or 6, "the child will have started a scientific interest in this thing that grown-ups call the real world. This real world has much to offer, as long as acceptance of it does not mean a loss of the reality of the personal imaginative or inner world."[58]

Jessica Benjamin and Intersubjective Psychology

As both an academic and a practicing analyst, Jessica Benjamin sees an increasing focus on intersubjectivity in her field as offering an opportunity for work across disciplines, particularly psychology and political theory. Benajmin argues that "the ongoing discussion about intersubjectivity in psychoanalysis should have a chance to inform contemporary theory outside psychoanalysis in a much deeper way than has been done so far."[59] For too long, she notes, psychoanalytic theory has accepted and worked within a series of familiar polarities: subject and object, active and passive, father and mother, observer and participant, male and female, knower and known. These polarities, while useful, do not encourage us to think more broadly about the dynamics between the people who construct them. Benjamin's hope is that we can, in certain moments, get beyond these reversible complementarities to a more interpersonal understanding of subjectivity. "The intersubjective perspective is concerned with how we create the third position that is able to break up the reversible complementarities and hold in tension the polarities that underly them."[60]

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Benjamin takes Winnicott as her point of departure, for it is his concept of destruction and survival that opens up the possibility of a relationship with a truly separate subject. She notes that one of the shortcomings of object relations theory before Winnicott was that, "[w]hile acknowledging the contribution of the object to the subject, [it] did not fully confront the subject with the outside other, with anything external to its own projections and identifications."[61] Benjamin labels early object relations (and much of Freudian psychology, for that matter) "intrapsychic," since it focuses primarily on the subject's reactions to outside objects. As a result, "intrapsychic theory did not produce a critique of the self-enclosed, independent self."[62] For example, Melanie Klein, in her recognition of the dual positions of hate and reparation, definitely considers the impact of the object on the self. If the self can contain the tension between the positions of good and bad, a relation to the "whole object', Klein says, will follow. Alterity ceases to be a problem once managed internally by the subject.

"The crucial move beyond this Kleinian position," Benjamin says, "was Winnicott's (1971) realization that omnipotence cannot be broken up without a process of 'destruction,' which may, if survived, lead to recognition of the other as external."[63] It is not enough, Benjamin argues, for us to be able to identify with others or hold split images of them inside our own minds. In order to get beyond intrapsychic experience to intersubjectivity, we must be willing to risk the cycle of destruction and survival, to allow the other to occupy a space beyond our control. Winnicott believed that only the

outside other can be loved. Benjamin wants us to see that only an outside other can allow for a space of freedom between us.

Winnicott is only a starting point for Benjamin, however. She tests the limits of his framework in some ways and pushes beyond him in others. The mother's subjectivity in particular receives close attention from Benjamin, who worries, as we did, that Winnicott still idealizes the mother infant bond too much. By painting such a vivid and harmonious picture of the early infant/mother attachment, Winnicott risks setting it up as a mutuality that cannot ever be surmounted. Against this backdrop, separation and individuation seems like such a tragic loss that we are justified in spending the rest of our lives trying to recapture it. By depicting the mother's role as one of absolute attunement, psychoanalytic theory has made it necessary for individuation to be an absolute rejection of the mother figure. Benjamin wants to moderate both our ideas of the initial attachment and of the separation that must inevitably follow.

She sets out to do this by first bringing out the inevitable imperfections in a mother's relations to her child. "In this framework, the attunement within the mother-infant relationship is not to be conflated with a normative ideal of mutuality. ... [T]he relationship itself is not meant to be idealized, seen as some kind of should-be harmony, to which we hope to return ... ."[64] Attunement in infancy, though it may feel perfect, cannot actually be so, precisely because there are always two selves in the relationship. And because the mother is not a utopian figure of all encompassing goodness but only,

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after all, just herself, the relationship does have its own cycles of success and failure. Although Winnicott describes the primary maternal preoccupation as wholly enabling, Benjamin reminds us that those "forms of connection may be oppressive or facilitating, controlling or liberating."[65]

Indeed, Benjamin takes dead aim at the myth of the perfect mother in order to bring into focus the ongoing struggle for recognition. Most of psychoanalytic theory, she argues, proceeds from an unquestioned assumption of an initial merger or near-perfect attunement between mother and child. This merger, however, has many facets; Winnicott emphasizes the nurturing and holding capacities, but there are other less attractive elements there as well. The child's imagination is full of powerful and conflicting fantasies surrounding the mother figure. "The mother can be the 'anal controlling phallic mother' or the 'tantalizing breast mother' who is longed for but unattainable."[66] Benjamin skillfully draws our attention to one aspect obscured by Winnicott's characterization of the mother, and that is the primitive fear of passivity. The infant's total helplessness, she argues, often fosters a dread of maternal power and an experience of her as an all-encompassing force. "[S]he is likely to appear not as a person but as an all-powerful figure, either omnipotently controlling or engulfingly weak."[67] Winnicott highlights the *child's* experience of omnipotence, but his sometimes overly infantocentric account leaves out the likelihood that the mother often appears omnipotent *to her child.*

By resurrecting the element of maternal power, and the child's fear and dread, Benjamin reminds us why the fantasy of paternal rescue has been so pervasive over the years. Ever since Freud, psychoanalytic theory has accepted the intervention of the father as necessary to break up the union between mother and child. Most psychoanalysts accept "the transfer of power to the father as the only means by which the child can free him- or herself from helpless subjection to the omnipotent mother and enter the reality of the wider world."[68] This transfer, however, denies the mother the chance to negotiate for her own subjectivity; Benjamin argues that Freudian theory "took for granted the impossibility of achieving recognition within the dyad; it assumed that two subjects alone could never confront each other without merging, one being subordinated and assimilated by the other; and it gave the father the role of bringing the child into reality and creating the triangular field."[69] The father assumes the familiar position of the "third term" that "breaks up" the merger from which mother and child are presumably powerless to escape. Paternal power, then, gets cast as a natural biological necessity and the only available conduit to freedom and autonomy. The only way out of the omnipotent grasp of the mother is to displace her omnipotence onto the father.

This scheme of "paternal rescue" operates on the unspoken assumption that the mother is too emotionally attached to her child—and vice versa – to survive the process of individuation. This assumption allows two fantasies to persist: the fantasy of the omnipotent mother figure and the fantasy of the all-powerful father. In neither case is

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the parent afforded his or her own subjectivity. Benjamin's analysis is worth quoting in full:

> Yet this "solution" [of paternal rescue] actually constructs the undifferentiated maternal ideal it purports to cure. Rather than negotiating with mother's power to abandon or control the child, the struggle around separation and recognition is split off from the maternal figure. The anger and loss in relation to her are not felt and worked through; instead, power and aggression are simply redirected onto a rival father. (fn omitted). The omnipotence once attributed to her is revived in the fantasy of paternal rescue – as in Freud's view of religion. In the oedipal solution the mother is at once idealized as unattainable object of goodness and repudiated as possible subject.... . The oedipal complementarity negates the mother's subjectivity by locating her in what Kristeva (1986) has termed the fantasy of a "lost territory."[70]

Benjamin wants us to see that the "perfect oceanic symbiosis" of motherhood is "read backwards through the lens of loss."[71] This ideal of maternal perfection is doubly illusory, because it generates a wish for a symbiotic union *that was never there in the first place*. The oedipal drama, "with its valorization of the paternal, occludes and retroactively refigures the maternal, reducing it to that archaic, idealized phantasm that haunts us."[72] As long as the mother can only occupy this fantasied position, the possibilities for mutual recognition remain disappointingly slim.

Thankfully, Benjamin writes, Winnicott's theory presents an opportunity for mutual recognition between mother and child. She follows Winnicott here in her understanding of the developmental process. As the child begins to feel threatened by loss—loss of mother, of self, and of omnipotent control – he struggles with his feelings of anxiety and frustration. He is used to thinking in split terms, alternating between

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complementary ideas of good and bad, powerful and powerless. Benjamin writes that during this time conflicts over ownership (hear the toddler screaming "mine!") are common, as "the complementary mode of having –mastery, possession of objects – becomes pervasive, a defense against a barely tolerated loss."[73] Having, or ownership, fits nicely with a complementary thought pattern since it is an all-or-nothing state. When the child feels secure in his "ownership" of the mother, his feeling of omnipotence is reinforced. When she asserts her own will, or if he has to share her with others (siblings, father), then she appears as the omnipotent one.

Complementary thinking like this is intrapsychic, and severely limits the child's ability to relate to others in the space of the external world. "The complementary structure organizes the relationship of giver and taker, doer and done to, powerful and powerless. It allows us to reverse roles, but not to alter them. In the reversible relationship, each person can play only one role at a time: one person is recognized, the other negated; one is subject, the other object. This complementarity does not dissolve omnipotence but shifts it from one partner to the other."[74] Within the intrapsychic framework of complementarity, the child has neither the freedom nor the flexibility to develop real relationships with others. At this point in the child's life, the fantasy of binary thinking needs to come face to face with reality, for only then can real people, different from how the child imagines them, enter the child's world. In order for him to see them, however, they must survive attempted destruction.

Benjamin is helpful here in providing a little more detail about Winnicott's idea of destruction. Once the child begins to assert his will against his mother, Benjamin explains that "[m]any of the power struggles that begin here (wanting the whole pear, not a slice) can be summed up as a demand: 'Recognize my intent!'"[75] These power struggles are attempts at destruction, a breakdown in the mutual attunement between mother and child. Benjamin describes the process as follows. First, the child becomes aware of a difference between self and other; " You and I don't want or feel the same thing." Following this discovery "...is a breakdown of recognition between self and other: 'I insist on my way, I refuse to recognize you, I begin to try to coerce you; and therefore I experience your refusal as a reversal: you are coercing me.' "[76] Destruction, then, does not mean that the child tries to annihilate her mother or make her disappear entirely. It is, rather, like an act of "negation—which might consist of an attack, a refusal to comply, a 'You do not exist for me'... ."[77] These acts of negation may be active or passive; they may be calm or violent, predictable or unforeseen. "[I]n the mental act of negating or obliterating the object, which may be expressed in the real effort to attack the other, we find out whether the real other survives. If she survives without retaliating or withdrawing under the attack, then we know her to exist outside ourselves, not just as our mental product."[78]

When the child's wish to assert himself repeatedly crashes into the reality of others beyond his control, and these collisions often include aggression on the part of the child. Significantly, however, "[i]n the collision Winnicott has in mind, ...

aggression does not occur 'reactive to the encounter with the reality principle' but rather 'creates the quality of externality.' When the destructiveness damages neither the parent nor the self, external reality comes into view as a sharp, distinct contrast to the inner fantasy world."[79]

Aggression, defiance, resistance, and conflict all play an important part in the recognition of the other, and in our construction of a space outside our mental realm. Once we realize this, Benjamin writes, we can no longer claim that they are always defensive or reactive, bad or inauthentic.

> If we want to claim that relations with others are essential to the self, then we cannot help but acknowledge aggression as a necessary moment of psychic life. Many relational thinkers have argued that aggression is not a primary but a secondary response to deprivation or frustration. But this is true only from the point of view of one-person psychology, of intrapsychic experience, which defines that which frustrates us – the will of the other – as inessential, external, not intrinsic to the self. From an intersubjective standpoint, the clash of two wills is inherent in subject-subject relations, an ineluctable moment that every self has to confront.[80]

As with so much in psychological life, however, that confrontation can go well or badly, and for the destruction to serve its purpose, the mother must *survive* the confrontation. This can be very difficult for a mother, who has after all invested a great deal of emotional capital in her child; these attempts at destruction can hurt her feelings badly. Even if we disagree with the idea of a total merger between mother and child, we can still grant that there has been an extremely close bond between the two, and separation is bound to be difficult. Not only is the mother confronted with her child's wish for independence, she is also confronted, perhaps suddenly, with her own

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subjectivity, a perception of herself as different from her child. She may feel sad at the temporary disruption of a (fantasied) harmony and anger at the child's willfulness, "How the mother responds to her child's and her own aggression depends on her ability to mitigate such fantasies with a sense of real agency and separate selfhood, on her confidence in her child's ability to survive conflict, loss, imperfection ... ."[81]

To this we might add, "and on confidence *in her own ability* to survive conflict, loss, imperfection." For the response of survival requires a strength unlike any other, and an ability to tolerate and sustain the tension between recognizing the other and asserting the self. To survive, therefore, means both to recognize the negation and yet not capitulate to it; to resist the temptation to respond with punishment and retaliatory aggression, but also to resist the urge to give in (every time) to the child's demands. It seems like an impossibly thin line, and perhaps it is. But we have to remember that there are many chances for success, because survival is not a one time occurrence. The cycle of destruction and survival will repeat itself many times over during the separation and individuation phase. In fact, as Benjamin argues, that cycle actually continues to repeat itself throughout our lives, whenever we are confronted with difference or otherness. "The paradox of recognition is not solved once and for all but remains an organizing issue throughout life, becoming intense with each fresh struggle for independence, each confrontation with difference."[82]

When the Other Does Not Survive

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The mother's survival over time allows the child to place her outside his omnipotent fantasies and to begin to live in a shared space with her. If the mother does not survive, however, child's recognition of intersubjective space is severely impeded. Benjamin notes that the mother may either fail to react at all, or react with punitive retaliation; she may be emotionally absent or vengefully aggressive. In these cases, the child lacks an ally that can help him toward intersubjectivity. He is left only with his own psychic space, his internal fantasies and representations of her. "What cannot be worked through and dissolved with the outside other is transposed into a drama of internal objects ... when the other does not survive and aggression is not dissipated, experience becomes almost exclusively intrapsychic."[83]

In this situation, the child cannot distinguish between his inside feelings and the outside world; how the child *feels* is how it *is* for him. Caught within the complementary structures of thought that have their origin in the "me" – "not-me" duality, he continues to split his world into good and bad objects, seeing all his relationships in terms of self and other, powerful and powerless, "me" against "them."

This way of thinking, in and of itself, is not harmful; Benjamin says that splitting "is not only defensive but organizing; by setting boundaries and discriminating, it allows the self to keep from being overwhelmed... ."[84] Even under ideal circumstances, she explains, splitting alternates with moments of mutual recognition; there is a continual back and forth between our mental process and our perceptions of what is going on outside. The difficulty when there is no survival, however, is that

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these dualities become fortified and hardened, since there is no "outside" to check them. "Splitting itself is not the problem, but only its rigid congelation into indissoluble complementarity, which structures the subject and his other as mirror opposites (good/bad, excluded/included)."[85]

Without an external other to help process aggression and destruction, the child has no recourse but to turn inward to his own mental realm. "The self thus limited in its contact with externality remains in the thrall of idealization and repudiation, of identifications and projections."[86] Benjamin reminds us that when the mother does survive, the space between them serves an important containing function; "[t]here is now a space between mother and child that... contains negative feelings such that they need not be projected onto the object ('she is dreadful') or turned back upon the self ('I am destructive')."[87] Without this space, however, the child must manage on his own, and the negative feelings will often predominate.

It is important to note here that these mental mechanisms can work in two directions at once, both aggressively rejecting or attacking what the child feels is "bad" and trying to assimilate what the child feels is "good." This can result in further difficulties recognizing others, since "[a]ll that is bad and dreaded is projected onto the other, and all the anxiety is seen as the product of external attack rather than one's own subjective state."[88] Moreover, the assimilatory instincts, though likely to be less aggressive, can also represent an attempt to deny the other's difference—the child says to the good object, in effect, "I am just like you, and you are just like me, there is no

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space between us that can separate us." Benjamin tells us that while identification can bridge difference without denying it or abrogating it, "the condition of this form of identification is precisely the other's externality. The other's difference must exist outside; not be felt as a coercive command to 'become' the other, and therefore not to be defended against by assimilating it to self."[89]

Without a space between self and other, that is, without recognition of the mother's subjectivity, the child loses the ability to approach difference creatively, and thus also loses the ability to have confidence in a relationship with a different other over time. This disability has ramifications for the child socially, and will likely follow him into the future relationships of adolescence and adulthood. "The loss of externality plunges the self into unbearable aloneness, or escape into merger with like-self beings, creating an identity that demands the destructive denial of the different."[90] This destruction, however, is quite different from the destruction that seeks survival in childhood, for now it is directed not at others whom the self sees as real, but at the objects of the self's mental projections. Benjamin reveals the dangers of this developmental path: "The cycle of destroying the reality of the other and filling the void with the fantasy of a feared and denigrated object, one who must be controlled for fear of retaliation, characterizes all relations of domination."[91]

If the mother can survive, however, then several things can begin to occur, all of them centered on helping the child to gain a more intersubjective understanding of the world. First, by surviving (which again means responding without undue aggression or

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complete capitulation), the mother can reprise her "holding" role for the child. Now, however, she is not holding together an infant's unintegrated psyche but rather "catching" the negative response of her child. As Winnicott describes it, the subject says to the object: 'I destroyed you' and the object is there to receive the communication. Second, the mother can recognize the negation for what it is -- a child's response to a change in the relationship and a reaction to feeling frustrated and afraid. Remembering this can help her not to take these destructive attempts personally, and to respond to them appropriately and keep them in perspective. (I note here from personal experience that this is considerably easier to do if one has multiple spaces of freedom in which to move; that is, if the child does not constitute one's entire universe).

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the mother's survival allows her to draw the child's attention away from the painful "loss" toward a new mode of being together that is only gained in separation. The process of negotiating conflict and placing the other outside of our mental realm of control opens up a space for freedom that was not there before. Within this space, we can share states of feeling or experiences without having to be so closely identified with one another. Alford calls this "freedom with,"[92] and describes it as a freedom created by a relationship between two (separate) people. Part of its attraction is that the child constructs the space even as he navigates and explores it. In fact, he co-creates it with the other, such that in the end it is not really dominated by either one. Rather than suffering through reality, the child has the chance to assert his agency and independence.

While the intrapsychic ego has reality imposed from without, the intersubjective ego *discovers* reality. This reality principle does not represent a detour to wish fulfillment or a modification of the pleasure principle. ... Rather it is a continuation under more complex circumstances of the infant's original fascination with and love of what is outside, her appreciation of difference and novelty. This appreciation is the element in differentiation that gives separation its positive, rather than simply hostile, coloring: love of the world, not merely leaving or distancing from mother.[93]

Intersubjective Spaces of Freedom

The kind of intersubjective space Benjamin imagines offers three positive goods or experiences to both the mother and the child. The first is the element of language, which now can communicate not only need but shared perceptions as well. "Language is the heir to the transitional space," Benjamin says, because it relationally "forms the medium of the subject's acting on and interacting with the world. Hence, it constitutes a space of fluctuating convergence and divergence between inner and outer."[94] Through language, two subjects can communicate across the space that separates them; they can recognize that there is an interior and an exterior element to the relationship, and that they might be shared. This spoken language builds upon the pre-verbal dialogue of the mother-infant relation, which includes "awareness of the other person's affect, the sense of having an impact, the contours of intensity, the kinetic timing, the choreography of turning toward and turning away from the other." These schemas, Benjamin writes, "form the basis of our expectation of being close or distant, matched and met, or violated and impinged upon."[95] Verbal dialogue goes on along with these other

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elements at the same time; they form as much a part of the relation as the thoughts expressed. "[I]n the intersubjective conception of recognition, two active subjects may exchange, may alternate in expressing and receiving, cocreating a mutuality that allows for and presumes separateness. The arena for this catching and throwing is the intermediate in-between space, the dialogue which becomes the 'third term.' "[96]

The second element that intersubjective space offers is recognition of desire. Winnicott's theory of destruction and survival can now re-work our understanding of the child's relationship to the father as well as the mother. In psychoanalytic theory, Benjamin writes, frequently the mother represents holding, attachment, and caretaking, while the father "has respresented the outside world, exploration, freedom – a 'knight in shining armor' ... ."[97] Benjamin argues that while we no longer need to split the "holding" and the "liberating" functions along gender lines, it is important that they both be represented within the family relationship. Although the father isn't the third term that breaks up the maternal dyad, he can nonetheless fulfill the function of an outside other to the relationship. "The key feature of this person, or position, is not yet that he or she loves the mother and seals the triangle, but that he or she creates the second vector, which points outward and on which the triangle can be formed. Identification with a second other as 'like subject' makes the child imaginatively able to represent the desire for the outside world.[98] As Benjamin describes when discussing a daughter's relationship with her father, "the wish to be like father expresses an intrinsic need to make desire one's own, to experience it as legitimate and self originated, not as

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the property of the object but as one's own inner desire."[99] The important thing is for each parent to be differentiated, and thus for the child to be able to recognize the separateness of each point on the triangle. This can only happen within the intersubjective space of freedom.

Finally, intersubjective space allows the child to distinguish between symbol and symbolized. Where there is a space between self and other, and a space between symbol and object, "the object is not equated with symbolic properties attributed to it, ... but rather is seen as distinct from those properties. The ability to recognize the symbolic properties of the object as one's own attributions reflects the differentiation between self and other."[100] When that space is foreclosed, the symbolic equation holds sway: the mother *is* an object of fear or hate; the child *is* destructive or bad. Often the symbolic equation collapses once again into the familiar complementarities, and we are stuck once again within the intrapsychic framework.

Winnicott shows us how a space between self and other creates a space for play; I'm not *that* but I feel like *that*; I can imagine her *that way* even though I know she really isn't. Benjamin amplifies this space, noting that "the subject who can begin to make this distinction has access to a triangular field—symbol, symbolized, and the interpreting subject."[101] Now there really is space for play, and on multiple levels; imaginative, fictive, dramatic, and intellectual. The child can begin to understand how we invest our world with meaning, and how those meanings are accessible in contact with others. But he can only begin to tap the enormous creative power of symbolism if

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he first understands the difference between inner states and external relations, that is, if he appreciates both the difference and the relatedness of self and another subject.

Conclusion

Winnicott and Benjamin advance the psychological understanding of interdependence a good deal since the time of Freud. But we don't want to trade one set of idealizations for another; we don't want to create a new ideal of mutual recognition out of intersubjective space. Instead, Benjamin encourages us to get comfortable with certain paradoxes, and to work to sustain the tension between intrapsychic and intersubjective space. Benjamin views tension differently than Freud and other intrapsychic theories. Tension is not necessarily a negative state that needs to be resolved or minimized. It also signals the presence of others who may affect us in positive and negative ways, by motivating us or threatening us. Though outside our mental control, these others offer a chance to enter into a space beyond our own imaginings. Benjamin invites us to theorize "a third position that neither denies nor splits difference, but holds it in a paradoxical state of being antagonistic and reconcilable at once."[102]

Even the tension itself is not an ideal, for it too can be broken and mended and broken again. "The breakdown of tension between self and other in favor of relating as subject and object is a common fact of mental life. For that matter, breakdown is a common feature within intersubjective relatedness – what counts is the ability to restore or repair the relationship."[103] The opposition of recognition/negation can lead to partial

disruption. But mutual recognition breaks down catastrophically when the possibility of reestablishing the tension is foreclosed, when the survival of the other for self is over. Recognition is also impossible if the subject never moves beyond an omnipotent assimilation or destructive refusal. "To include without assimilating or reducing requires us to think beyond the binary alternatives of self-enclosed identity and fragmented dispersal to a notion of multiplicity."[104]

Benjamin's interpersonal theory does not look for a universal capacity for reason or autonomy. Instead, she argues that we must look for both points of commonality and difference, and recognize that we all have omnipotent tendencies of our own. We need to take ownership of our destructive tendencies rather than projecting them outward onto not-me objects, to risk a struggle for recognition wherein we both assert ourselves and recognize others. Working through these tendencies, she argues, offers the possibility of a "negativity of nonviolence,"[105] one that does not rest on an imagined commonality but tries to construct a space for multiplicity.

[1] D.W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality.* (New York: Routledge Press 1989) p. 105.

[2] Jessica Benjamin, *Like Subjects, Love Objects: Essays on Recognition and Sexual Difference.* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1995) p. 31. Hereafter LSLO.

[3] D.W. Winnicott, *The Maturational Process and the Facilitating Environment: Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development.* (New York: International Universities Press, 1965) p. 39 n. 1. Hereafter MPFE.

[4] D.W. Winnicott, "The Mother's Contribution to Society" in *Home is Where We Start From: Essays by a Psychoanalyst.* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co. 1986) pp. 124-125.

[5] D.W. Winnicott, *The Child, the Family, and the Outside World.* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing, 1964) p. 183. Hereafter CFOW.

[6] Winnicott, *CFOW,* p. 183

[7] Winnicott, *MPFE,* p. 45.

[8] Winnicott, *MPFE* p. 91.

[9] Winnicott, *CFOW,* p. 46.

[10] The role of the father at this early stage is also intimately connected to the setting, for it is he who makes it possible for the mother to give herself over to the primary maternal preoccupation. In Winnicott's theory he supports the new mother and takes over infant care when necessary to allow her to take care of herself. Not until later does the father become an important figure for the baby, but his role at the outset is no less important because it makes possible the mother/infant bond.

[11] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality,* p. 109.

[12] Winnicott, *MPFE,* p. 57.

[13] Winnicott, *MPFE,* p. 58.

[14] Winnicott, *CFOW,* p. 69

[15] Winnicott, *CFOW,* p. 182.

[16] Winnicott, *CFOW* p. 87.

[17] Winnicott, *CFOW* p. 72.

[18] D.W. Winnicott, *Talking to Parents.* (Addison-Wesley Publishing 1993) pp. 75-76.

[19] Winnicott, *Talking to Parents,* p. 74.

[20] Winnicott, *Talking to Parents,* pp. 72, 74.

[21] Winnicott, *Talking to Parents* p. 76.

[22] Winnicott, *Talking to Parents,* p. 78.

[23] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality,* p. 11.

[24] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality,* p. 12.

[25] Winnicott, *MPFE* p. 86.

[26] Winnicott, *MPFE* p.86.

[27] Daniel Stern places great emphasis on this point, and has conducted extensive research on mother-child interaction. He argues that the initial merger is also an illusion, and that at no point do infants feel completely merged with their primary caretakers. See Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant.* Paperback edition w/ New Introduction (New York: Basic Books 1985).

[28] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality,* p. 10.

[29] Winnicott, *CFOW,* p. 239.

[30] D.W. Winnicott, *CFOW,* pp. 82-84.

[31] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality,* p. 6.

[32] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality,* p. 5.

[33] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, pp. 14-15.

[34] Winnicott, *CFOW*, p. 236.

[35] Winnicott, *CFOW*, p. 236.

[36] Winnicott, *CFOW* p. 234.

[37] D.W. Winnicott, "Aggression in Relation to Emotional Development," in *Collected Papers: Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis* (New York: Basic Books 1958).

[38] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p. 92.

[39] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p. 93.

[40] Winnicott, *CFOW* p. 62.

[41] Winnicott, *CFOW*, p. 234.

[42] Winnicott, *CFOW* p. 239.

[43] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p. 91.

[44] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p. 93.

[45] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p. 91.

[46] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p. 88.

[47] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p. 88.

[48] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p. 89.

[49] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p. 89.

[50] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p. 90.

[51] Winnicott, *MPFE* p. 76.

[52] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p. 94.

[53] Winnicott, *MPFE* p. 77.

[54] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p. 15 ff.

[55] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, p. 17.

[56] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* p. 90.

[57] Michael Eigen, "The Area of Faith in Winnicott, Lacan, and Bion" in *The Electrified Tightrope*. (New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc. 1993) p. 112.

[58] Winnicott, *CFOW* p. 71.

[59] Jessica Benjamin, *The Shadow of the Other*. (New York: Routledge Press 1998) p. xiii. Hereafter SO.

[60] Benjamin, *SO*, p. xiv.

[61] Benjamin, *SO* p. 90.

[62] Benjamin, *SO* p. 90.

[63] Benjamin, *SO* p. 90.

[64] Benjamin, *LSLO*, p. 22-23.

[65] Benjamin, *LSLO* p. 23.

[66] Benjamin, *LSLO* p. 162.

[67] Benjamin, *LSLO* p. 90.

[68] Benjamin, *LSLO* p. 83.

[69] Benjamin, *LSLO* p. 96.

[70] Benjamin, *LSLO* p. 97.

[71] Benjamin, *LSLO* p. 87.

[72] Benjamin, *LSLO* p. 99.

[73] Benjamin, *LSLO* p. 65

[74] Benjamin, *LSLO* p. 43.

[75] Benjamin, *LSLO* p. 37.

[76] Benjamin, *LSLO* p. 42.

[77] Benjamin, *SO* p. 91.
[78] Benjamin, *LSLO* p. 39.
[79] Benjamin, *LSLO* pp. 39-40.
[80] Benjamin, *LSLO* p. 45.
[81] Benjamin, *LSLO* p. 38.
[82] Benjamin, *LSLO* p. 94.
[83] Benjamin, *LSLO* p. 40.
[84] Benjamin, *SO* p. 88-89.
[85] Benjamin, *SO* p. 97.
[86] Benjamin, *SO* p. 91.
[87] Benjamin, *SO* p. 93.
[88] Benjamin, *LSLO* p. 86.
[89] Benjamin, *SO* p. 95.
[90] Benjamin, *SO* p. 96.
[91] Benjamin, *LSLO* p. 94.
[92] C. Fred Alford, *Levinas, the Frankfurt School, and Psychoanalysis.* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press 2002) pp. 109-131.
[93] Benjamin, *LSLO* p. 41.
[94] Benjamin, *LSLO* p. 28.
[95] Benjamin, *LSLO* p. 160.
[96] Benjamin, *SO* p. 29
[97] Benjamin, *LSLO* p. 57.
[98] Benjamin, *LSLO,* p. 57.
[99] Benjamin, *LSLO* p. 123.
[100] Benjamin, *LSLO* p. 202.
[101] Benjamin, *LSLO* 95.
[102] Benjamin, *SO* p. 34.
[103] Benjamin, *LSLO* p. 47.
[104] Benjamin, *SO* p. 104.
[105] Benjamin, SO p. 99.

CHAPTER 3: MORAL DEVELOPMENT AND POLITICAL LIBERALISM

Introduction

"Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of

thought."[1] So begins one of the twentieth century's most important works of political

theory. In *A Theory of Justice*, and also in *Political Liberalism*, John Rawls advances a

powerful argument for the possibility of justice in a liberal democratic society. Both

works contain a sustained and persuasive argument for egalitarian liberalism and

redistributive economics, for a Kantian understanding of the right prior to the good, and

for a plausible way to structure a just society amidst increasing moral and political

pluralism. And in both works Rawls constructs a political procedure designed to yield

agreement on his two basic principles of justice, which he calls justice as fairness.

Central to Rawls' understanding of liberalism is his belief that at its core, society

contains an identity of interests. We recognize that "social cooperation makes possible a

better life for all than any would have if each were to live solely by his own efforts."[2]

Despite their conflicting interests, men "nevertheless acknowledge a common point of

view from which their claims may be adjudicated."[3] Rawls calls this common point of

view a public sense of justice, and claims that people generally desire to abide by it

since it enhances social cooperation for all. Justice as fairness constitutes "the

principles that free and rational persons concerned to further their own interests would

accept in an initial position of equality as defining the fundamental terms of their

association."[4] In this initial position of equality, people can move beyond their own particular points of view to a moral point of view that can adjudicate conflicting claims.

Rawls' conception of the person is central to both *A Theory of Justice* (TJ) and *Political Liberalism* (PL). In Part III of TJ Rawls sets out his theory of moral development, which includes an account of how the child develops the ability to reason from the moral point of view. Based on the work of Piaget and Kohlberg, in Rawls' developmental theory the child advances through several different levels of moral reasoning, each more sophisticated than the last. At the final stage of development, Rawls claims, the child has access to a universally valid set of principles that hold regardless of culture or circumstance.

This account of child development is vastly different from those of psychoanalytic theorists. The differences are important for our project here, and they revolve around two key points. The first point concerns the absence of conflict in Rawls' account of child development. Consistent with Piaget and Kohlberg, Rawls' theory focuses almost exclusively on the child's cognitive perceptions and mechanisms, on how he internally processes events in the external world. The second point concerns the trajectory of this story of development, which moves, in Benhabib's terminology, from the concrete to the generalized other. The child starts in a concrete relationship with the parents, moves outward to more diffuse relationship with peers and finally graduates to a recognition of principles disconnected from other people entirely. Rawls' focus on moral reasoning does not of course preclude the possibility of other kinds of

psychological development; for example, emotional maturity may be developing

alongside moral reasoning, even though Rawls doesn't discuss it. But the absence of

conflict and the disappearance of the other cast grave doubts on this possibility. For the

kind of moral development Rawls depicts systematically excludes difference from view,

with the result that the rational subject remains self-sufficient and whole, unaffected by

otherness and unmolested by the demands of reality.

Rawls' Theory of Moral Development

Rawls discusses his moral psychology most extensively in Chapter VIII of *A*

Theory of Justice. Rawls recognizes the importance of motivation as an element in

politics: "[h]owever attractive a conception of justice might be on other grounds, it is

seriously defective if the principles of moral psychology are such that it fails to

engender in human beings the requisite desire to act on it."[5] Thus Rawls wants to show

in Part III of TJ that because justice as fairness is in line with principles of moral

psychology, it generates its own support and is more stable than other alternatives.[6]

Although Rawls concedes that the criterion of stability is not decisive, he places

enormous emphasis on it in both TJ and PL. The circumstances of justice must be

stable enough to persist over time, to resist fluctuations and contincengies of

circumstance. Rawls wants to include an account of the moral sentiments in order to

"insure that the basic structure is stable with respect to justice."[7]

In Part III of TJ, Rawls distinguishes two main traditions that provide theories of how we acquire our moral sentiments. The first tradition stems from the doctrine of empiricism and has been followed by thinkers like Hume and Sidgwick. Under this tradition we acquire moral sentiments through moral training that supplies an (otherwise absent) motivation for justice. The empirical tradition, Rawls says, assumes that we commonly lack a motive for right conduct (which is usually against our interests) and possess a motive for injurious conduct (which is usually in our interests). Moral training in this tradition realigns our interests by changing our motivations. "This is achieved by the approbation and disapprobation of parents and of others in authority, who when necessary use rewards and punishments ranging from bestowal and withdrawal of affection to the administration of pleasures and pains. Eventually, ... we acquire a desire to do what is right and an aversion to doing what is wrong."[8]

Rawls groups Freudian theory under this empirical tradition, since it also depends on a kind of psychic re-training. Rawls reads Freud as saying that a sense of morality only develops out of the Oedipal situation, once the child accepts and internalizes the rules of his parents in order to reduce conflict and anxiety. (I cannot resist noting here that, in a triumph of linguistic avoidance, Rawls manages a fairly complete discussion of Freudian theory without ever using the word "mother.") Moral learning in Freudian theory thus suffers from two flaws: first, it occurs very early in life, well before the child can rationally grasp the concept of the right, and second, moral learning occurs under conditions "marked by conflict and stress."[9] Rawls rejects these empirical accounts of moral development,

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however, because in his view a pre-rational childhood and a conflict-ridden family are unlikely to produce the right kind of morality. "It follows that since parents and others in authority are bound to be in various ways misguided and self-seeking in their use of praise and blame, and rewards and punishments generally, our earlier and unexamined moral attitudes are likely to be in important respects irrational and without justification. Moral advance later in life consists partly in correcting these attitudes in the light of whatever principles we finally acknowledge to be sound."[10]

This won't do for Rawls, both because of the irrationality of our early moral feelings and because of the arbitrary nature of "whatever principles we finally acknowledge to be sound." And so Rawls proposes another tradition of moral learning, one derived from rationalist thought and that finds supporters in thinkers like Rousseau, Kant, and Piaget. In this tradition, moral learning does not require moral re-training, but instead allows the "free development of our innate intellectual and emotional capacities according to their natural bent."[11] This tradition does not attach much importance to our early, unexamined moral attitudes but instead stresses that once we mature, we can learn to take up the standpoint of others and to assess our own claims in light of theirs. Once we do this, we will naturally desire to live in a society based on fair terms of social cooperation. "We have a natural sympathy with other persons and an innate susceptibility to the pleasures of fellow-feeling and self-mastery, and these provide the affective basis for the moral sentiments once we have a clear grasp of our relations to our associates from an appropriately general perspective."[12] The rationalist account of moral development, by side-stepping familial

conflict and irrational childhood desires, is able to ensure that there will be no difference between a moral person's individual desires and the institutional requirements of justice. Rawls refers to Mill on this point, who explains that "the arrangements of a just society are so suited to us that anything which is obviously necessary for it is accepted much like a physical necessity."[13] Moral learning, therefore, is not a matter of re-training our (base) motives but of allowing the right ones to develop. Not surprisingly, Rawls argues that "[t]he rationalist tradition presents a happier picture, since it holds that the principles of right and justice spring from our nature and are not at odds with our good, whereas the other account would seem to include no such guarantee."[14]

It is essential for Rawls that the moral commitment to justice be explained and grounded rationally, for without such a grounding, the priority of justice and the stability he seeks cannot be secured. The argument for the good of justice, he notes, depends on people having an effective desire to act justly. If the desire for justice is merely an accident of upbringing, like manners or grammar, we may be tempted to discount it. "Thinking that these sentiments have arisen in situations marked, say, by submission to authority, we may wonder whether they should not be rejected altogether."[15] Without a foundation in rationality, moral sentiments may be seen merely as inexplicable feelings or inhibitions. And, as Rawls himself surprisingly admits, "[i]f it should turn out that these scruples are indeed largely shaped and accounted for by the contingencies of early childhood, perhaps by the course of our family history and class situation, and that there is nothing to add on their behalf, then there is surely no reason why they should govern our lives."[16]

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Rawls cannot accept this possibility. Moral sentiments have to be based on something more permanent and reliable than the human psyche. But how do we figure out what this is? Rawls says we are to look for guidance in moral principles themselves. Consistent with his constructivist approach, Rawls starts with the idea of justice as his desired endpoint, and "works out" the psychological basis that best fits his idea of justice. Moral development for the individual must "conform to principles that he himself would choose under conditions that he would concede are fair and undistorted by fortune or happenstance."[17] Rawls constructs a theory of how moral development might occur in a well-ordered society. He sets out three stages of morality corresponding roughly to Kohlberg's stages of moral development; the morality of authority, the morality of association, and the morality of principles.

The Morality of Authority

Rawls assumes that the well-ordered society does include the family in some form, and that children are therefore first subject to the legitimate authority of their parents. Thus the first stage is called the morality of authority. The child obeys the parents because he lacks both the knowledge and understanding to challenge parental authority; the child "cannot with reason doubt the propriety of parental injunctions."[18] These injunctions, Rawls asserts, are on the whole justified; "[t]hey accord with a reasonable interpretation of familial duties as defined by the principles of justice."[19] First the parents love the child, and in time the child learns to love and trust his parents. The order of these sentiments is

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important here, for Rawls insists that the child comes to love the parents *"only if they manifestly first love him."*[20] There is thus an odd, contractual element even here, at the earliest stages of the child's life.

Rawls assumes that at first the child is motivated only by rational self-interest. "Although the child has the potentiality for love, his love of the parents is a new desire brought about by his recognizing their evident love of him and his benefiting from the actions in which their love is expressed."[21] In the familial setting, the parents first manifestly love the child and the child later comes to love the parents. Rawls' description of the relationship between parent and child is as follows:

[The child] is made aware that he is appreciated for his own sake by what are to him the imposing and powerful persons in his world. He experiences parental affection as unconditional; they care for his presence and spontaneous acts, and the pleasure they take in him is not dependent upon disciplined performances that contribute to the well-being of others. In due course, the child comes to trust his parents and to have confidence in his surroundings; and this leads him to launch out and to test his maturing abilities, all the while supported by their affection and encouragement. Gradually he acquires various skills and develops a sense of competence that affirms his self-esteem. It is in the course of this whole process that the child's affection for his parents develops. He connects them with the success and enjoyment that he has had in sustaining his world, and with his sense of his own worth. And this brings about his love for them.[22]

Thus a child's love is a *transformation* of the child's original, self-interested desires. This transformation occurs because the parents affirm the child's sense of his own worth as a person; a child's love for his parents, therefore, is both reciprocal and equal. Rawls does not consider the original inequality between child and adult, and does not recognize the fact of the child's complete dependence and need. The child is already a separate self, capable

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of forming attachments to outside others. Despite this separateness, however, Rawls makes sure that his feelings are transparent. "The child's love does not have a rational instrumental explanation; he does not love them as a means to achieve his initial self-interested ends. With this aim in view, he could conceivably act as if he loved them, but his doing so would not constitute a transformation of his original desires."[23] Rawls considers the morality of authority necessary, but primitive, because the child cannot understand the larger scheme of rights and justice within which his parent's demands are situated. "The child's morality of authority is temporary, a necessity arising from his peculiar situation and limited understanding."[24] Within this temporary morality, "the prized virtues are obedience, humility, and fidelity to authoritative persons; the leading vices are disobedience, self-will, and temerity."[25]

The Morality of Association

The second stage of morality is the morality of association. Here the child takes his cues from the associations outside of the family to which he belongs—peer group, school, clubs, church. He extends his understanding of various roles and the ideals associated with them by mixing with wider circles of people. In his encounters with others, he learns that they see things differently than he, that other perspectives are not the same as his. "He knows that others have different things to do depending on their place in the cooperative scheme. Thus he eventually learns to take up their point of view and to see things from their perspective."[26] Our moral sensibility depends upon the complex arts of perception.

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How well we listen, how attentive we are, how well we are able to read people all affect our ability to take up their point of view. One would think, therefore, that attention to detail and to differences matters, and that the more experience we have with plurality the sharper our moral sensibilities would be. But Rawls does not move in this direction.

Understanding the intricacies of social interaction, and understanding how to read people, are alone insufficient for a moral sensibility. Such skills, while socially useful, can serve either truth or falsity; by themselves, they cannot tell us what the morally right decision might be. Thus while Rawls does agree that "acquiring a morality of association ... rests on the development of the intellectual skills required to regard things from a variety of points of view," he adds that "[t]he tricks of persuasion and gamesmanship call upon the same intellectual accomplishments."[27] Not only are we to think about things from other points of view, then, we must also "think of these together as aspects of one system of cooperation."[28] The morality of association requires *both* that we be attentive to different points of view *and* that we cognitively harmonize or equalize them at the same time. "[W]e may suppose that there is a morality of association in which the members of society view one another as equals ... joined together in a system of cooperation known to be for the advantage of all and governed by a common conception of justice. The content of this morality is characterized by the cooperative virtues: those of justice and fairness, fidelity and trust, integrity and impartiality. The typical vices are graspingness and unfairness, dishonesty and deceit, prejudice and bias."[29]

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Just as the familial relationship was based on an assured reciprocity, so too relationships within associations require others to create the circumstances of justice first. "[A]s his associates with evident intention live up to their duties and obligations, he develops friendly feelings toward them, together with feelings of trust and confidence."[30] These feelings induce the child, and later the adult, to want to cooperate with others who do their part in upholding a just scheme of social cooperation. These associations contain "moral exemplars ... [who] display skills and abilities, and virtues of character and temperament, that attract our fancy and arouse in us the desire that we should be like them ... ."[31] Thus, as in the family, the same two psychological processes occur; others act with evident intention to affirm our well-being, and they exhibit qualities that make us want to emulate them.

The Morality of Principles

The final stage of development is the morality of principles. In the earlier stage of morality of association, the individual develops an attachment to many particular individuals and communities, and is disposed to follow the moral standards that apply to him in his various positions. While in the morality of association, he understands the principles of justice, even though "his motive for complying with them, for some time at least, springs largely from his ties of friendship and fellow feeling for others, and his concern for the approbation of the wider society."[32] Now the individual moves beyond his particular ties to others and develops an attachment to the principles of justice themselves.

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"The conception of acting justly, and of advancing just institutions, comes to have for him an attraction analogous to that possessed before by subordinate ideals. ... [J]ust as during the earlier phase of the morality of association he may want to be a good sport, say, he now wishes to be a just person."[33]

Moving beyond particular ties to others is the key moment in the morality of principles. Within the morality of association, the individual takes note of the position of others, and adjusts his actions accordingly so that he can pursue his own rational ends and still maintain the approval of his associates. However, "[o]nce a morality of principles is accepted, ... moral attitudes are no longer connected solely with the well-being and approval of particular individuals and groups, but are shaped by a conception of right chosen irrespective of these contingencies. Our moral sentiments display an independence from the accidental circumstances of our world ... ."[34] Once we get clear of these accidental circumstances, Rawls notes, serious disagreements about justice are less and less likely to occur. "The natural end of this development is a state of the human mind in which each person has a feeling of unity with others. ... One of a person's natural wants is that there should be harmony between his feelings and those of his fellow citizens."[35] Through this understanding of and attachment to principles, Rawls claims, men realize their full autonomy. "Finally, the Kantian interpretation of these principles shows that by acting upon them men express their nature as free and equal rational beings."[36]

Areas of Concern in Rawlsian Psychology

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Rawls' developmental psychology looks very different from the psychoanalytic account laid out in the previous chapter. Perhaps the first thing we notice is the absence of any mention of struggle or conflict between the child and parents, or indeed, between the child and anyone else at all. Rawlsian moral psychology exhibits a strong ego function, able to manage the tensions between self and other without much difficulty. Like the ego in Freudian theory, the Rawlsian subject excels at mastering stimuli, at coordinating social positions and navigating the world of others. Unlike Freud, however, Rawls does not recognize the element of aggression in his moral subjects, preferring to overlook man's lupine tendencies. Rawls would say that this is consistent with his constructivist approach, that he is doing ideal theory and therefore need not take aggression into account. But Freud warns us that aggression is not so easily repressed; recall his observation that it is always possible to "bind together" a considerable number of people in love *as long as* there are others left over to receive the manifestations of their aggressiveness. While we do not see these others in TJ, they do make an appearance in PL, as those who hold "unreasonable" comprehensive doctrines.

Interpersonal psychology tells us that aggression and conflict serve constructive purposes as well. According to Winnicott, aggression has multiple meanings, not all of them destructive or negative. He explains that aggressive impulses are also connected to an impulse to activity, to reach out to the world around us. Aggression is one of the ways we establish boundaries between ourselves and others; without this kind of activity, we do not encounter the reality around us. Moreover, without the repeated cycle of destruction and

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survival, we cannot recognize the space between inner and outer experience, between our idealizations and their objects. Rawls' moral psychology leaves these elements out, however, and in doing so it may foreclose certain spaces of human freedom. As we will see, the absence of conflict works its way into Rawls' political philosophy. There, too, it raises concerns about plurality and respect for others.

In addition to the lack of conflict is the glaring absence of the mother or mother figure, the lack of any recognition of an initial state of helplessness or dependence. When we notice that Rawls has excluded any consideration of dependence, we resurrect a familiar complaint about liberalism more generally. Like many other liberal theorists, Rawls has always treated his subjects as fully formed and independent, already possessed of their rational plans of life. Luce Irigaray has long maintained that the autonomous subject of liberal theory is founded on a repression of its early helplessness and relation to the maternal body. The autonomous subject is thus "a fantasy of autogenesis," self sufficient from the very start and unaffected by any residual issues of dependence or relation.[37] Rawls' developmental psychology is fully in line with this idea of the subject; the child in his account is already rationally self-interested, waiting for his parents to demonstrate their love for him so that he may reciprocate. The problem from a psychoanalytic perspective is that this moral psychology excludes the essential connection between infant and mother.

There is a creepy sort of identity between the child and the parents in Rawls' theory. The child loves the parents because they love him (first) and he experiences their love as "unconditional;" they care for him, he trusts them; he launches out to test his maturing

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abilities, they encourage and support him; his skills bring him a sense of self-worth, he feels he can sustain his world, and this brings about his love for his parents. In order to maintain this kind of mutuality, however, Rawls must rule out from the beginning any hidden or conflicting feelings. For example, the child's "original desires" for instinctual satisfaction and self-interest have to be "transformed" into a genuine love for his parents; the child cannot just act "as if" he loves them, and presumably he cannot resist or defy them without jeopardizing that love. Rawls creates a constant need for the child and parents to mirror each other exactly, without attending to the very real need for the two to see each other as separate persons.

Rawls replicates here in his theory of moral development an experience of the holding function that we can recognize from our discussion of Winnicott. When the mother performs the holding function, she meets and even anticipates the child's needs; there is very little distance between "self" of child and "other" of mother. During this holding phase, the outside other exists to help process feelings of tension and anxiety, to give the child a sense of self by mirroring her desires and intentions. This holding phase also generates the experience of omnipotence, which gives the illusion that external reality corresponds to the infant's thoughts and feelings.

This kind of mirroring follows the child into the morality of association, where the child develops friendly feelings towards others who act "with evident intention" to uphold the rules of a group. Although the child does learn that others have different roles and views, his way of managing these differences is entirely intrapsychic. He learns to take

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other views into account, but with the aim of "coordinating" them into one system of cooperation. From the child's standpoint, his position must feel at least a little like that of an arbitrator or judge, removed from the conflict and (maybe) exercising a bit of moral authority. Again, Rawls does not directly address what happens during times of conflict or dissent. He neatly excises them from the morality of association by "supposing" that the members already view one another as equals, that their association is "known to be for the advantage of all" and that it is "governed by a common conception of justice." We don't yet know where this common conception of justice comes from, however, only that children have somewhere acquired the cooperative virtues of fidelity, fairness, and impartiality, and avoided the "vices" of unfairness, dishonesty, prejudice and bias. The morality of association, like the family, is peculiarly risk-free; the negative aspects of otherness do not seem to be able to penetrate the protective shield of rationality.

Because Rawls' developmental theory doesn't admit of conflict within the family setting, it seems reasonable to assume that the child is ill-equipped to deal with conflict when it arises in a wider setting; he is unfamiliar with the cycles of breakdown and repair that always accompany intersubjectivity. This lack of exposure to conflict is troublesome from a psychoanalytic point of view. We know that struggles of recognition are essential to a person's ability to place others outside his own realm of mental control, and to view them as subjects in their own right. We also know that when this differentiation does not occur, an intrapsychic mode of thinking predominates, along with the mental mechanisms of splitting, assimilation, and fantasies of omnipotence. The subject has difficulty seeing

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others as independent and different, preferring to impose his own mental projections on them. But now this lack of differentiation begins to be troublesome from a *political* point of view. As the range of others the child (now the young adult) confronts widens, his perception of them narrows to only one dimension, that of a "free and equal rational being."

By the time the child reaches the final stage of morality, the human element of plurality has almost completely disappeared. In the morality of association, concrete others still populate the child's world; he adheres to the rules of justice because of his mutual friendships with others. In the morality of principles, however, he moves "beyond his particular ties to others" in order to ascend to the moral point of view. This move, Rawls argues, allows the individual to free himself from the "accidental contingencies" of particular individuals and groups, respect for whom is, after all, a "subordinate ideal" to the ideal of justice. The moral point of view affords the reasonable individual the opportunity to view himself as independent of others and self-sufficient in his reason; as long as he can (mentally) coordinate different views into a cooperative system, he need not actually engage the different claims of others. Rawls continues to exclude the fact of dependence, and to ignore the fact of interdependence, arguing instead that the principles of justice exist separate from the others with whom we share our world. "It follows that in accepting these principles on this basis we are not influenced primarily by tradition and authority, or the opinions of others. ... [W]e eventually come to hold a conception of right on reasonable grounds that we can set out independently for ourselves."[38]

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Even though the morality of principles applies within a political setting, Rawls insists on the same identity of interests that he set up in the family situation. He does not consider contestation or difference to be generative or creative, but dangerous and divisive. He wants our moral sentiments to "display an independence from the accidental circumstances of our world" because those accidental circumstances are responsible for conflict and loss. If we can only agree to see each other as separate from those "contingencies," we will be able to experience the natural "feeling of unity" and "harmony" Rawls describes. The assimilative impulse here is obvious, as is the intrapsychic mode of thinking. Even though Rawls advances these ideals in the name of a better society for all, his approach does not account for the impact of the other on the self, the inevitable clash of wills between independent subjects, or what Benjamin calls "the plurality that strains subjectivity."[39]

Having reviewed Rawls' account of moral development, we are now in a position to see how he utilizes it in his political theory. As we might suspect, the Rawlsian subject is committed to a politics that is just and fair, one that respects all individuals as free and equal rational beings. Rawls' political theory seeks to build a model of political engagement that will encourage this kind of respect, but at the same time yield the correct result of justice as fairness. Stability also remains a central feature of political liberalism, so much so that Rawls is willing to sacrifice a great deal in order to attain it.

Rawls' developmental theory thus gives us insight into the spaces of freedom that are important for him. Clearly the internal, mental space of thought and perception matters

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a great deal, especially as it allows us to access the moral point of view. With a mental

space purified of accidental contingencies, we are free to see others as equal to ourselves, to

move beyond our own partial points of view toward an impartial stance of justice and

fairness. "We should be prepared to find that the deeper the conflict, the higher the level of

abstraction to which we must ascend to get a clear and uncluttered view of its roots."[40] The

most important space of freedom for Rawls parallels a Kantian understanding of autonomy;

free from heteronomous influence and subject to our individual will alone.

Rawls' commitment to Kantian autonomy appears most vividly in *A Theory of

Justice*. He modifies this view somewhat in *Political Liberalism*, moving from what he

calls a comprehensive liberalism to a more limited view of liberalism as a political, not

metaphysical, construction. We will consider the implications of this shift a bit later on.

For now, however, I want to illustrate the ways in which Rawls' developmental psychology

informs his ideas of freedom in TJ, particularly in the priority of the right over the good.

A Theory of Justice and Spaces of Freedom

The appearance of Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* in 1971 marked the beginning of

a rich and important period in political theory. Drawing extensively on Kantian strains

of liberalism, Rawls constructs a robust and powerful conception of justice that is

specifically tailored to a constitutional democracy. His aim is "to work out a

conception of justice that provides a reasonably systematic alternative to utilitarianism,

which in one form or another has long dominated the Anglo-Saxon tradition of political

thought."[41] Rawls thought that utilitarianism was insufficiently protective of the individual, that it could not "provide a satisfactory account of the basic rights and liberties of citizens as free and equal persons, a requirement of absolutely first importance for an account of democratic institutions."[42] Critics of utilitarianism, Rawls noted, mostly focused on the ways utilitarian outcomes sometimes (but not always) ran afoul of moral sentiments, but "they failed ... to construct a workable and systematic moral conception to oppose it."[43] The result was that political theory seemed caught in an endless back and forth between utilitarianism and versions of moral intuitionism, while the democratic citizen's basic rights hung delicately in the balance. Hence Rawls' now famous liberal formulation: "[e]ach person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override."[44]

To secure this inviolability, Rawls proposes, we need to construct an ideal theory of justice that treats all citizens as free and equal rational beings. A just society is one that is ruled by principles chosen in an initial position of equality, where none can gain an unfair bargaining advantage based on natural assets or unfair social advantage. This initial position of equality is of course the now familiar original position, the hypothetical situation in which no one knows his place in society, his share of natural assets or abilities, or even his conception of the good. The principles of justice are chosen behind a veil of ignorance, which "ensures that no one is advantaged or disadvantaged in the choice of principles by the outcome of natural chance or the contingency of social circumstances."[45] Since all the parties choose principles from

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behind the veil, all are similarly situated; the original position is "fair between

individuals as moral persons, that is, as rational beings..." and "no one is able to design

principles to favor his particular condition."[46]

In TJ, Rawls is explicit about the Kantian grounds of his political theory. The

original position is an attempt to embody Kant's idea that we can choose moral

legislation only under conditions that characterize us as free and equal rational beings.[47]

Rawls suggests that we "think of the original position as in important ways similar to

the point of view from which noumenal selves see the world."[48] That is to say, as a free

and equal rational being, one's principles "are not adopted because of his social position

or natural endowments, or in view of the particular kind of society in which he lives or

the specific things he happens to want. To act on such principles is to act

heteronomously."[49] Because the veil of ignorance removes just such information from

the parties, Rawls says, the principles agreed to behind it "do not depend upon social or

natural contingencies, nor do they reflect the bias of the particulars of their plan of life

or the aspirations that motivate them. By acting from these principles persons express

their nature as free and equal rational beings ... ."[50]

A free and equal rational person is not wholly without substance, however.

Rawls endows him (liberally) with two features of a moral personality; the capacity for

a sense of justice and a capacity for a conception of the good. Moral persons are

distinguished by these two features. "[F]irst, they are capable of having (and are

assumed to have) a conception of the good (as expressed by a rational plan of life); and

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second they are capable of having (and are assumed to acquire) a sense of justice, a normally effective desire to apply and to act upon the principles of justice... ."[51] Although Rawls states that it is precisely—perhaps only --- the moral persons who are entitled to equal justice, he assumes that this capacity for a sense of justice is "possessed by the overwhelming majority of mankind. ... Only scattered individuals are without this capacity," and "[w]hen someone lacks the requisite potentiality either from birth or accident, this is regarded as a defect or deprivation."[52]

While the capacity for the sense of justice is (almost) universal, however, other capacities are unequally, and therefore unjustly, distributed. Rawls makes an eloquent argument on behalf of justice by explaining why the initial, natural distribution of talents and assets across humanity should be considered "arbitrary from a moral point of view"[53] Given that we do not choose where, when, or to whom we are born, Rawls argues, we cannot reasonably say that we "deserve" our initial position in life. Because this initial position is so influential, however, in determining our life chances and circumstances, these initial inequalities grow and multiply over time. They are in need of moral redress if we are really committed to the ideal of fairness and equality. The problem is, such a system of redress that takes everyone's individual circumstances into account would be hopelessly complex and ultimately futile. So Rawls suggests we simplify things a bit, by paring down our view of each other such that we can more easily identify our equality.

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Since the original position forbids all knowledge of accidental contingencies, the parties are able to decide upon principles of justice that express man's nature as a rational (autonomous) being rather than a heteronomous one. Without limitations on knowledge the bargaining problem would be hopelessly complicated. Rawls notes that the practical advantage of his theory is that "it is no longer necessary to keep track of the endless variety of circumstances and the changing relative positions of particular persons. One avoids the problem of defining principles to cope with the enormous complexities which would arise if such details were relevant."[54]

The veil of ignorance, however, can remedy the problem of complexity by adding the benefit of unanimity as well. "[S]ince the differences among the parties are unknown to them, and everyone is equally rational and similarly situated, *each is convinced by the same arguments*. Therefore, we can view the agreement in the original position from the standpoint of one person selected at random."[55] This unanimity, Rawls explains, is the direct result of the original position's situating all parties fairly and treating them equally as moral persons. If knowledge of particulars or social circumstance is allowed, "then the outcome is biased by arbitrary contingencies."[56]

By avoiding such contingencies, and constructing an ideal of the moral person and the original position, Rawls argues that we arrive at a conception of justice that is *more* real than one reached under conditions of full information. "[I]f in choosing principles we required unanimity even when there is full information, only a few rather

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obvious cases could be decided. A conception of justice based on unanimity in these circumstances would indeed be weak and trivial. But once knowledge is excluded, the requirement of unanimity is not out of place and the fact that it can be satisfied is of great importance. It enables us to say of the preferred conception of justice that it represents a *genuine reconciliation of interests*."[57] I find this argument both bizarre and startling, as it demonstrates the extent to which Rawls is committed to a Kantian conception of autonomy. We can only achieve a *genuine* reconciliation of interests by interpreting others' interests for them, which we do by imposing a view of all persons as reasonable and rational, as defined by Rawls. We can imaginatively wish away particulars and social circumstance—just as the Freudian child can do by throwing the spool into the corner and shouting "Fort!"

The absence of contingency and the unanimity of reasoning means that Rawls' procedure actually specifies in advance what conception of justice will issue from the original position. "The arbitrariness of the world must be corrected for by adjusting the circumstances of the initial contractual situation. ... We want to define the original position so that we get the desired solution."[58] With the desired solution in hand, justice as fairness is now in a position to regulate what conceptions of the good are permissible in a just and well-ordered society. "Hence in justice as fairness one does not take men's propensities and inclinations as given, whatever they are, and then seek the best way to fulfill them. Rather, the desires and aspirations are restricted from the outset by the principles of justice which specify the boundaries that men's systems of ends must

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respect. We can express this by saying that in justice as fairness the concept of right is prior to that of the good."[59]

Rawls' moral psychology and his political theory thus converge and mutually support each other. The original position represents the concrete embodiment of Rawls' morality of principles, a common point of view from which claims may be adjudicated. The two principles of justice can be chosen "irrespective of contingencies," and they will regulate the basic structure of society in such a way as to reduce conflicts over matters of basic justice. The mirroring and identity of interests that we saw in Rawls' moral psychology is also reflected in the original position, in which all reasons are convincing and all decisions are unanimous. And since justice as fairness specifies the right prior to the good, we can be reasonably assured that our conceptions of the good will be suitably ordered so as to maximize political harmony. ("Da!")

As with Rawls' moral psychology, however, there are several lingering concerns from a psychoanalytic viewpoint. Plurality here is no more visible than it was in the morality of principles, and there are still no mechanisms for facing, respecting, and communicating with those different from us. In fact, Rawls has now pushed the level of assimilation to an alarming level; every rational party is persuaded by the same arguments, and almost all markers of difference and otherness are to be excluded from the procedural device of the original position. The cognitive, imaginative limits on information also ensure complete transparency, for there can be no hidden motives or agendas if one does not know even who one will be. And of course there is virtually no

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space at all between self and other, no room (or even need) for conflict and confrontation, and thus very little difference between one party and the next.

Bonnie Honig also notices the absence of conflict and resistence in TJ, and wonders why Rawls feels compelled to produce a politics without remainder.[60] She argues that Rawls' insistence on reconciliation at the price of resistance actually closes political space in his liberal democratic regime. "Committed to pluralism, Rawls' liberal democracy insists that no single comprehensive vision of the good life may dominate the political space. But Rawls sees no *positive* connection between politics and pluralism. He makes no provisions for the politicizations necessary to maintain plurality in an age of social homogenization."[61] As our psychoanalytic work informs us, however, pluralism and contestation are both necessary for a space of freedom to appear. By diminishing both, Rawls also diminishes the prospects for democratic practice.

From Theory to Politics: More Space for Freedom?

A Theory of Justice generated a considerable body of critical literature. It came under fire for its Kantian conception of the person, for the construct of the original position, and for its substantive vision of redistributive economics. Michael Sandel took issue specifically with the idea of a self prior to its ends, and developed a sophisticated communitarian response based on a thicker conception of the subject.[62] Feminists like Susan Moller Okin criticized Rawls for incorporating a gendered conception of justice into TJ and for leaving the family stranded in limbo between the

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public and the private, unsure of its stature as a subject of justice.[63] Carol Gilligan famously criticized the Kohlbergian theory of development, and by extension Rawlsian theory, arguing that it privileges a rationalist (male) form of reasoning over a more relational, contextual (female) form of reasoning.[64] And many theorists, feminist and communitarian alike, took issue with the image of the "unencumbered self" that Rawls' Kantianism seemed to generate.

Although Rawls responded to many of these critiques individually, he nonetheless found it necessary to produce a second major work, *Political Liberalism*, in order to address what he called a "serious problem" in *A Theory of Justice*.[65] This problem, interestingly, concerns respect for plurality in a democratic culture. In Rawls' view, "[a] modern democratic society is characterized not simply by a pluralism of comprehensive religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines but by a pluralism of incompatible yet reasonable comprehensive doctrines."[66] Such plurality, he writes, is the happy result of the exercise of reason under free institutions in a democracy. But in the face of this plurality, it is unreasonable to assume that all or mostly all of a people will ever affirm any one comprehensive doctrine. Hence, the problem: Rawls says that *Theory* presents justice as fairness not only as a political doctrine but as a comprehensive moral one as well. "Although the distinction between a political conception of justice and a comprehensive philosophical doctrine is not discussed in *Theory*, once the question is raised, it is clear, I think, that the text regards justice as fairness and utilitarianism as comprehensive, or partially comprehensive, doctrines."[67]

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Insofar as *Theory* gives a comprehensive account of the stability of a well-ordered society in Part III, it is incompatible with the "fact of reasonable pluralism" and "must be recast."[68]

In the recasting, Rawls attempts to show how it may be possible "for there to exist over time a just and stable society of free and equal citizens who remain profoundly divided by reasonable religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines."[69] The current crisis facing liberal democratic regimes, Rawls says, involves an ongoing clash between "salvationist, creedal, and expansionist religions."[70] The ancient world knew nothing of this kind of plurality, and so it presents a uniquely modern difficulty. "What is new about this clash is that it introduces into people's conceptions of the good a transcendent element not admitting of compromise. This element forces either mortal conflict moderated only by circumstance and exhaustion, or equal liberty of conscience and freedom of thought. ... Political liberalism starts by taking to heart the absolute depth of that irreconcilable latent conflict."[71]

Rawls' solution is to re-present justice as fairness as a *political* conception of justice, differentiated in significant ways from comprehensive doctrines as he defines them. Political liberalism, Rawls stresses, is restricted to "the domain of the political" in the hopes of finding common ground amidst plural conceptions of the good. A political liberalism that stands apart from the various comprehensive views can nonetheless gain their support. "Given the fact of reasonable pluralism of a democratic culture, the aim of political liberalism is to uncover the conditions of the possibility of a

reasonable public basis of justification on fundamental political questions."[72] Rawls

wants this public basis of justification to be shared by all reasonable citizens, to

generate an overlapping consensus of comprehensive doctrines, in which "each citizen

affirms both a comprehensive doctrine and the focal political conception, somehow

related."[73]

Political liberalism remains committed to the ideal of justice, but in a different

way from its presentation in TJ. "Which moral judgments are true, all things

considered, is not a matter for political liberalism as it approaches all questions from

within its own limited point of view. ... [P]olitical liberalism, rather than referring to its

political conception of justice as true refers to it as reasonable instead."[74] This is, Rawls

insists, more than a semantic change. Switching to the criteria of reasonableness

"indicates the more limited point of view of the political conception as articulating

political and not all values, while providing at the same time a public basis of

justification."[75]

Political Liberalism initially seems to offer much more space for freedom than *A*

Theory of Justice. Rawls' idea of an overlapping consensus of reasonable

comprehensive doctrines seems much more expansive than the identity of interests in

the original position. His expectation that those with different views will actually

discuss and argue about the political conception of justice goes a long way toward

allowing difference and plurality to appear in the public realm. Initially, of course,

Rawls was very restrictive about the arguments in the domain of the political; questions

about justice were to be settled by appeals to political values alone. "[I]n discussing constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice we are not to appeal to comprehensive religious and philosophical doctrines—to what we as individuals or members of associations see as the whole truth... ."[76] Rawls has since lifted that restriction with the amendment he calls the Proviso. Citizens now can argue from within their reasonable comprehensive doctrines at any time, "provided that in due course public reasons, given by a reasonable political conception, are presented to support whatever the comprehensive doctrines are introduced to support."[77] Presumably, this will widen the scope of permissible argument, and thus widen the space for contestation as well.

In PL Rawls also gives politics its own, separate space. Though boundaries may seem restrictive, they can in fact open up more space for freedom by giving priority to specifically political concerns. Political liberalism applies "to the main political, economic, and social institutions and how they fit together as one unified system of social cooperation."[78] And its fundamental ideas all belong, Rawls says, to the category of the political. Such ideas are "those of political society as a fair system of social cooperation, of citizens as reasonable and rational, and free and equal."[79] Rawls separates the domain of the political from what he calls the background culture of society, arguing that political liberalism needs its own space, apart from the organizations of everyday life. "Comprehensive doctrines of all kinds – religious, philosophical, and moral – belong to what we may call the 'background culture' of civil

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society. This is the culture of the social, not the political. It is the culture of daily life, of its many associations: churches and universities, learned and scientific societies, and clubs and teams, to mention a few."[80]   By creating a separate space for politics, Rawls invites us to participate in a shared space with others, to engage them as citizens and to hear the plurality of views in our democratic culture.

By dividing social space into the political realm and the background culture, Rawls also allows for two different kinds of individual beliefs, one public (political) and one private (comprehensive). From a psychological standpoint, this is a welcome move, for it increases the intrapsychic space for each citizen. We can now anticipate movement and between political conceptions and comprehensive doctrines, and Rawls in fact does so. He assumes that each citizen affirms both a comprehensive doctrine and a political conception, but "[i]t is left to citizens individually—as part of liberty of conscience – to settle how they think the values of the political domain are related to other values in their comprehensive doctrine."[81]   Because the political conception of justice is freestanding – a point we will consider later on – "the political conception gives no guidance on how the claims of political justice are to be ordered, or weighed, against nonpolitical values."[82]   This represents a significant space of freedom, despite the fact that it is still intrapsychic.

Despite these differences, political liberalism still deals only with the internal, mental space of freedom. As illustrated by his moral psychology, Rawls views conflict and aggression as inessential and dangerous, a reaction of unreason to an imperfect

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human condition. We know from psychoanalytic theory, however, that without the necessary moment of aggression, otherness does not come into view. Without facing the other, the subject can remain safely enclosed in a fantasy of omnipotence.

I want to be very clear about the argument here. I am not arguing that Rawls himself is a megalomaniac, nor that his theory countenances an authoritarian view of reason. I am talking about the mental position of omnipotence, from a psychological perspective. As we have seen, omnipotence is a phase through which every child passes. It involves a feeling that the world responds to one's desires, that by thinking something true we can bring it about. As Benjamin explains, omnipotence is a state "generally understood as one of undifferentiation. In this state we are unable to take in that the other person does not want what we want, do what we say."[83] In omnipotent thinking, others see the world exactly the same way we do and respond to it the same way we would. Because our perception is how it *is,* there is no space between self and other.

Although omnipotence is a common fact of childhood experience, it does not disappear from our mental landscape. The feeling of omnipotence reappears whenever we encounter something new or potentially threatening to our sense of control. "The moment in which omnipotence is continually recharged is that of facing the fact of dependency on others outside our control."[84] It makes sense, then, that the public political arena is one space where omnipotence reappears.

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The problem is that omnipotence fails to recognize the other as a separate subject. Even in the practice of political liberalism, the citizen can free himself from the burden of otherness by choosing only to see certain characteristics of his fellow citizens. Seeing others only as "free and equal" frees us from the anxiety and conflict that is likely to arise from multiple, conflicting points of view. I would like us to see that this kind of autonomy sacrifices other spaces of freedom. "[O]mnipotence is and has always been a central problem for the self, disavowed rather than worked through by its position as a rational subject. In fact, if the other were not a problem for the subject, the subject would again be absolute—either absolutely separate or assimilating the other. Therefore, the negativity that the other sets up for the self has its own possibilities, a productive irritation, heretofore insufficiently explored."[85]

Political liberalism aims to be practical, Rawls says. It is a conception of justice on which citizens of differing moral and religious beliefs can agree. An overlapping consensus of reasonable comprehensive doctrines is the best hope for citizens of a diverse political body, because it "expresses their shared and public political reason."[86] Because it hopes to gain the support of a plurality of reasonable comprehensive doctrines, "political liberalism applies the principle of toleration to philosophy itself."[87]

But upon closer inspection, we find that the spaces of freedom in political liberalism are smaller than they first appear. Despite Rawls' attempts at more inclusive political communication, recognition of otherness and plurality still remains problematic. Within the domain of the political, Rawls imposes several constraints both

on the kinds of views citizens can hold and, more importantly, on how citizens view one another, both of which operate to efface difference and plurality. Far from being a space of difference and contestation, public reason is single and unified, able to command a universal consensus among reasonable comprehensive doctrines. As with the principles of justice derived from the original position, public reason is derived from terms of social cooperation that all would endorse as free and equal citizens; as a result, Rawls argues, public reason is objectively valid. Rawls claims that political liberalism is not a comprehensive doctrine, that the Kantian conception of the person has been "transformed" into that of a political citizen. However, his commitment to rational autonomy and his reliance on objective validity make it difficult for us to accept this claim.

In addition, Rawls still denies the elements of conflict and aggression, forcing them underground via a coercive consensus on the principles of justice. As stated above, Rawls argues that the overlapping consensus gains the support of all who hold *reasonable* comprehensive doctrines. Those who do not, however, are not allowed to argue for their positions or beliefs, and are in fact shut out of the public domain of the political. Rawls' treatment of "the unreasonables" is harsh and uncompromising, evoking images of the psychological splitting described by Winnicott and Benjamin. Unreasonable comprehensive doctrines, he claims, must be contained, separated, quarantined from the rest of our political culture. Instead of being more inclusive,

political liberalism guards the gates against any who do not fit Rawls' conception of the reasonable citizen.

Finally, it turns out that citizens are not actually permitted to determine for themselves how to order their political and nonpolitical values. Because the values of public reason are "very great values," Rawls says, they cannot be overridden by comprehensive doctrines. Indeed, the definition of an unreasonable comprehensive doctrine is one that does not yield priority to political liberalism. Thus, the space we thought we had between our political and our comprehensive doctrines is much narrower than we might have thought.

In the end, political liberalism is stuck in a theoretical quandary, trying to distance itself from comprehensive doctrine yet unable to trust fully in the realm of the political. This ambivalence, I will argue, is actually healthy in a robust democracy; between the poles of ideal theory and real practice there is a space for political freedom. Rawls errs, though, in attempting to resolve the paradox in favor of philosophical certainty and security. This resolution forecloses a potential space for contestation and action, and undermines the strength of Rawls' political theory.

Plurality and the Free and Equal Citizen

"In the transformation from the comprehensive doctrine of justice as fairness to the political conception of justice as fairness, the idea of the person as having moral personality with the full capacity of moral agency is transformed into that of the citizen."[88] The citizen stands in a political relation with other citizens, all of whom

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endorse reasonable, though often conflicting, comprehensive doctrines. Public reason expresses the ideal of democratic citizens trying to conduct their affairs on terms and in ways that we might reasonably expect others to endorse. The ideal of citizenship "imposes a moral, not a legal, duty – the duty of civility – to be able to explain to one another on those fundamental questions how the principles and policies they advocate and vote for can be supported by the political values of public reason."[89] The duty of civility "expresses a willingness to listen to what others have to say and being ready to accept reasonable accommodations or alterations in one's own view."[90]

In order to fulfill their political role, citizens are viewed as having "the intellectual and moral powers appropriate to that role, such as a capacity for a sense of political justice given by a liberal conception and a capacity to form, follow, and revise their individual doctrines of the good, and capable also of the political virtues necessary for them to cooperate in maintaining a just political society."[91] We are familiar with the first two moral powers from TJ; they correspond to the reasonable (sense of justice) and the rational (conception of the good). The political virtues are a new set of concepts, however, and they involve the virtues of reciprocity and mutual respect.

Rawls assumes that his citizens are reasonable and affirm a sense of justice. "Insofar as we are reasonable, we are ready to work out the framework for the public social world, a framework it is reasonable to expect everyone to endorse and act on, provided others can be relied on to do the same."[92] Only if we are reasonable can we enter "as equals the public world of others and stand ready to propose, or to accept, as

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the case may be, fair terms of cooperation with them."[93] And the definitive marker of reasonableness for Rawls is the criterion of reciprocity: "our exercise of political power is proper only when we sincerely believe that the reasons we offer for our political action may reasonably be accepted by other citizens as a justification of those actions."[94]

The criterion of reciprocity is an extension of the cognitive exercise that Rawls describes in the morality of association. We can recall that in that stage of moral psychology, the child learns that others have different views than he does, but he also learns how to consider those different views together as a cooperative system. The citizen does the same thing here. "For these terms to be fair terms, citizens offering them must reasonably think that those citizens to whom such terms are offered might also reasonably accept them."[95] Just as in the morality of association, however, the actual or real responses of other people do not factor into the individual's reasoning. The process is entirely intrapsychic, taking place within the subject's own mind and under his own mental control. "Note that 'reasonably' occurs at both ends in this formulation: in offering fair terms we must reasonably think that citizens offered them might also reasonably accept them. And they must be able to do this as free and equal, and not as dominated or manipulated, or under the pressure of an inferior political or social position."[96] But whether our fellow citizens *actually* accept our "fair terms" is of no special importance to the ideal of reciprocity. We have fulfilled out part of the

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bargain as long as we can convince ourselves that other citizens could reasonably accept our terms.

We undertake the same intrapsychic exercise when we recognize the burdens of judgment, another requirement of reciprocity. Since many hard decisions have no clear answer, even among reasonable citizens, the burdens of judgment are meant to explain the sources of reasonable disagreement in a way that does not disrespect the views of the citizens involved. On matters of basic justice, Rawls says, the evidence may be conflicting and difficult to assess; even where we agree on the evidence, we may disagree about the weight accorded to different elements. Our concepts are vague and rely on judgment and interpretations; plus "the way we assess evidence and weigh moral and political values is shaped by our total experience, our whole course of life up to now; and our total experiences must always differ."[97] These are the kinds of things Rawls considers as sources for reasonable disagreement. By recognizing the burdens of judgment, we agree that disagreement rests on our errors, not willful ignorance or moral evil. Thus "fair terms of cooperation can be acknowledged by everyone without resentment or humiliation (or for that matter bad conscience).... ."[98]

The second political virtue is the practice of mutual respect. Here Rawls describes how citizens are to see each other within the framework of the political. Because is important to protect the view of the citizen as free and equal, mutual respect in political liberalism shares an affinity with the veil of ignorance in the original position. "In giving reasons to all citizens we don't view persons as socially situated or

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otherwise rooted, that is, as being in this or that social class, or in this or that property or income group, or as having this or that comprehensive doctrine. …Rather we think of persons as reasonable and rational, as free and equal citizens."[99] The difference here, of course, is that we can think of ourselves as having this or that comprehensive doctrine, as there is no formal limitations on knowledge as under the veil. This step is necessary, Rawls says, in order to establish a basis for political reasoning that all can share.

Rawls has argued repeatedly that in TJ, the original position is a device of representation, and the veil of ignorance an heuristic device. He argues this in order to blunt criticism aimed at showing how the original position does not respect the plurality and diversity of the parties. Whether we agree with his defense of the original position or not, Rawls' *political* requirement of viewing citizens only as free and equal is troubling. In requiring us to view each other as free and equal citizens and only that, Rawls attempts to mask the plurality and otherness inherent in a democratic polity. Admittedly, his aim is to try to remove divisive elements from the political arena, in order to give citizens the best chance for agreement. But this kind of assimilative move cordons off an important space of freedom.

From the standpoint of psychoanalytic theory, such an attempt to reduce plurality not only *doesn't* work, it *shouldn't* work. It doesn't work because we are always aware of the individuality of others; we cannot simply decide to look past, or away from, the confrontation with otherness. "Merely by living in this world, we are exposed to others and subjected to unconscious, unwilling identification" with them.[100]

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As Benjamin explains, the self "is not really independent and self constituting," it is rather "constituted by the identifications with others that it deploys in an ongoing way, in particular to deny the loss and uncontrollability that otherness necessarily brings."[101] We cannot choose to see beyond the person, the "who," in Arendt's terms, who is always there connected with the claim, the argument, the opinion. Pretending that we can do this is again merely another intrapsychic exercise, one disconnected from the interpersonal world of politics between citizens.

But even as an ideal, looking at others as essentially all the same *shouldn't* work. Such an assimilative vision denies the subjectivity of the citizen and closes the space between self and other. Rawls claims to be respecting other citizens by viewing them *only* as free and equal persons, but the quality of this respect is open to question. By seeing others only as free and equal – the view of the noumenal self -- Rawls only sees his own projection of the other, his identification with what is "like self" in her, without leaving room for her own subjectivity. In viewing citizens this way, we do not respect them, but only the characteristics we imagine they share with us. By contrast, mutual respect in psychoanalytic theory requires us to recognize the other as an outside subject, beyond our mental projections and identifications. "Recognition requires acceptance of the other's independence and unknowability."[102]

By seeing others only as free and equal persons, we willingly shut our eyes to human plurality, choosing not to see the real people around us but to populate our

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mental world with others that we imagine are exactly like ourselves. Rawls makes clear

that respecting the free and equal person is not the same thing as respecting the real one:

> From the standpoint of justice as fairness it is not true that the conscientious
> judgments of each person ought absolutely to be respected; nor is it true that
> individuals are completely free to form their moral convictions. ... We are not
> literally to respect the conscience of an individual. Rather we are to respect him
> as a person and we do this by limiting his actions, when this proves necessary,
> only as the principles we would both acknowledge permit.[103]

The success of this assimilative move drives the remainder of political

liberalism, because it is only by viewing each other in the appropriately equal way that

we can come to agreement on the public principles of justice. Significantly, this

agreement must be both universal and binding "for the right reasons," otherwise, Rawls

says, we have not attained the kind of politics that respects free and equal selves. "Since

political power is the coercive power of free and equal citizens as a corporate body, this

power should be exercised, when constitutional essentials and basic questions of justice

are at stake, only in ways that all citizens can reasonably be expected to endorse in light

of their common human reason."[104] If all citizens do not agree, Rawls says, the political

conception of justice is not sufficiently stable; it comprises only a *modus vivendi* of

accidental circumstance. Under a modus vivendi, "historical circumstances have so

turned out that for the time being at least, the balance of forces keeps all sides

supporting the current arrangements, which happen to be just to each of them."[105]

Though just, the *modus vivendi* is not secure, stable, fixed and certain, because it does

not reach beyond the contingent into the universal domain of rationality. Where only a *modus vivendi* is in place, "society's stability depends on a balance of forces in contingent and possibly fluctuating circumstances."[106]

To combat contingency, then, Rawls returns to the familiar concept of constructivism, though here he says it is political constructivism rather than moral. "To find this political conception we do not look at known comprehensive doctrines with the aim of striking a balance or average between them, nor do we attempt to strike a compromise with a sufficient number of those doctrines actually existing in society by tailoring the political conception to fit them. Doing that appeals to the wrong idea of consensus and makes the political conception political in the wrong way."[107] The right way, Rawls argues, cannot start from what is but must instead start from what we imagine. We start by "working from the fundamental idea of society as a fair system of cooperation and its companion ideas ... [w]e leave aside comprehensive doctrines that now exist, or that have existed, or that might exist. ... The thought is not that [this is] fair to comprehensive conceptions of the good associated with such doctrines, by striking a fair balance among them, but rather fair to free and equal citizens as those persons who have those conceptions."[108] The comprehensive doctrines that now exist, or have existed, cannot be allowed to structure a conception of justice because they are not complete enough; based on actual experience rather than rational thought, they lack the sufficient clarity, logic, and authority. "What we cannot do in public reason is to proceed directly from our comprehensive doctrine, or a part thereof, to one or several

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political principles and values, and the particular institutions they support. Instead, we are required first to work to the basic ideas of a complete political conception and from there to elaborate principles and ideals, and to use arguments they provide. Otherwise public reason allows arguments that are too immediate and fragmentary."[109]

What does it mean, then, to be political in the *right* way? For Rawls it means that the political conception must be detached completely from any comprehensive doctrine, in order to attain a political objectivity that can garner support. "The difficulty is this: we must find some point of view, removed from and not distorted by the particular features and circumstances of the all-encompassing background framework, from which a fair agreement between persons regarded as free and equal can be reached."[110] The political conception must be *freestanding*, independent of (contingent) comprehensive doctrines. "A distinguishing feature of a political conception is that it is presented as freestanding and expounded apart from, or without reference to, any such wider background. ... This means that it can be presented without saying, or knowing, or hazarding a conjecture about, what such doctrines it may belong to, or be supported by."[111] Political liberalism is a doctrine that "falls under the category of the political. It works entirely within that domain and does not rely on anything outside it."[112] As long as public reason specifies the ordering of political values without input from existing comprehensive doctrines, "we may be confident that the ordering of political values is not distorted by particular reasonable comprehensive doctrines."[113] We must be

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particularly mindful that political values "are not puppets manipulated from behind the scenes by comprehensive doctrines."[114]

The ideal of autonomy here reflects the morality of principles that Rawls sets out in his moral psychology. The political conception here is completely disassociated from specific individuals or beliefs; it focuses instead on a disembodied reason that specifies the universal principles suitable for "free and equal persons." Earlier in this chapter, we considered the possibility that Rawls divided the political from the background culture in order to create more space for freedom in politics. But when we consider Rawls' comments above, the rigidity of the separation takes on a different meaning. Rawls doesn't separate the political from the background culture in order to enhance movement between both; he separates them in order to purify the political from contingency.

To be sure, there are considerable advantages to such a split. Stability and certainty are chief among them. "Actual agreements reached when people know their present place in an ongoing society are influenced by disparate social and natural contingencies. The principles adopted depend on the actual course of events that takes place within its institutional structure. *We cannot by actual agreements get beyond happenstance or specify a suitably independent standard.*"[115] An independent standard allows us to order our political institutions in ways that remove contestation and disagreement from the public sphere, which is a very attractive ideal for Rawls. "I assume that a political conception properly laid out is complete. That is, the political

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values specified by it can be suitably ordered, or balanced, so that those values alone give a reasonable answer by public reason to all or nearly all questions concerning constitutional essentials and basic justice."[116] The completeness of the public conception of justice allows us to "fix, once and for all, the content of certain political basic rights and liberties, and to assign them special priority. Doing this takes those guarantees off the political agenda and puts them beyond the calculus of social interests."[117] If these rights were not settled once and for all, the results could be dire. Leaving them subject to social calculus "subjects them to the shifting circumstances of time and place, and by greatly raising the stakes of political controversy, dangerously increases the insecurity and hostility of public life."[118] In general, then, political liberalism helps to frame the institutions of the basic structure such that "intractable conflicts are unlikely to arise... ."[119]

Here again we must ask both whether this ideal of politics is likely and whether it is desirable. From a psychoanalytic standpoint, political liberalism has managed to remove plurality and contingency from the public sphere, mostly by imposing its own definitions of reason. Even though Rawls argues that intractable conflicts are unlikely to arise, we cannot help asking ourselves what would happen if they do? Benjamin reminds us that "[n]o perfect environment can take the sting from the encounter with otherness."[120] Our only guidance on this question comes from Rawls' comments on how political liberalism treats those who do not hold reasonable comprehensive

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doctrines. This treatment is exclusionary and punitive, which fits with the mental act of splitting into the categories of good and bad, with no space in between.

"Unreasonable doctrines are a threat to democratic institutions, since it is impossible for them to abide by a constitutional regime except as a modus vivendi. Their existence serves to limit the aim of fully realizing a reasonable democratic society with its ideal of public reason...".[121] From this description, we may think that Rawls has in mind only the extreme kind of beliefs that are truly disruptive or even violent. "[A] society may contain unreasonable and irrational, even mad, comprehensive doctrines." Because these pose such a severe threat to public reason, , " ... the problem is to contain them so that they do not undermine the unity and justice of society."[122]

If we are talking here about truly violent and dangerous groups or individuals, perhaps the solution of containment is permissible. However, many commentators have argued that Rawls' definition of unreasonable actually sweeps into its net many doctrines that we would not want excluded from the political conversation. Rawls requires reasonable doctrines to conform to certain conception-dependent desires; that is, they desire *for its own sake* a society ruled by the two principles of justice. But, as Leif Wenar writes:

> Followers of Bentham will be ruled out, as Bentham's conception of the person as motivated solely by pleasure and pain countenances no conception-dependent desires. Rawls himself notes 'the obvious non-Humean character of this account of motivation" of the reasonable person (p. 84) ...so Humeans are left outside the consensus. Hobbes followers (who, it must be said, are probably more numerous than Hume's) will also be excluded.[123]

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In addition, Wenar notes, followers of Gauthier and other decision theorists will also be excluded because they find only the rational (pursuit of self-interest) and not the reasonable (concern for fairness) compelling. "In fact, it seems that only those who affirm a Kantian conception of the person are eligible to be reasonable members of a society well ordered by Rawls' theory."[124]

All reasonable doctrines, Rawls says, affirm "a political conception of justice underwriting a constitutional democratic society whose principles, ideals, and standards satisfy the criterion of reciprocity. Thus, all reasonable doctrines affirm such a society with its corresponding political institutions: equal basic rights and liberties for all citizens, including liberty of conscience and freedom of religion."[125] If citizens have some other view of the political relation, "political liberalism does not engage those who think this way."[126] It is open to question, then, how much space actually exists in political liberalism for dissent and contestation, which is problematic for any regime that wants to call itself democratic or liberal. The severity with which Rawls splits the reasonable from the unreasonable can only arise from intrapsychic experience, one that is unwilling to confront the other as an outside entity.

Finally, even the potential space of movement between comprehensive doctrines and political conceptions is ultimately shut down by political liberalism. In a puzzling passage, Rawls explicitly rejects the idea of the domain of the political as offering a space of freedom. Instead, he sees it as a source for those ideals that a fundamental and regulative, or as issuing from an already existing concept of justice. Rawls writes:

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A domain so-called, or a sphere of life, is not, then, something already given apart from a political conception of justice. A domain is not a kind of space, or place, but rather is simply the result, or upshot, of how the principles of political justice are applied, directly to the basic structure and indirectly to the associations within it. The principles defining the equal basic liberties and opportunities of citizens always hold in and through all so-called domains.[127]

Disappointingly, Rawls does not make good on his earlier promise that the individual is free to decide how to relate his political and comprehensive values. For in order to secure the certainty he needs from politics, Rawls cannot allow that individuals might hold their own views above the demands of political agreement. "[T]he political values expressed by its principles and ideals normally have sufficient weight to override all other values that may come in conflict with them."[128] In fact, in instances of conflict, Rawls says that it is not the political conception that in error, since by definition it is based on principles chosen by free and equal persons. If a person's beliefs are reasonable, they already comply with political liberalism. "[A] true judgment in a reasonable comprehensive doctrine never conflicts with a reasonable judgment in its related political conception."[129] Political liberalism, then, much like the original position, specifies in advance what reasons ought to govern individual actions concerning matters of basic justice. Their priority is almost coercive; reasonable citizens "are to act from these reasons, whether moved by them or not; and so these assigned reasons may override the reasons agents have, or think they have, from their own point of view."[130]

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Conclusion

Many political theorists have noted the apolitical, or even antipolitical,

tendencies in Rawlsian thought. Habermas criticizes the monological nature of both the

original position and political liberalism, arguing that Rawls is insufficiently attentive to

intersubjective communication in constructing the moral point of view. As we will see

in the next chapter, Habermas adopts a much more interpersonal approach in his theory

of communicative reason. Benjamin Barber[131], Bonnie Honig[132], Susan Bickford[133], Iris

Young[134] and Chantal Mouffe[135], to name only a few, all take Rawls to task for his

rationalist and overly philosophical account of politics. What I argue here is that

Rawls' political theory relies on a moral psychology that is too narrow to support a

democratic politics, one that has to include conflict and plurality in order to move

outside the space of intrapsychic thought and fantasy. We have to be able to both see

reality and also to own fantasy; the tension between the two is what creates a space for

freedom.

"[I]t must not be expected that by taking thought we can prevent love, hate, and

conflict of loyalties."[136] Rawls' political liberalism tries to create a realm of politics that

is detached from concrete others and from the plurality that different viewpoints

generate. By removing others from the citizen's field of vision, Rawls tries to assure

that there will be no unwanted contact, no interference, with the reasoning of the

citizen. ("Fort!") The duties of reciprocity and mutual respect, while praiseworthy, also

allow the citizen to remain within the confines of his own mental processes, his

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idealization and repudiation of others. And despite the fact that citizens are of course free to change their comprehensive doctrines and conceptions of the good at any time, their plans of life are from the outset restricted by the authority of the principles of justice; this is what it means to prioritize the right over the good.

Political liberalism seems to require the citizen to submit to a morality that is punitive and exclusionary. Rawls' exclusion of unreasonable citizens and his imposition of the priority of principles of justice are difficult to understand from a liberal-democratic perspective. Whenever I think of these elements of *Political Liberalism*, I am always struck by the difference between them and the animating spirit of *A Theory of Justice*. It seems Rawls has abandoned one of his most inspiring ideals, that each individual possesses an inviolability that the welfare of society as a whole cannot override.

Of course the explanation is that, despite his claims to the contrary, the individual for Rawls is and has always been the Kantian noumenal self, the one free from contingency and accident, the one able to exercise an undistorted free will. This is why Rawls finds it acceptable to remove so much plurality from politics. The worry here is that such autonomy is actually harmful to the human realm of politics, however supportive it might be of the noumenal realm of ideals. "Our arguments have to be grounded in a human point of view; they cannot be derived from a point of view that is no one's point of view at all. It is not, as the strongest forms of ethical theory would have it, that reason drives us to get beyond humanity. The most urgent requirements of

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humanity are, as they have always been, that we should assemble as many resources as we can to help us respect it."[137]

[1] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice, Revised Edition.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1999). Originally *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971) p. xi. All references to this work are to the revised (1999) edition.. Hereafter referred to as TJ.

[2] Rawls, TJ p. 4.

[3] Rawls, TJ p. 4.

[4] Rawls, TJ p. 10.

[5] Rawls, TJ p. 398.

[6] Rawls, TJ p. 399.

[7] Rawls, TJ p. 401.

[8] Rawls, TJ p. 401.

[9] Rawls, TJ p. 402.

[10] Rawls, TJ p. 402.

[11] Rawls, TJ p. 402.

[12] Rawls, TJ p. 402-3.

[13] Rawls, TJ p. 403.

[14] Rawls, TJ p. 403.

[15] Rawls, TJ p. 451.

[16] Rawls, TJ p. 451.

[17] Rawls, TJ p. 451.

[18] Rawls, TJ p. 405.

[19] Rawls, TJ p. 405.

[20] Rawls, TJ p. 406.

[21] Rawls, TJ p. 406.

[22] Rawls, TJ pp. 406-407.

[23] Rawls, TJ p. 406.

[24] Rawls, TJ p. 409.

[25] Rawls, TJ p. 408.

[26] Rawls, TJ p. 410.

[27] Rawls, TJ p. 411

[28] Rawls, TJ p. 410.

[29] Rawls, TJ p. 413.

[30] Rawls, TJ p. 411.

[31] Rawls, TJ p. 413.

[32] Rawls, TJ p. 414.

[33] Rawls, TJ p. 414.

[34] Rawls, TJ p. 416.

[35] Rawls, TJ p. 439.

[36] Rawls, TJ p. 417.

[37] Luce Irigaray, *The Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian Gill (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 1985).

[38] Rawls, TJ p. 452.

[39] Benjamin, *SO* p. 101.

[40] John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (paperback edition, Columbia University Press 1996) p 46. All references to this work refer to this paperback edition. Hereafter referred to as PL.

[41] Rawls, TJ, Preface For the Revised Edition, p. xi.

[42] Rawls, TJ p. xii.

[43] Rawls, TJ p. xvii.

[44] Rawls, TJ p. 3.

[45] Rawls, TJ p. 11.

[46] Rawls, TJ p. 11.

[47] Rawls, TJ p. 221.

[48] Rawls, TJ p. 225.

[49] Rawls, TJ p. 222.

[50] Rawls, TJ p. 222.

[51] Rawls, TJ p. 442.

[52] Rawls, TJ p. 443.

[53] Rawls, TJ p. 14.

[54] Rawls, TJ p. 76.

[55] Rawls, TJ p. 120 (emphasis added).

[56] Rawls, TJ p. 122.

[57] Rawls, TJ p. 122 (emphasis mine).

[58] Rawls, TJ p. 122.

[59] Rawls, TJ p. 27-28.

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

[61] Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, p. 130.

[62] Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge University Press 1982).

[63] Susan Moller Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family* (New York: Basic Books 1990).

[64] Carol Gilligan, *In A Different Voice: Women's Development and Psychological Theory.* (Harvard University Press 1992).

[65] Rawls, *Political Liberalism.* p. xvii.

[66] Rawls, PL xviii.

[67] Rawls, PL xviii

[68] Rawls, PL xix.

[69] Rawls, PL xxxix.

[70] Rawls, PL p. xxvii.

[71] Rawls, PL p. xxviii.

[72] Rawls, PL xxi.

[73] Rawls, PL xxi.

[74] Rawls, PL p. xxii.

[75] Rawls, PL p. xxii.

[76] Rawls, PL p. 224-5.

[77] Rawls, PL pp. li-lii.

[78] Rawls, PL p. 376.

[79] Rawls, PL p. 376.

[80] Rawls, PL p. 14.

[81] Rawls, PL p. 140.

[82] Rawls, PL p. 386.

[83] Jessica Benjamin, *SO* p. 86.

[84] Jessica Benjamin, *LSLO* p. 95.

[85] Jessica Benjamin, *SO* p. 85.
[86] Rawls, PL p. 9.
[87] Rawls, PL p. 10.
[88] Rawls, PL p. xlv.
[89] Rawls, PL p. 217.
[90] Rawls, PL p. 253.
[91] Rawls, PL p. xlvi.
[92] Rawls, PL p. 53-54.
[93] Rawls, PL p. 53.
[94] Rawls, PL p. xlvi.
[95] Rawls, PL p. xliv.
[96] Rawls, PL p. xliv.
[97] Rawls, PL p. 57.
[98] Rawls, PL p. 303.
[99] John Rawls, "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited," reprinted in Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1999) p. 171. Hereafter IPRR.
[100] Jessica Benjamin, *SO* p. 95.
[101] Jessica Benjamin, *SO* p. 79.
[102] Jessica Benjamin, *LSLO* p. 22.
[103] Rawls, TJ p. 454-455.
[104] Rawls, PL p. 139-140.
[105] Rawls, PL p. xlii-xliii.
[106] Rawls, "Reply to Habermas," reprinted in PL, p. 392.
[107] Rawls, PL p. xlvii, see also p. 39ff.
[108] Rawls, PL p. 40.
[109] Rawls, IPRR p. 145-6.
[110] Rawls, PL p. 23.
[111] Rawls, PL pp. 12-13.
[112] Rawls, "Reply to Habermas," p. 374.
[113] Rawls, IPRR p. 145.
[114] Rawls, IPRR p. 145.
[115] Rawls, PL p. 272 (emphasis mine).
[116] Rawls, "Reply to Habermas," p. 386.
[117] Rawls, PL p. 161
[118] Rawls, PL p. 162.
[119] Rawls, PL p. 156.
[120] Jessica Benjamin, *LSLO* p. 47.
[121] Rawls, IPRR pp. 178-179.
[122] Rawls, PL p. xviii-xix.
[123] Leif Wenar, "Political Liberalism: An Internal Critique" *Ethics* 106 (October 1995) 32-62.
[124] Wenar, p. 51
[125] Rawls, IPRR p. 172.
[126] Rawls, IPRR p. 132.
[127] Rawls, IPRR p. 160-161.
[128] Rawls, PL p. 138.
[129] Rawls, IPRR p. 173.

[130] Rawls, PL p. 111.

[131] Benjamin Barber, *The Conquest of Politics: Liberal Theory in a Democratic Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1988)

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

[133] Susan Bickford, *The Dissonance of Democracy: Listening, Conflict, and Citizenship* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1996)

[134] Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (London: Oxford University Press 2000)

[135] Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London: Verso Press 2000)

[136] Winnicott, *The Child, The Family, and the Outside World,* p. 184.

[137] Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1985) p. 119.

CHAPTER 4: HABERMASIAN PSYCHOLOGY AND COMMUNICATIVE ETHICS

Habermas' theory of communicative action, like Rawls' political liberalism, develops a discursive approach to the problems of increasingly pluralized political cultures. Recognizing the pressing need for political coordination, but sensitive to the demands of justice, Habermas endeavors to construct a political theory that combines democratic deliberation with a Kantian deontology. The distinctly political contribution of Habermas' philosophy is that he claims to combine embeddedness and universality in his intersubjective concept of reason. This combination, Habermas argues, resolves one of the longest-standing and intractable debates within contemporary political theory by incorporating elements of both liberalism and communitarianism. "Discourse ethics occupies an intermediate position, sharing with the 'liberals' a deontological understanding of freedom, morality, and law that stems from the Kantian tradition and with the communitarians an intersubjective understanding of individuation as a product of socialization that stems from the Hegelian tradition."[1] In order to respect both our situated identities and our moral duties, Habermas argues, we need a political procedure designed to make room for diversity but grounded in the possibility of consensus—"a universality highly sensitive to differences."[2]

Throughout his writings, Habermas argues for a paradigm shift from rationality understood as *subjectivity* to rationality understood as *intersubjectivity*. Subjective rationality conceives of reason as a faculty exercised by a human *subject* over against a world of *objects* to be manipulated and controlled, whereas *intersubjective* reason takes

into account the mutual dependence between subjects and the reciprocity inherent in everyday speech. "[T]he paradigm of the knowledge of objects has to be replaced by the paradigm of mutual understanding between subjects capable of speech and action."[3] Our interrelatedness and interdependence afford us the opportunity to come to an understanding with one another regarding difficult political issues, rather than trying to manipulate or coerce one another into agreement.

But Habermas' theory is not an unqualified endorsement of democratic deliberation. Intersubjectivity, though discursive, maintains a tie to the moral demands of justice; citizens must take into account the equal claim of all others who may be affected by a norm under consideration. Thus, recouping the inherent potential of mutual understanding requires that individuals consciously surmount subject-centered reason; they must work overcome their egocentric viewpoints in order to recognize each other as equal citizens. In addition, citizens must be able to see some claims, beliefs, and interests as separate from the people who hold them, and similarly to be able to distance themselves from their own beliefs and attitudes. In order to discuss and criticize claims and practices, citizens must be able to take a hypothetical stance toward the norms that shape social interactions. Habermas argues that this kind of rational distancing is made possible by the loosening of traditional and religious strictures and by modernity's adoption of a critical and questioning stance. "Independently of contingent commonalities of social background, political affiliation, cultural heritage,

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traditional forms of life, and so on, competent actors can now take a moral point of view, *a point of view distanced from the controversy ....* "[4]

Out of multiple and often competing points of view, Habermas argues, we can fashion a moral point of view from which conflicts may be judged impartially. "The moral point of view ... requires that maxims and contested interests be generalized, which compels the participants to *transcend* the social and historical context of their particular form of life and particular community and adopt the perspective of *all* those possibly affected."[5] The moral point of view is not philosophically imposed, however, but is communicatively achieved through speech and action. Habermas argues that his discourse ethics reconstructs the Kantian moral point of view without the Kantian metaphysics, because actual dialogue shapes the moral point of view. In his procedure, people propose and consider validity claims, to which each individual holds an inalienable right to say yes or no. Since arguments are considered only on their own merits, apart from the identities of the persons who make them, communicative action "insures that all concerned in principle take part, freely and equally, in a cooperative search for truth, where nothing coerces anyone except the force of the better argument."[6] Habermas argues that his procedure distinguishes him from other deliberative theories such as Rawls' political liberalism or Mead's ideal role-taking, which he argues are "monological" in their construction of a moral point of view. For Habermas, the moral point of view is neither a transcendental vantage point nor a position of ideal knowledge. It is, rather, a commitment we make to each other to see

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things from a perspective other than our own, to engage the views of others whose circumstances differ from ours, and to respect the freedom and autonomy of all equally. Raising and redeeming validity claims, Habermas argues, requires communicative competencies that hold regardless of particular contexts or cultures. The focus of his theory is on norms that can be rationally justified, not values, which he says are too integral to our identities to permit the necessary distancing. Habermas is after a normative validity "cleansed of empirical admixtures;" the validity of a norm means that it *could* be accepted with good reasons by *everyone* involved.[7]

As part of his philosophical and pragmatic programme, Habermas offers a supporting psychology of development. Given Habermas' perceptive critique of subject-centered reason and his emphasis on mutual interrelatedness, we could reasonably expect him to ground his theory on an interpersonal psychology like that found in Winnicott and Benjamin. As we will see, Habermas' account of subject-centered reason bears more than a passing resemblance to the psychological stance of omnipotence; he, like Winnicott and Benjamin, emphasizes that intersubjectivity requires a recognition of the other as a separate subject rather than an object. There are other parallels as well, but Habermas does not draw on interpersonal psychology to support communicative action. Instead he, like Rawls, relies on Kohlberg's theory of moral development and its stage theoretic progression to the idea of a generalized other. Kohlberg's theory allows Habermas to retain his much-desired deontological framework, for the development and exercise of moral consciousness applies

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universally across all cultures. And although Habermas incorporates the work of G.H. Mead to balance Kohlberg's strong deontology, he nonetheless remains strongly wedded to the cognitivist, formalist, and universalist elements of Kohlberg in order to explain how individuals can develop the capacity for attaining the necessary moral point of view "distanced from the controversy."

As we discussed in the last chapter, however, interpersonal psychology differs significantly from Kohlberg's account of moral consciousness. The most important differences are centered on the intrapsychic versus the interpersonal mode of interaction; whether we approach others from within an omnipotent mental stance, with the attendant modes of idealization and repudiation, or whether we engage the other as a separate subject, outside our mental projections and ideas of him. Interpersonal psychology theorizes a space of freedom between individuals that is co-created by them without being dominated by aggressive demands or defensive posturing; Benjamin likens it to a space for "throwing and catching," a third term outside the control of both parties. In this space individuals not only take responsibility for themselves and their views, but also expect to encounter difference and disagreement, even outright conflict and contradiction. Such a space is not permanent, like a stage of development, however; at best, we can expect our relations with others to alternate between omnipotent thinking and intersubjective understanding. Interpersonal conflict, (the process of destruction and survival that Benjamin and Winnicott describe), does not signal failure, but is rather how plurality comes into view, and what matters is not

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resolution as much as the willingness to continue the engagement or struggle. Intersubjective space is not a risk-free space, but it is full of possibility and creativity; it recognizes the incompleteness of both self and other, the partiality and unpredictability that is constitutive of human interaction.

Habermas does not deny that this kind of interaction is important for socialization and identity formation, but he argues that these are different, and separable, from moral development. Identity or ego formation, in his view, involves values and interests that are not reconcilable because they are so closely interwoven with the distinct contexts and cultures in which we grow up. Moral consciousness, on the other hand, can extend outward from a specific context toward the universal goal of justice, which is in principle recognizable by everyone. Principles of right, unlike ideas of the good, claim our obedience regardless of our contingent social circumstances because they embody the essence of humanity. They represent the universal core of human understanding, which alone makes freedom and autonomy possible.

But it is precisely this split between the right and the good that interpersonal psychology leads us to question. Deontology conceives of the "right" as a moral category given prior to conceptions of the good, and independent of them. We envision norms that embody this morality as those capable of securing universal agreement. While there are certain elements of Habermasian theory that seem to mesh nicely with an interpersonal psychology – most notably his emphasis on communication, equality, and intersubjectivity – when we consider his project as a whole we begin to see some

difficulties with his claim to have "overcome" subject-centered reason. We have

learned from Winnicott and Benjamin that the psychic stance of omnipotence is a

common fact of mental life, and that it is continually recharged in moments of facing

others. We all employ omnipotent modes of thought, like splitting or assimilation, in

organizing our world. But when these modes become rigid or congealed, then the

intersubjective relationship is threatened; when we insist on continuing to see others as

we would like rather than as they are, we have evacuated intersubjective space and

retreated to our intrapsychic realm. Intrapsychic thinking treats others as (mental)

objects rather than separate subjects, no matter how salutary or complimentary our

images of them may be. We may fantasize the other as a god or a demon, but neither

treats the other as her own subject, and neither helps to construct an intersubjective

space of freedom.

Once we are reminded of the —again, very common -- tendency toward

omnipotent thinking, we ought to view claims to universalism with a healthy dose of

suspicion. We ought to question whether such claims enhance or impede

intersubjective relations, and to question the nature of respect universalism entails. In

this chapter, I argue that Habermas' commitment to a deontological framework actually

hinders intersubjectivity, and that his theory of communicative action operates as an

assimilative defense against the contingency and unpredictability of politics. Despite

his wish to combine the situated individual with universal reason, by incorporating

Kohlberg's developmental model, Habermas absolves himself of the responsibility of

confronting intersubjectivity in its entirety. Habermas, like Kant before him, privileges

an autonomy that is isolated and detached from others, even though he claims to

recognize our interdependence. His theoretical move beyond subject-centered reason is

therefore open to question, since it is possible to construe communicative action as an

intrapsychic and omnipotent exercise, albeit on a much more sophisticated level.

Intersubjectivity asks us to resist assimilative thinking about others that assumes

that they are just like us. Communicative reason, by contrast, relies heavily on a

specific way of seeing others, on assuming that all speech "seeks" agreement, for

example, or that all reasonable persons are somehow already committed to a

cooperative search for truth and universal justice. Intersubjectivity requires us to

recognize and face the unpredictability and uncontrollability of the other, yet Habermas'

theory relies heavily on bracketing those uncontrollable elements of otherness –what he

calls "contingencies"— in structuring the communicative encounter. And finally,

interpersonal psychology asks us to step up to the conflicts that plurality generates, and

to realize that these conflicts may have a value all their own; they not only show us our

own partiality, but also allow us to test and possibly augment our particular view of the

world. For Habermas, interpersonal conflict is evidence of a divided totality, the

marker of a distorted relation between self and others. Conflict for Habermas does not

create additional space, it signifies the presence of coercion, manipulation, "strategic"

action. This defensiveness, we will see, permeates Habermas' theory and prevents him

from moving beyond an intrapsychic mode of engagement.

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In this chapter I focus on those elements of Habermas' theory that highlight the intrapsychic stance that communicative action retains. First, I discuss the relationship that Habermas posits between language and universal understanding, and contrast it with interpersonal psychology's view of language as *both* a relationship *and* a personal revelation. Interestingly, this account of language is quite similar to Arendt's view of speech and action, central to her conception of the public realm and political freedom. (We will take up Arendt's view in more detail in later chapters.) Second, I engage Habermas on the ideas of a common situation definition and cooperative search for truth, contrasting them again with interpersonal psychology's interpretation of different points of view. Third, I look at Habermas' use of Kohlberg's psychology, arguing that even though (in contrast to Rawls) Habermas incorporates actual dialogue into his discursive situation, he remains allied to an intrapsychic and omnipotent stance toward the other. Finally, I argue that, despite his apparent acceptance of intersubjectivity, Habermas fashions a defensive morality that serves as a protective mechanism, one that shields the Habermasian subject from as much interpersonal contact as possible.

Language Oriented to Universal Understanding

Habermas argues that philosophy as formulated by Descartes through Kant has pursued only one of the possible paths toward a satisfactory concept of reason. This path has led to an understanding of human reason as a *subjective* faculty, in which a self posits itself as a subject in possession of reason over against a world of external objects

that it can manipulate, know, study, and control. Subjective rationality takes as its

paradigm the philosophy of consciousness, wherein the individual is presumed to be

conscious of himself and of the world around him, and through this consciousness able

to represent or master the physical objects of his environment. "With the relationship of

the knowing subject to itself, Descartes had disclosed the realm of conscious

phenomena and equated this self-consciousness in turn with the *ego cogito*. ...Since

Kant, the transcendentally revaluated ego has been conceived simultaneously as a

world-generating and *autonomously acting* subject."[8] A philosophy of consciousness

yields the sovereign, rational subject that we recognize as the main character (and main

target) in some liberal political theory, empirical social science, and analytic

philosophy.

Romantic critics like Schiller and postmodern thinkers like Nietzsche, Foucault,

and Derrida have all advanced nuanced and sophisticated critiques of this autonomous,

rational subject, but Habermas does not want to align himself with this group.

Habermas believes that such critiques have amounted to little more than *abstract*

negations of subject-centered reason, creating a set of unhelpful dichotomies;

reason/emotion, mind/body, unity/heterogeneity, subject/object. Habermas thus tries to

theorize an escape from the endless contradiction between the autonomous subject and

its alter ego(s) posited by Romantic and postmodern thinkers:

> A more viable solution suggests itself ...if we understand the hectic to and fro
> between transcendental and empirical modes of dealing with issues, between
> radical self-reflection and an incomprehensible element that cannot be

reflectively retrieved, between the productivity of a self-generating species and a primordial element prior to all production – that is to say, when we understand the puzzle of all these doublings for what it is: a symptom of exhaustion. The paradigm of the philosophy of consciousness is exhausted. If this is so, the symptoms of exhaustion should dissolve with the transition to the paradigm of mutual understanding.[9]

Habermas wants to convince us that along with instrumental rationality, another kind of rationality is also "unleashed" by the conditions of modernity. The loosening of traditional and religious bonds allows individuals the opportunity to question and discuss beliefs and norms that were not open for discussion before — to "problematize" moral assumptions and test them through debate. This, Habermas argues, is also a kind of rationality, a *discursive* rather than *purposive* rationality that can help individuals forge relationships that are autonomous and self-governing but not coercive. Habermas calls this alternative rationality *communicative rationality*, which "is not the relation of a solitary subject to something in the objective world that can be represented and manipulated, but the intersubjective relation that speaking and acting subjects take up when they come to an understanding with one another about something."[10]

Habermas believes that intersubjective reason can counteract subject-centered reason's apparent need to control the objective world, its drive to dominate both nature and other humans. When we imagine ourselves as self-sufficient, when we treat others as means to our ends, we forget the importance of relationships and the equal claim of others to freedom and autonomy. As socialized beings, we rely upon one another for our very existence, for our psychic if not our physical survival. A philosophy of

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consciousness ignores that interdependence; Habermas wants to revive it in the medium of language. Recognition of the mutual dependence and reciprocity that characterizes communication, Habermas argues, can reduce the subject's need to objectify others.

The idea here is that because we can speak to and understand each other, we inhabit a common universe that binds us together regardless of differences in culture, opinions, or beliefs. Our shared language is our key to mutual understanding and reciprocal recognition, both of which are the ideal relations between equal subjects. Communicative reason "conceives of intersubjective understanding as the telos inscribed into communication in ordinary language, and of the logocentrism of Western thought, heightened by the philosophy of consciousness, as a systematic *foreshortening* and *distortion* of a potential always already operative in the communicative practice of everyday life... ."[11] We speak to be understood, to be recognized by others. Without that telos of common understanding, we are lost to ourselves and each other.

From the standpoint of interpersonal psychology, this account of language is promising. Habermas views language not as representative but as relational, as a bridge between subjects that makes social life possible. For Habermas, the subject-object relationship is the result of a self alienated from its common life of intersubjectivity. "Communicative reason is expressed in a decentered understanding of the world. From this perspective, both cognitive instrumental mastery of an objectivated nature (and society) and narcissistically overinflated autonomy (in the sense of purposively rational self-assertion) are derivative moments that have been rendered independent from the

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communicative structures of the lifeworld, that is, from the intersubjectivity of relationships of mutual understanding and relationships of reciprocal recognition. Subject-centered reason is the *product of division and usurpation*."[12] Interpersonal psychology also emphasizes a "decentered" view of the world, one that rejects "cognitive instrumental mastery" and "narcissistically overinflated autonomy," both hallmarks of an omnipotent mental state. In a decentered understanding of the world, no one view can claim to be the whole truth, and no one person can claim a monopoly on meaning. Though language is unique to each person, it is also the means by which people connect with one another, recognize each other, and understand each other.

But other aspects of Habermas' theory of language are troubling from a psychological perspective. We can start to visualize the difficulty if we ask, in reference to the quotation above, *from what* are we divided? Habermas says we are divided from relationships of mutual understanding and reciprocal recognition, opposing them to his concept of subject-centered reason. In these relationships, however, lurks an undercurrent of wholeness, unity, and consensuality. We can feel its pull whenever he talks about language as "seeking universal understanding."

It is as though language has become an entity separate from the speaking subject entirely, an odd position for a theory claiming to place intersubjective recognition at its center. For example, Habermas writes, "[o]n the one hand, languages impress their own stamp on world-views and forms of life and thus make translations from one language into others more difficult; nonetheless, they are directed like converging rays toward the

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common goal of reaching universal understanding: '...[L]anguage ... contains within the hull of the most individual of expressions the possibility of universal understanding.'" (footnote omitted).[13] Given the plurality of speakers and meanings that inhabit our world, Habermas' claim here seems implausible at best, and vaguely coercive at worst. Indeed, Romand Coles has charged Habermas with importing an "imperative consensuality" into his communicative theory, particularly in his insistence on understanding as the telos of speech.[14]

Language As Transitional and Differentiating

From the psychological perspective, language does more than "seek" understanding or recognition, however. Language not only connects subject to subject, but also helps individuals connect their inner experiences with the outer world and those in it. Language is how we express and work through our feelings and experiences, how we construct our own identities in addition to establishing ties with others. We use language to articulate our own unique place in the world, to voice the view from where we stand, a view necessarily colored by where we have been and where we hope to go. "Language is the heir to the [Winnicottian] transitional space," Benjamin writes, because it "constitutes a space of fluctuating convergence and divergence between inner and outer."[15] Language forms the medium for expressing and receiving, co-creating a relationship that allows for and presumes separateness. As Benjamin further explains,

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"[t]he arena for this catching and throwing is the intermediate in-between space, the dialogue which becomes the 'third term.'"[16]

Language does not only constitute a relationship, however. Interpersonal psychology notes that it also operates as a divisive force precisely because it is so closely interwoven with individual identity. Language draws much of its power, both constructive and destructive, from the person of the speaker. In addition to the cognitive content of what is said, speech embodies and transmits many signals; physical characteristics (sound of the voice, appearance, attitude, etc.) and manners of engagement – (kinetic timing, affect, contours of intensity, choreography of exchange).[17] Benjamin argues that when we speak to each other, we communicate our subjectivity whether we wish to or not, but this is not a kind of communication we should try to ignore or bracket. Subjectivity needs a space to appear for there to be any hope for intersubjective recognition. If we avoid seeing the other, we lose the opportunity to act with her and persist instead in our mental image of who we think she is, or who she could (or ought to) be. "[I]ntersubjectivity refers to the capacity of the mind to directly register the responses of the other. … In the mutual exchange (or denial) of recognition each self is transformed; this transformation is a condition of each subject's expression (or denial) of his or her own capacities."[18] Differentiation contains a necessary tension and contradiction; we try to both recognize the other and assert the self.

Arendt parallels this line of thought with her argument that through speech, men appear to each other as men rather than objects. Only man "can communicate himself and not merely something – thirst or hunger, affection or hostility or fear."[19] Speech for Arendt is both about something in the world and a disclosure of the acting and speaking agent, and both are equally important for social and political life. "This disclosure of 'who' in contradistinction to 'what' somebody is –his qualities, gifts, talents, and shortcomings, which he may display or hide – is implicit in everything somebody says and does."[20] Speech and its disclosive qualities generates the plurality of views necessary to maintain a public sphere, a space for engagement so essential for political freedom.

Habermas wants to retain the connective potentials of speech but to lop off (split) its disclosive and individuating powers. He wants to hear only the thing that is said, without hearing the identity – the who – of the speaker. In order for language to do the work of supporting universal understanding, then, Habermas must divest it of its potentially divisive features. He has to devise ways of minimizing the visibility of the speaker, or at least minimizing the visibility of those "empirical admixtures" such as identity and context that can create grounds for disagreement and conflict. One of the ways he accomplishes this is by directing our attention solely to language's cognitive content. First, Habermas adopts a strangely contractual concept of communication in describing our use of language. "When ego carries out a speech act and alter takes up a position with regard to it, the two parties enter into an interpersonal relationship. The

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latter is structured by the system of reciprocally interlocked perspectives among speakers, hearers, and non-participants who happen to be present at the time."[21] These reciprocally interlocked perspectives allow the speaker to make an offer of validity, to which hearers have an inalienable right to say "yes" or "no," depending upon their views or experiences. Next, Habermas divides speech acts into three different categories. When someone speaks about something, the utterances not only represent states or events in the *objective* world, they produce or support interpersonal relationships in the *social* world, and they can express things about the individual's own *subjective* world. A speaker can offer a validity claim with respect to any or all three of these. "When someone rejects what is offered in an intelligible speech act, he denies the validity of an utterance in at least one of three respects: *truth, rightness,* or *truthfulness.*"[22] Thus it is important that claims be (mentally) sorted into the right logical bucket.

Whether it is possible to separate claims so neatly into these categories, the issue I'd like to focus on here is the intrapsychic operation of this kind of communicative interaction. The kind of division and classification Habermas here employs is a wholly cognitive and controlling exercise. It allows no space for reacting to, or being affected by, the presence of another subject. The expectation that one can cognitively control for the impact of another on the self is a hallmark of the mental position of omnipotence. Interpersonal psychology starts from the observation that the self is neither independent nor self-constituting, and that our interactions with others always

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occasion both thoughts and feelings about self and other. Benjamin expresses this point eloquently as follows:

> Merely by living in this world, we are exposed to others and subjected to unconscious, unwilling identification with others (on television, if not begging on the streets). Whether we will or no, the world exposes us to *different* others who, not only in their mere existence as separate beings reflect our lack of control, but who also threaten to evoke in us what we have repudiated in order to protect the self: weakness, vulnerability, decay ... the excluded abject in either Kristeva's and Butler's sense. It is not truly in our power not to identify; what we cannot bear to own, we can only repudiate.[23]

The cognitive controls that Habermas imposes in order to protect the subject from unwelcome influence are impressive. If a speaker should wander into emotional territory during a discussion, for example, the Habermasian subject can justifiably ignore such speech as irrelevant to a validity claim that ought to be based, say, on truth or rightness. This kind of emotional control is further enhanced by the requirement that only reasons can motivate acceptance of an offer. In fact, both the speech act offer *and* the acceptance or rejection must be based on reasons in order to be communicatively valid. As Habermas explains, "...a speaker can *rationally motivate* a hearer to accept his speech act offer because –on the basis of an internal connection between validity, validity claim, and redemption of a validity claim – he can assume the *warranty* for providing, if necessary, convincing reasons that would stand up to a hearer's criticism of the validity claim."[24]

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The "internal connection" between validity, validity claim, and redemption should pique our interest here. Habermas repeatedly employs this idea of an "internal" connection when he talks about communicative reason; in argumentation, for example, "convictions change *internally* via a process of rationally motivated attitude change."[25] The idea of an internal connection, or internal processes, I think, is an unintentional indication of the intrapsychic nature of communicative reason. The subject has to decide for himself, to will himself; he cannot be motivated or influenced by the external world. Reason seems to operate almost like revelation, a seeing "from within" rather than being influenced by another, which means limiting the impact of other subjects on the self. Consistent with his Kantian aims, Habermas writes that "[t]o heteronomy, that is, dependence on existing norms, is opposed the demand that the agent make the validity rather than the social currency of a norm the determining ground of his action ... [T]o act morally is to act on the basis of *insight*."[26]

Moral insight plays a crucial role in deontological thinking. For Kant, moral duty cannot be grounded in heteronomous impulses or inclinations, which are directed toward some end. Only the subject as a rational being is autonomous, able to participate in an ideal, unconditioned realm wholly independent of social (and psychological) inclinations. The basis of the moral law, therefore, must lie *within the subject's free will,* our ability through reason to determine those ends we give ourselves. From a psychological perspective, however, what originates "inside" the subject is also liable to remain in an intrapsychic register. As for Kant, insight operates along the lines

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of formal logic for Habermas, who insists that the kind of rational agreement he has in mind need not require amiability or fellow-feeling. This is not a Rousseauian concept of a general will. Instead, our cognitive processes respond to the presentation of validity claims in an almost automated fashion. Habermas quotes Wolfgang Klein as follows:

> The unfolding of such an argument is by no means a friendly agreement on some view or other. What is collectively valid can in some cases be pragmatically very unpleasant for a participant; but if it follows from what is valid by valid transitions, then it just is valid—whether he wants it to be or not. One cannot very well defend oneself against thinking. Transitions from what is valid take place in us whether or not we like them. (footnote omitted).[27]

We can note here again the intrapsychic operation of this intersubjective reason, a transition that "takes place in us" whether we like it or not. The assertion, too, that "one cannot defend oneself from thinking" should also give us pause, for it ignores one of the most salient features of mental life, namely that we excel at defending ourselves from doing just that. We rationalize, suppress, project, and ignore what we do not like, regardless of what our "internal" processes tell us. The defense of rationalization is a particularly troublesome feature for a theory premised on mutual understanding, for rationalization allows the subject to deceive not only others but himself as well. Rationalization is "an impulse ... unconsciously unacceptable to our self-image until dressed in the cloak of a more acceptable motive."[28]

Habermas does address the problem of such defense mechanisms in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, but he does not consider them problematic

for his theory. Defenses do operate as "intrapsychic disturbances of communication," but as such they are merely examples of "systematically distorted communication."[29] Defense mechanisms thus are like any other characteristic that stands between us and the ethical totality of understanding, such as desires for domination, coercion, threats, or enticements. Distorted communication, though common, is something from which we should continuously work to free ourselves if we want to pursue autonomy. Thus claims based on such distortions do not deserve to be recognized as valid, regardless of how deserving is the speaker who voices them.

The problem of psychological defenses, and distorted communication more generally, raises a final point concerning Habermas' normative commitment to wholeness. Habermas claims to understand, and accept, that our identities are socially constructed, and that we depend upon each other for recognition—this is the context for his turn to communication in the first place. But when our need for recognition comes into conflict with the cooperative search for the truth, Habermas seems to say that the latter trumps the former. Recognition concerns our situated identities, while validity references universal understanding; this is why Habermas requires that we separate speech that is oriented to validity from speech that is aimed at recognition. This is perhaps his most demanding, and troubling, use of the splitting mechanism in relation to language. Even though "[t]he self of a practical relation-to-self reassures itself about itself through the recognition that its claims receive from an alter ego," he writes, "these identity claims aiming at intersubjective recognition must not be confused with

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the validity claims that the actor raises with his speech acts. For the 'no' with which the addressee rejects a speech-act offer concerns the validity of a particular utterance, not the identity of the speaker."[30]

This is a very tough distinction to make, particularly under the strains of political and moral discourse. First, if I reject the validity of a speech act, on whatever grounds, I also challenge the identity of the speaker, or at least that part of her identity that believes in what she has said. Even though I may clearly say, "I am rejecting your argument, not you," what I have also said is that "I don't believe you can assume the warranty for providing convincing reasons for your claim." Whether intended or not, such a "no" will feel to the speaker like a personal rejection, no matter how many cognitive categories we employ in our defense. One of the goals that Habermas claims for intersubjectivity is that individuals remain committed to the engagement, even if they disagree. But he doesn't stop to consider the impact – emotional, psychological, or otherwise – that his discursive exchange might have on concrete individuals. Possibly the very invocation of a universal reason might be enough to turn some away from the engagement entirely. That Habermas is so dismissive of this possibility is another indication of his intrapsychic stance.

In sum, what started out looking like a genuinely intersubjective encounter has turned out to contain several markers of intrapsychic thinking. Using sophisticated mechanisms of division and classification, Habermas constructs a speech situation that allows his subjects to cognitively control relationship, to select what counts as a valid

claim and to repress the identity of the speaker. To be sure, he does this in the service of a positive goal — universal understanding, mutual respect, and reciprocal recognition. But these ideals for Habermas obscure the differentiation and plurality that political freedom requires; they assert an assimilative view of others instead of taking up an interactive stance. The temptation to do this is, as we will see, understandable in the face of increasing diversity and difference.

The Common Situation Definition and the Cooperative Search for Truth

The undercurrent of unity that we noticed in Habermas' theory of language swells to a tidal pull when we look at how Habermas conceives of relations between subjects beyond their use of language. He starts out with the assertion that "[r]eaching understanding is the inherent telos of human speech. ... Use of language with an orientation to reaching an understanding is the original mode of language use, upon which the ... instrumental use of language [is] parasitic."[31] The instrumental use of reason, for Habermas, occurs whenever subjects speak to each other without the appropriate orientation to commonality; that is, whenever they assert a self-interest as opposed to a common interest. "In communicative action participants are not primarily oriented to their own individual successes; they pursue their individual goals under the conditions that they can harmonize their plans of action on the basis of common situation definitions."[32]

Though seemingly innocuous, the idea of a common situation definition is very problematic. People define situations—perceive something as a problem, say -- based on their situated position in the world, and because each position differs from another, definitions are bound to conflict. Benhabib is particularly good on this point: "[S]ituations, to paraphrase Stanley Cavell, do not come like 'envelopes and golden finches' ready for definition and description, 'nor like apples ripe for grading.'"[33] Moreover, we rarely perceive a situation, especially a political one, as separate from the people that inhabit it, cause it, or are affected by it. Our perceptions are also, finally, colored by our own characteristics and feelings, our experiences and beliefs regarding the elements we see as salient. As Anais Nin once said, "We do not see things as they are, we see them as we are."

Habermas is very much aware of the differences that pervade situation definitions, and aware as well that our different perceptions are grounded in our individual identities. For Habermas, the governing question is, "[h]ow can (at least two) participants in interaction coordinate their plans in such a way that alter is in a position to link his action to ego's without a conflict arising, or at least without the risk that the interaction will be broken off?"[34] Alter and ego can only do this if they can somehow transcend their own individual perspectives, a difficult but important goal for intersubjective understanding. Habermas, however, takes things a step further by requiring ego and alter not only to broaden their own viewpoints but to "engage in a cooperative search for truth." Intersubjective agreement is thus doubly binding: I agree

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both to cooperate in a search for truth, and I agree to recognize that truth even (or

especially) if it conflicts with my own perception of the situation. Habermas calls the

first of these a performative attitude. "Fundamental to the paradigm of mutual

understanding is ... the performative attitude of participants in interaction, who

coordinate their plans for action by coming to an understanding about something in the

world."[35] This performative attitude demonstrates our reasonableness, our willingness

to recognize other points of view as equally valid as our own. It also, however, requires

us implicitly to agree—or at least pretend--that there exists an external truth that is

accessible to all, another incarnation of the unity and wholeness that hovers over

Habermas' communicative theory.

The ideal of mutual agreement, which represents the intrapsychic assumption

that all subjects can be similarly harmonized, also governs Habermas' description of

how we approach acting with one another. He draws an important distinction between

strategic action, or "action oriented to success," and communicative action, or "action

oriented to understanding." In communicative action, "actors are prepared to

harmonize their plans of action through internal means [internal *again*], committing

themselves to pursuing their goals only on the condition of an agreement—one that

already exists or one to be negotiated—about definitions of the situation and

prospective outcomes."[36] Actors who are not interested in pursuing their goals only on

the condition of agreement are "oriented toward success," that is, "they will try to reach

their objectives by influencing their opponent's definition of the situation, and thus his

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decisions or motives, through external means by using weapons or goods, threats or enticements. Such actors treat each other *strategically.*"[37]

Habermas is right, I think, to notice these two different kinds of interaction, but the rigidity of the dichotomy he draws mischaracterizes the connection between them. Again, his language reverts to a theorized totality from which subjects who assert themselves are divided and diminished, somehow lessened. "Under conditions of strategic action, the self of self-determination and of self-realization slips out of intersubjective relations. The strategic actor no longer draws from an intersubjectively shared lifeworld; having himself become worldless, as it were, he stands over and against the objective world and makes decisions solely according to standards of subjective preference. He does not rely therein upon recognition by others. Autonomy is then transformed into freedom of choice, and the individuation of the socialized subject is transformed into the isolation of a liberated subject who possesses himself."[38]

The possibility of strategic action also underlies Habermas' conception of power. In an interesting early article on the concept of power in Arendt, Habermas discusses several theorists' conceptions of power, starting with Max Weber. Weber, he writes, conceives of power as "manipulative power over the means that afford influence on the will of another."[39] Arendt, by contrast, calls this "violence," and insists that it is not a political capacity at all. Habermas also writes that "the single alternative to coercion is the voluntary agreement of participating subjects,"[40] and proceeds to identify Arendt with a commuinicative model of action, one that is aimed at agreement.

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Habermas writes that "Arendt insists that a public sphere as political can engender legitimate power only as long as it gets expressed in the structures of an undistorted communication."[41]

I think Habermas gets Arendt dead wrong here, even though (as I will argue later) her distinction between power and violence is indeed problematic. Arendt does link power with speech and action, but the qualifier "undistorted" appears nowhere in her corpus. By adding in this concept of "undistorted" communication, Habermas imputes to Arendt a philosophical ideal that she takes great pains to exclude. Arendt does not hold with any ideal of universal understanding or common human reason; these ideals, she argues, are used too often in the service of suppressing plurality. It is only through an exercise of will that we can see others as all the same, and she " can only hint here at the fatal consequences for political theory of this equation of freedom with the human capacity to will; it was one of the causes why even today we almost automatically equate power with oppression or, at least, with rule over others."[42] Habermas, as we will see, also equates power with oppression (though he more often uses the term coercion), which is why he insists on the *forceless* force of reason, that operates internally for each subject. This stands in sharp contrast to Arendt's view of power as exercised by many different people: "Power is what keeps the public realm, the potential space of appearing between acting and speaking men, in existence. ... [P]ower springs up between men when they act together and vanishes the moment they disperse."[43]

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But surely strategic and communicative action are not so sharply defined; what then is the point that Habermas is trying to make? Can he really believe that subjects who cannot (or for whatever reason will not) commit themselves to a cooperative search for a common situation definition are "worldless?" Is our choice really between everyone seeing a situation the same way and the private viewpoint of "subjective preference?" This kind of binary thinking should now be familiar to us from our understanding of omnipotence, in which others are divided into opposing categories, with no space for negotiation or differentiation between them. This complementary (opposing) mental structure "organizes the relationship of giver and taker, doer and done to, powerful and powerless. It allows us to reverse roles but not to alter them."[44] No matter what Habermas might claim, this split characterization is not conducive to intersubjectivity, which requires us to recognize others as subjects, and also to assert ourselves. "From the standpoint of intersubjective theory, the ideal "resolution" of the paradox of recognition is that it continue as a *constant tension* between recognizing the other and asserting the self."[45]

Plural Situations, Contested Truths

Rather than setting up an imperative consensuality through common situation definitions, intersubjective psychology allows room for multiple interpretations of a situation that express a plurality of perspectives. Benjamin highlights both the dialogic possibilities and the limits of intersubjectivity; two separate subjects can appreciate both

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"the multiple possibilities of interpretation in any moment" and the "unknowability and uncertainty" inherent in interaction.[46] Moreover, both she and Winnicott understand the temptation to think of one's own view as the whole truth, and to view with suspicion and anxiety those who see things differently. But interpersonal psychology urges us to resist the temptation to split experience, as Habermas does, into commonality on the one side and fragmentation on the other. "There are people," Winnicott writes, "for whom there has to be one kind of real, or the other kind. For this unfortunate man either the world is there and everyone sees the same thing or else everything is imaginative and personal. We can leave these two people arguing."[47] While Habermas does understand that arguing is part of understanding, his insistence on mutual agreement does not respect the importance of both internal and external reality, self and other, and the importance of the space between the two.

A different approach is reflected in Arendt's theory of plurality, in which a multiplicity of perspectives creates and maintains the public sphere. Arendt is comfortable with the paradox that reality does not require us all to see things in the same way, but rather actually needs different perspectives in order to appear. Susan Bickford captures Arendt's position well. "It is not that a multiplicity of perspectives lets us perceive a reality that is beyond perspective or beyond appearance; rather the multiplicity of perspectives on what appears is what *constitutes* reality."[48] Arendt doesn't argue that a world discloses itself more readily to numerous eyes, nor that we see things differently because of some failing, bad motive, or misunderstanding on our

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part. Difference creates externality, even if there is no common situation definition. "If it is true that a thing *is* real ... only if it can show itself and be perceived from all sides, then there must always be a plurality of individuals or peoples and a plurality of standpoints to make reality even possible and to guarantee its continuation. In other words, the world comes into being only if there are perspectives; it exists as the order of worldly things only if it is viewed, now this way, now that, at any given time."[49]

We will go into more detail on Arendt's political theory in contrast to Habermas' in the next chapter, but for now the issue of a plurality of situation definitions raises one other concern. Arendt doesn't expend much energy in search of consensus or agreement, because she recognizes that plurality will necessarily engender conflict. However, she does raise the possibility of understanding, even across multiple points of view, when she writes about the importance of representative thinking. Thinking from the perspective of another, "training the imagination to go visiting," is an essential capacity for politics because it helps us get outside our own private perspectives and develop an "enlarged mentality." But while Arendt encourages such thinking in order to increase our understanding of one another, she does not then go on to promise that such understanding will generate agreement, much less universal agreement. Understanding another's position and agreeing with it are two different things, and Arendt argues passionately for the importance of a space for disagreement in order to protect plurality and resist totalitarian impulses.

Differentiating understanding from agreement, however, is actually one important distinction that Habermas doesn't make. He elides the two without much discussion, assuming that knowledge and agreement can coincide. "Reaching understanding is considered to be a process of reaching agreement among speaking and acting subjects."[50] Here again we feel the insistent pull of the transparent ideal; if we can only know the other well enough, we can all agree on the correct answers. The transition occurs without any interpersonal influence whatsoever, just like the "internal" connection between language and validity. If I understand you, I must agree with you. If I don't agree with you, then something must be blocking our mutual understanding, dividing us from the "common life of intersubjectivity."

For Habermas, more often than not what blocks mutual understanding is self-assertion or strategic action, attempting to manipulate other actors or situations. "Everyday communication makes possible a kind of understanding that is based on claims to validity and thus furnishes the only real alternative to exerting influence on one another in more or less coercive ways."[51] But as the discussion above reveals, when the speech "relationship" can consist only of validity claims, the mere appearance of subjectivity makes any attempt at influence seem coercive. This is why Habermas insists on what he calls the "forceless force of reason;" reasons have to motivate us *by themselves*, separate from the person or speaker who offers them. The "peculiarly constraint-free force of the better argument"[52] just makes agreement happen, working in us almost invisibly, as long as we are appropriately oriented to one another. Through an

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inclusive and noncoercive rational discourse among free and equal participants, *"there*

emerges an ideally extended we-perspective from which all can test in common whether

they wish to make a controversial norm the basis of their shared practice ... ."[53]

Despite the fact that this ideally extended perspective just emerges, not just any

agreement satisfies Habermas' conditions for intersubjective reason. The absence of

coercion is very important to the procedure, because only if there is zero coercion can

we say that the agreement has been entered into by free and equal participants.

"...[C]oming to an understanding requires the rider *uncoerced,* because the expression

is meant to be used here as a normative concept. From the perspective of the

participants, coming to an understanding is not an empirical event that causes de facto

agreement; it is a process of mutually convincing one another in which the actions of

participants are coordinated on the basis of motivation by reasons. 'Coming to an

understanding' refers to communication aimed at achieving a valid agreement."[54] If

validity is merely social fact without the "internal" connection to universal reason, we

are left with an unhappy situation where it is "arbitrary whether this or that comes to be

valid for an individual or a collective; some believe this, others that, and what wins out

depends on contingencies, on greater rhetorical skill or on physical force. This leads to

consequences that are scarcely satisfying. One would then have to accept the fact that

for one individual 'love your neighbor as yourself' is valid, while for another it is 'slay

your neighbor if he gives you trouble.' ..." (fn omitted).[55]

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Satisfying or not, it is probably a more accurate picture of reality to note that some love their neighbors and some try to slay them than to posit a rational, universal acceptance of social norms. This is the reality that political theory faces. While this fact may be worrisome, Habermas' solution is not appropriate to the realm of human interaction. The assimilative nature of communicative action is overwhelming, and cannot be rendered less assimilative by the normative appeal of his ideal. No matter how noble, how desirable, how worthy the proffered ideal of universal agreement, we must realize that it contains as well a subjugative impulse, a desire to see all others as the same as oneself, whether they appear so or not. Pretending all people possess a universal desire for cooperation, when they plainly empirically exhibit no such desire, is not just harmlessly utopian. It is also disrespectful of the concrete individuals who make up our shared world. Habermas would like to divide individuals up into neat analytic categories; "reasonable" people possess a capacity for respecting all as free and equal, others do not. Benjamin urges us to see that this kind of thinking does not help us advance mutual respect. "To include without assimilating or reducing requires us to think beyond the binary alternatives of self-enclosed identity and fragmented dispersal to a notion of multiplicity, a multiplicity that can *tolerate* the different other."[56]

Unfortunately, the undercurrent of assimilation is not confined to Habermas' political theory. When we turn to his moral psychology, and his justifications for it, we are confronted again with the intrapsychic stance of omnipotence, one that reduces the visibility of other subjects and advances a universal goal of transparent understanding.

In addition, when we explore Habermas' developmental psychology we note the absence of one of the most important elements of intersubjectivity. Benjamin and Winnicott both emphasize that moving beyond an omnipotent stance requires interpersonal conflict; it requires a process of destruction and survival between two subjects in order for one to realize the externality of the other. Habermas' moral psychology however includes no recognition of conflict whatsoever, which in itself should give us pause. As we will see, this absence of conflict raises questions concerning Habermas' claim to respect intersubjectivity.

Habermas and Moral Psychology

Habermas, like Rawls, adopts Kohlberg's theory of moral development in support of his philosophy.[57] Kohlberg is especially attractive to Habermas because both Kohlberg and Kant focus on three features of specifically moral theory: cognitivism, universalism, and formalism.[58] These three features help Habermas to distinguish between a moral consciousness that can be rationally oriented to universal justice, and identity or ego development, which is particular to each individual or culture. For our purposes here, however, it is important to note how these three features affect interpersonal interaction. All three rely on the cognitive mechanism of splitting, which we know is an intrapsychic exercise. While this exercise is not per se problematic, we can notice how Habermas uses it to defend against the unwanted influence of difference and otherness in his theory of communicative action.

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The *cognitivist* element specifies that moral issues can be decided on the basis of *reasons*; this is what it means for a moral judgment to have cognitive content. As Habermas explains, moral judgments "represent more than expressions of the contingent emotions, preferences, and decisions of a speaker or actor."[59] The *universalist* element "rejects the basic assumptions of ethical relativism, which holds that the validity of moral judgments is measured solely by the standards of rationality or value proper to a specific culture or form of life."[60] By contrast, Habermas' discourse ethic proposes that a valid norm garners the free acceptance of all those potentially affected by its general observance. "[A]nyone who takes part in argumentation of any sort is in principle able to reach the same judgments on the acceptability of norms of action."[61] Finally, the *formalist* element operates to exclude all ethical considerations except considerations of justice, which Habermas argues are alone resolvable by rational argument. The "concrete value orientations with which particular biographies or forms of life are permeated" are eliminated from consideration as "nongeneralizable," that is, not applicable to all concerned. "By defining the sphere of normative validity of action norms, discourse ethics sets the domain of moral validity off from the domain of cultural value *contents*. Unless one operates with a strictly deontological notion of normative rightness or justice such as this, one cannot isolate those questions accessible to rational decision from the mass of practical issues."[62]

These three characteristics of Kohlberg's theory are reflected throughout his discussions of how a child progresses toward moral maturity. In particular, Kohlberg's

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theory emphasizes a cognitive ability to distance oneself from one's beliefs, to question those norms that have in the past perhaps gone unquestioned, and to discover those norms that might be acceptable to all concerned. This shift in point of view thus moves, inexorably, from the intimate relationship of the child's first concrete reference persons (parents, siblings, peers) to wider social arrangements and finally to all of humanity. In describing the development of the child's capacity for moral judgment, Kohlberg elaborates his (now familiar) six stages of moral consciousness.

Level A is what Kohlberg calls the preconventional level; it contains Stage 1 (punishment and obedience) and Stage 2 (individual instrumental action and exchange). In Stage 1 children believe that "what is right" is whatever the authority figure commands, in order to avoid punishment. In Stage 2, "what is right" is acting to meet one's own interests and letting others do the same, as long as exchanges are relatively fair or equal. The motivation for doing what is right at this stage is recognition that others have interests too, alongside the desire to avoid punishment.

Level B, the conventional level, moves beyond self-interest towards interpersonal relationships. Stage 3, according to Kohlberg, is a stage of conformity and mutual interpersonal expectations; "right" is defined as playing a good role, "being concerned about the other people and their feelings, keeping loyalty and trust with partners, and being motivated to follow rules and expectations."[63] This motivation comes in part from recognition of the familiar Golden Rule; if one puts oneself in another's place, one can see what the correct action is based on what one would or would not want done to oneself.

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Stage 4 is the point at which the child becomes conscious of a social system beyond his own peer group or family that needs his consent; the right is thus fulfilling duties and contributing to the wider society, group or institution.

Level C, the postconventional and principled level, represents the apex of moral development. At this level, Kohlberg maintains, the child is able to move beyond even the specific frame of a particular culture or society and envision a set of universal moral principles. In Stage 5, the child is aware that most values and rules are relative to one's group, but that there is a set of nonrelative values and rights such as life and liberty that must be upheld in any society. The motivation, usually, is the utilitarian calculus of the greatest good for the greatest number, except for the nonrelative values that must be upheld regardless of majority opinion. Stage 6 "assumes guidance by universal ethical principles that all humanity should follow ... principles of justice, the equality of human rights and respect for the dignity of human beings as individuals."[64] The motivation, now disassociated from specific reference persons, is that, "as a rational person, one has seen the validity of principles and has become committed to them."[65]

Over twenty years ago, Carol Gilligan famously critiqued Kohlberg's methodology and conclusions, asserting that Kohlberg's theory privileged the male perspective of autonomy over a "female" consciousness of connectivity and interdependence.[66] Seyla Benhabib, in her book *Situating The Self,* offers a lucid and concise review of that debate, (which I will not go over again here) and adds her own critical contribution to it.[67] Benhabib, like Gilligan, takes issue with Kohlberg's construction of the generalized other,

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arguing that as a vision of the self, it "is incompatible with the very criteria of reversibility and universalizability advocated by defenders of universalism."[68] Benhabib contrasts the standpoint of the generalized other, where the relation is governed by formal equality and reciprocity, to the standpoint of the concrete other, where the relation between subjects is governed by equity and complementary reciprocity. "In treating you [as a concrete other], I confirm not only your *humanity* but your human *individuality*."[69] Benhabib then goes on to critique Kohlberg's and Habermas' splitting questions of justice from questions of the good life, arguing that "obligations and relations of care are genuinely moral ones, belonging to the center and not at the margins of morality."[70] Her position, then, in opposing the split is to try to include questions of the good within a Habermasian framework for universal discourse. "Questions of care are moral issues and can also be dealt with from within a universalist standpoint."[71]

Benhabib thus recognizes the split between the right and the good but "resolves" it in favor of universalism. She defines universalism as (1) a commitment to the equal worth and dignity of every human being in virtue of his or her humanity, and (2) recognition of the other as a moral individual by taking into account his or her needs, interests, and points of view.[72] Her solution of combining respect for both the generalized and the concrete other, therefore, mirrors Habermas' claim to combine situated individuals with a universal point of view. Benhabib, like Habermas, continues to operate in an intrapsychic framework, however. What Benhabib fails to consider is the tension between the two points of view, and the assimilative stance created by her assumption that the concrete other

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can be unproblematically "recognized." Benhabib pictures an autonomous individual with fluid ego boundaries, able to encompass the other without being threatened by her, able to engage in practical discourse without disruption or negation. We can ask, however, whether Benhabib's construction really recognizes otherness if it does not problematize conflict and disagreement. Benjamin notes this problem as well. "Benhabib's formulation seems to avoid the well-known objection, ... that recognition itself can go over the edge into knowledge as mastery (Hegelian synthesis). To articulate the conditions for recognizing the other, we must understand the deepest obstacles within the self, and acknowledge that this ideal of autonomous, knowing reason has served to obscure those dynamics, if not, indeed, to foster them."[73]

Intersubjective psychology suggests, then, that the "solution" of reconciliation, either within an encompassing universalism or an "overcoming" of subject-centered reason, is a false one, unlikely to support mutual respect between different subjects. The important elements for such recognition are an acknowledgment of partiality in the self, and awareness of contestation – the negative moment – as necessary for allowing the subject to appear to us outside our mental projections of him. As Benjamin explains, "omnipotence is and has always been a central problem for the self, disavowed rather than worked through by its position as rational subject. In fact, if the other were not a problem for the subject, the subject would again be absolute – either absolutely separate or absolutely assimilating the other. Therefore, the negativity that the other sets up for the self has its own possibilities, a productive irritation, heretofore insufficiently explored."[74]

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Kohlberg's emphasis on moral consciousness, able to encompass and reconcile all conflicts from the moral point of view, has no space for negativity or productive irritation. First, as noted above, moral consciousness proceeds from stage to stage without any mention of conflict or disagreement, much less separation and individuation. Between Levels A and B, the child simply moves "beyond" self-interest to interpersonal relationships, there is no struggle or dissonance between the two. Neither Kohlberg nor Habermas seems to think that individuation or separation from parental authority needs explication as part of development; both assume that, like most disagreements, this one too can be cognitively controlled. Second, and just as important, in the theory of moral consciousness no other parental figure actually appears as her own subject to the child, one who frustrates or angers him or contests his separation and individuation. Indeed, no other subject appears to challenge the child at all, at any stage of moral development. This story is one that takes place almost exclusively on an intrapsychic level, concerned only with how the child cognitively manages his widening circle of relations.

The lack of another subject in Kohlberg's moral psychology is both troubling and telling. If interpersonal theory is correct, we can only move beyond an omnipotent stance by engaging in the process of destruction and survival, by asserting our will against another who, by surviving, appears in an external and intersubjective space between us. This process is never completed "once and for all," but is cyclical and recurrent, even under the best of circumstances. If we interact with others based only

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on our internal images of them, we do not engage them as other subjects but instead continue to treat them as our mental objects. Intersubjective recognition depends on a space for difference to appear and for conflict to occur, what Benjamin calls "the plurality that strains subjectivity."

Put simply, Kohlberg's theory of moral consciousness begins and ends in the intrapsychic register. Only briefly, in Stages 3 and 4, are others a part of the child's mental landscape, when he notices that they have interests too, and that working around them can be part of a "fair" situation. But by Stages 5 and 6, the subject (child) is again alone in his thinking about his relationships to others. He encounters no resistance, he need not recognize others as equal subjects; he is free to manipulate them imaginatively as he might wish. As a rational person, he "sees" the validity of universal norms. He can persist in his view that all are like himself, because no external subject appears to challenge that internal perception. Oddly enough, Stage 6 is eerily like Stage 1, only the authority that demands submission is no longer embodied in a parent, but in a suprahuman reason exercised via the moral point of view. The intrapsychic experience of the very young child returns again in the omnipotent stance of universal reason.

The intrapsychic stance from developmental psychology persists once Habermas incorporates moral consciousness into his broader theory. We can recall that Habermas wants individuals to agree to coordinate their actions on the basis of a common situation definition. When definitions conflict, he argues, universal agreement is rationally accessible as long as we engage each other with the appropriate motivation

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and refrain from strategic action. But his description of how conflicts are reconciled reveals its intrapsychic process, for it takes place entirely under the control of the rational subject's mind, without reference to how other views impact the self. Habermas' language here is key. "The interpretive task consists in incorporating the others' interpretation of the situation into one's own in such a way that divergent situation definitions can be brought to coincide sufficiently."[75] Can be brought to coincide *by whom*? By the autonomous subject of moral consciousness, unimpeded by alterity or other recalcitrant subjectivities. Indeed, the fully developed moral consciousness can reverse and alter perspectives (imaginatively, at least) at will, for "[o]nly when A in his interaction with B adopts the attitude of an impartial member of their social group toward them both can he become aware of the *interchangeability* of his and B's positions."[76]

Despite this language, Habermas denies that the moral point of view is the same as a neutral observer. A neutral standpoint will not serve, Habermas claims, because such an ideal observer "operates as an isolated subject, collecting and assessing his information in the light of his own individual understanding of the world and of himself."[77] This statement offers hope that perhaps Habermas might move in a more intersubjective direction, taking into account the subjectivity of others and the importance of plurality. He even argues at one point that "[i]mpartiality of judgment, by contrast, is essentially dependent on whether the conflicting needs and interests of *all*

participants are given their due and can be taken into consideration from the viewpoint of the participants *themselves.*"[78]

Such hope proves to be short-lived, however. First, in the communicative exercise participants not only listen to each others' offered reasons, they try to "adopt the perspective of all those possibly affected." This cannot but be an imaginative exercise, virtually guaranteeing that participants will only be able to transpose their own world views onto imagined others. Second, the validity of a norm is such that it "could be accepted with good reasons by everyone involved." I have always found this language puzzling, for it seems to me that saying that something *could* be accepted is a bit of a dodge, an assertion of one's personal opinion based on one's own reasons. To a participant who says, "I don't accept your reasons, because of my reasons A, B and C," the Habermasian subject says, "but you *could*, if you believed X or Y or Z ... ." Such a response does not get us very far in the direction of mutual recognition or understanding, if what we mean by these is clarification of concrete positions.

As it turns out, however, this is not what Habermas means by reciprocal recognition and mutual understanding at all. Giving conflicting needs and interests their due does not mean giving concrete subjects the space to express those interests as they are and work through the resulting conflicts. For one thing, de facto agreement is insufficient for valid agreement; a valid agreement can only issue from the practical discourse based on exchange and critique of validity claims, sufficiently categorized as true, right, or sincere. Habermas expects conflicting needs and interests, once viewed

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impartially, to re-form the original mode of intersubjectively shared agreement. The "viewpoint of the participants themselves" that Habermas mentions is processed and harmonized through the cognitive mechanisms of the rational subject. Multiple viewpoints are necessary not because they help establish a space for plurality and externality, but because they allow the rational subject to claim a privileged position from which to judge. The disadvantage of a neutral observer perspective is that "it isolates him in a monological fashion from the interpretive horizons of the participants and denies him hermeneutic access to an intersubjectively shared moral world that reveals itself only *from within*."[79] If the moral world only reveals itself from within, and recognition of the external other as a subject is not required, then the rational subject is free to choose which interpretive horizons conform to his own and which do not. For no matter how much part of Habermas wants to incorporate multiplicity, he cannot in the end face the unpredictability and irrationality such multiplicity brings with it. Habermas' communicative subject has to imagine in the other motivations that are not there, commitments that are like his own, and cognitive processes that obscure otherness. In this way, like Arendt's homo faber, he can remain master of his doings from beginning to end, treating others as material from which to fashion an ideal consensus.

The Other of Reason and Defenses Against It

In the last part of this chapter, I want to consider whether Habermas' construction of the moral point of view operates as a defense against the anxiety and unpredictability of otherness.   Consider the modern problematic from which Habermas begins—his situation definition, if you will. "The universalism of equal respect for all and of solidarity with everything that bears the mark of humanity is first put to the test by radical freedom in the choice of individual life histories and particular forms of life."[80]   Note here the now familiar trope of connection and unity in his assertion of universality and solidarity, now "put to the test" (read: under threat?) by modernity.   As diversity and plurality increase, so too does the potential for misunderstanding and disagreement. Communication across different values and cultures becomes more and more difficult. Thomas McCarthy explains that "[a]s the rationalization of the lifeworld progresses, so does the risk of disagreement among the parties to interaction. The less the need for mutual understanding is covered in advance by traditions that pre-decide which validity claims are to be recognized, the greater the burden placed on actors themselves to achieve common definitions of situations, and the greater the danger of deficits or failures in coordination." [81]

One of the dangers of deficits in coordination seems to be a resurgence of a dangerous kind of anti-rationality, an aestheticism found in anti-Enlightenment Romantic thought, Habermas argues that Romantic thinkers often mischaracterize reason as self-serving and coercive in order to posit some other, creative power that transcends human experience. It seems that there are two faces to this "other of reason"

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for Habermas. The first is those human experiences that resist rational inquiry or linguistification. "Since early Romanticism, limit experiences of an aesthetic and mystical kind have always been claimed for the purpose of a rapturous transcendence of the subject. The mystic is blinded by the light of the absolute and closes his eyes; aesthetic ecstasy finds expression in the stunning and dizzying effects of (the illuminating) shock. In both cases, the source of the experience of being shaken up evades any specification. ... In this constellation, which persists from Nietzsche to Heidegger and Foucault, there arises a readiness for excitement without any proper object..."[82] What bothers Habermas about these limit experiences is not the ecstasy but the inexpressibility; he dislikes the idea of impulses that cannot be transformed into sentences. This objection forms the core of his critique of early Frankfurt school theorists. " ...Horkheimer and Adorno nominate a capacity, *mimesis*, about which they can speak only as they would about a piece of uncomprehended nature. They characterize the mimetic capacity, in which an instrumentalized nature makes its speechless accusation, as an 'impulse' (fn omitted)."[83] Speechless accusations, however, cannot do the work necessary for mutual understanding, for "[a] philosophy that withdraws behind the lines of discursive thought to the 'mindfulness of nature' pays for the wakening powers it exercises by renouncing the goal of theoretical knowledge. ...philosophy intentionally retrogresses to gesticulation."[84]

From the standpoint of intersubjective psychology, Habermas' response is instructive. As we have seen, speech and communication presuppose mutual

understanding for Habermas; they allow for a mutuality and transparency that can guide us in the direction of universal agreement. Gesticulation, by contrast, is not transparent. Its meaning is unclear, and it is not so easily absorbed into a cognitive framework oriented to validity claims. Nonetheless, gesticulation, along with other modes of personal appearance, matters a great deal to intersubjective recognition. The nonverbal cues in interaction form an important part of how others appear to us, and we to them. More importantly, our gestures often express needs of which we are unable to speak— needs for comfort, say, or reassurance. The experience of pain, so singularly private, can sometimes only be communicated by means other than speech, but we have to be attentive enough to nonverbal expression to "hear" these experiences.

The other face of anti-reason is the dark side of humanity, in which men act out their lupine tendencies. In *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas*, Tracy Strong and Frank Andreas Sposito pinpoint Habermas' resistance to the unspeakable, the incommunicable, or the incomprehensible, which comes to the surface in his discussion of this "other" of reason. "When Habermas examines various 'postmodernists,' most especially in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, his rhetorical mode becomes quite distinctive. There is a touch of disdain, an intimation of naivete, as if his subjects did not know that they were playing with something dangerous. The presumption is that there is a dark violence to humankind which these writers –Nietzsche, Bataille, Heidegger, Derrida – are *apprentis sorciers*."[85]

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When we look at how Habermas describes the dark side of unreason -- "the vital forces of a split-off and repressed subjective nature, it is the sorts of phenomena rediscovered by Romanticism – dreams, fantasies, madness, orgiastic excitement, ecstasy ... "[86] –what springs to mind is the Freudian conception of the id. Freud conceived of the id also as a dark and inaccessible realm, the "cauldron of seething excitations" that is not subject to the rules of logic or principles of noncontradiction. Of course Habermas would want to reject a theory that takes this id-like stance as its motivating force, because this view leaves little hope for discussion, rational or otherwise, to guide our politics. But in defense against this, Habermas moves to repress the existence of these impulses entirely in his theory of communicative action.

Humans do desire pleasure and satisfaction, and not just orgiastic ecstasy, but agency, recognition, power, and even moments of omnipotence. In this Freud was absolutely correct; we often derive a great deal of pleasure from exercising domination over others. Intersubjective psychology alerts us to these desires and encourages us to acknowledge them, not necessarily so that they may have free reign but so that we can structure our interactions accordingly, in hopes of minimizing destruction and damage. Omnipotence may be a common fact of experience, but it can be damaging in political interaction when it appears as domination. That does not mean there aren't other spaces for exercising will or force, just that politics is not one of them.

With the sole exception of a desire for justice, other human desires are not a part of our cognitive framework. In autonomous moral subjects, such distortions as

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impulse and desire can be bracketed and kept away from the operations of the intellect,
in much the same way as the right can be bracketed from the good. This is the most
frustrating aspect of Habermas, the point at which his assimilative thinking tips over
into idealized fantasy. Real people, real citizens, do not have space to appear in
communicative action, because their appearance occasions difficult impulses and
emotions. Real subjects manipulate and influence each other, they seek to dominate
one another, they fight and argue and wound each other. I think that it is for this reason
that Habermas does as much as he can to minimize the impact of intersubjectivity.

Freud once observed that "[w]e are threatened with suffering from three directions:
from our own body, which is doomed to decay and dissolution and which cannot even do
without pain and anxiety as warning signals; from the external world, which may rage
against us with overwhelming and merciless forces of destruction; and finally from our
relations to other men. The suffering which comes from this last source is perhaps more
painful to us than any other."[87] Intersubjectivity as a fact of social existence subjects us to
otherness, to possible influence, harm, manipulation, and coercion. Facing each other in
political discussion, moreover, greatly heightens this fear of manipulation, and so we are
motivated to find ways to protect ourselves. We have already discussed Habermas' use of
the Kohlbergian moral point of view as a "coordinative function," wherein the individual
mentally reconciles other views with his own in order to judge "impartially." But
Habermas employs another defense against otherness as well, when he incorporates the
theories of R. Selman on subjective perspective-taking, reciprocal perspective-taking, and

mutual perspective-taking.[88] In this conception, Habermas hopes to augment Mead's more

monological approach to ideal role taking by theorizing the capacity to understand others.

What is striking about it, however, is the emphasis on deceit, the way this theory begins

with an expectation of manipulation, and ends with an intrapsychic defense to it.

Level 1, which covers a child from about ages 5 to 9, is characterized by the child's

awareness of self, of others, and of the difference between the two. Distinguishing self from

other means knowing that the subjective perspectives of self and other may be different.

The child is also able to tell the difference between someone's physical characteristics and

their psychological state, and becomes aware that the exterior visage does not always

accurately reflect the interior. As a result, a child at this early age knows that each person

"has a unique subjective covert psychological life."[89]

Level 2, which covers about ages 7 to 12, brings advances in a child's ability to step

mentally outside himself or herself and take a self-reflective perspective on his or her own

thoughts. The child realizes that others can do so as well, and that people may have a

"dual, layered social orientation: visible appearance, possibly put on for show, and the *truer*

hidden reality."[90] Habermas claims that a child's concept of interpersonal relations is now

reciprocal; the child can put himself in another's shoes and realizes the other will do the

same. But knowing that there is an outer appearance/inner reality distinction "means selves

can deceive others as to their inner states, which places accuracy limits on taking another's

inner perspective. In essence, the two-way reciprocity of this level has the practical result

of détente, wherein both parties are satisfied, but in relative isolation: two single individuals

seeing self and other, but not the relationship system between them."[91]

Level 3, which is usually not attained until about ages 10 to 15, represents the final

stage of cognitive development regarding perspective taking. Here the child (now a young

adolescent) moves beyond reciprocity into a *generalized* and *coordinating* point of view.

> The critical conceptual advance is toward the ability to take a true third-person
> perspective, to step outside not only one's own immediate perspective, but outside the self
> as a system a [sic] totality. There are generated notions of what we might call an
> "observing ego," such that adolescents do (and perceive other persons to) simultaneously
> see themselves as both actors and objects, simultaneously acting and reflecting upon the
> effects of action on themselves, reflecting upon the self's interaction with the self.
> ... The third-person perspective permits more than the taking of another's
> perspective on the self; the truly third-person perspective on relations which is
> characteristic of Level 3 *simultaneously* includes and coordinates the perspectives of self
> and other(s), and thus the system or situation and all parties are seen from the third-person
> or generalized other perspective. ... [T]he third-person perspective of this level allows the
> adolescent to abstractly step outside an interpersonal interaction and simultaneously and
> mutually coordinate and consider the perspectives and their interactions of self and
> other(s).[92]

Habermas calls moral judgments at Level 3 judgments at the postconventional

level. As with Rawls' morality of principles, in postconventional reasoning "the child's

views of social bonds, authority, and loyalty become dissociated from specific reference

persons and contexts. They are transformed into the normative concepts of moral

obligation, the legitimacy of rules, the normative validity of authoritative commands,

and so on."[93] The dissociation of principles from persons is central to the construction of

Habermas' discourse procedure, which requires "complete *reversibility* of perspectives

from which participants produce their arguments; *universality*, understood as the

inclusion of all concerned; and the *reciprocity* of equal recognition of the claims of each participant by all others."[94]

This theory of perspective-taking allows Habermas to sidestep intersubjectivity, understood as co-created mutuality, completely. The layered social orientation makes transparency impossible; we can never *really* know what the other is thinking, not even based on what she says. This makes trust and mutuality particularly difficult, for if we interact with others based on their own representations, they may be wrong about their own motivations and a threat to our world view. Rather than risk intersubjective injury, then, Habermas removes to the third person perspective, one that can coordinate actions based on principles rather than relying on other persons. The advantage of this perspective, of course, is that it can be thought through intrapsychically.

We can detect Habermas' discomfort with interdependence in his discussions of identity, where our intersubjectivity seems unfortunate rather than empowering. A web of interactions is necessary to support our psychic existence, our feelings of self-in-the-world; without these relationships, we become disoriented, fragmented, and diminished. "Unless the subject externalizes himself by participating in interpersonal relations through language, he is unable to form that inner center that is his personal identity. This explains the almost constitutional insecurity and chronic fragility of personal identity—an insecurity that is antecedent to cruder threats to the integrity of life and limb."[95] Our interdependence is not necessarily a form of strength, but rather a cause for concern, because it renders us uniquely vulnerable to injury from other people.

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"Creatures that are individuated only through socialization are vulnerable and morally in need of considerateness. ...[T]he identity of the individual and that of the collective are interdependent; they form and maintain themselves together. ...The more the subject becomes individuated, the more he becomes entangled in a densely woven fabric of mutual recognition, that is, of reciprocal exposedness and vulnerability."[96]

To protect against these vulnerabilities, Habermas seeks a remedy, and he finds it in his reconstruction of deontological morality. "The ego is ... rendered vulnerable by the social interactions through which it is formed – by the dependencies in which it becomes implicated and the contingencies to which it is exposed. Morality serves to counterbalance this susceptibility implicit in the very process of socialization."[97] Instead of pre-determined religious or moral norms establishing understanding, Habermas argues, we can turn instead to communicative rationality. When we remember Freud's view of religion also as a palliative for the human condition, Habermas' language here is quite striking:

> I shall be guided by the hypothesis that the socially integrative and expressive
> functions that were at first fulfilled by ritual practice pass over to
> communicative action; the authority of the holy is gradually replaced by the
> authority of an achieved consensus. ... The aura of rapture and terror that
> emanates from the sacred, the *spellbinding* power of the holy, is sublimated into
> the *binding/bonding* force of criticizable validity claims and at the same time
> turned into an everyday occurrence.[98]

From an interpersonal perspective, then, morality operates as a holding function, a defense against vulnerability and weakness. Habermas' morality, like the maternal

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figure in Winnicott, holds together our fragmented sense of self and filters the dangerous elements out of our world for us. It also allows us to experience a feeling of omnipotence, by supporting the illusion of a transparency and equality across all others that does not exist in reality. From this perspective, there is no space between self and other; all perspectives are reversible, universal, interchangeable. Autonomy in this understanding does not occur amidst difference and plurality, but in an imagined unity;

"[o]nly a will that is open to determination by what all could will in common, and thus by moral insight, is autonomous ... From the standpoint of the theory of intersubjectivity, autonomy does not signify the discretionary power of a subject who disposes of himself as his own property but the independence of a person made possible by relations of reciprocal recognition that can exist only in conjunction with the correlative independence of the other."[99] Habermasian morality—embodied in the moral point of view "cleansed of empirical admixtures" – allows us to imagine we can recognize and yet remain separate from the other. Hence the "correlative independence" of self and other above.

Morality, like mother, is also reliable, predictable, consistent. It is both outside of us and inside of us, indeed, it *is* us. As such, and in order to perform its protective function, it needs to be undisturbed by particularity or difference, and unchallenged by discord or conflict. We need to be able to decide how to see others, which is consistent with the Habermasian conception of mutual respect. First, mutual respect has to be "perfectly symmetrical" in order to remain "commensurate with our intuitive

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understanding of noninstrumental relations between autonomously acting persons."[100]

Unlike our ordinary understanding of respect, based on characteristics or qualities of

another,

> respect for a person *as* a person admits of no gradations; we respect a
> person as such not on account of some outstanding characteristic or
> other. We respect a person as such on account of his capacity to act
> autonomously, that is, to orient his actions to normative validity claims;
> we respect him solely on account of the accomplishment or quality that
> makes him a person. One cannot possess this constitutive capacity to a
> greater or lesser degree; it is definitive of what it means to be a person as
> such. We do not respect someone as a person because he impresses us or
> because he is worthy of esteem in some way or other – or even because
> he is a good person or lives a good life – but because he is, and by his
> conduct shows himself to be, fundamentally capable of being a 'member
> of a community," that is, capable of observing norms of communal life
> *as such*.[101]

Respecting others for Habermas means respecting a capacity to act

autonomously; that is the quality that *makes him a person*. Acting autonomously, in

turn, means acting oriented to validity claims one has chosen based on rational insight,

and being a member of a community. But it is important to note that the community

Habermas has in mind here is not historical but ideal, the "universal communication

community" of speaking and acting subjects. We do not deserve respect based on our

specific loyalties to national identity, culture, clan, or even family, for these are the ties

that divide us. We have to imagine an accord that cuts across all of these in order to

"make" us all into persons. Habermas' ideal here is "a mutual and constraint-free

understanding among individuals in their dealings with one another, as well as the

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identity of individuals who come to a compulsion-free understanding with themselves—

sociation without repression."[102] We could not be much farther from the

intersubjectivity described by Winnicott and Benjamin.

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[1] Jurgen Habermas, "Remarks on Discourse Ethics" in *Justification and Application* (Cambridge: MIT Press 1993) p. 91

[2] Jurgen Habermas, *The Inclusion of the Other* (Cambridge: MIT Press 2001) p. xxxv.

[3] Jurgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge: MIT Press 2000) p. 296. Hereafter PDM.

[4] Jurgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*. Trans. C. Lenhardt and S.W. Nicholson. (Cambridge: MIT Press 1990) p. 162. Hereafter MCCA.

[5] Habermas, *Justification and Application* p. 24.

[6] Habermas, MCCA p. 198.

[7] Jurgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Vol* II *Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason* Trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press 1987) p. 96. Hereafter TCA Vol. II.

[8] Jurgen Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking* trans. William Hohengarten (Cambridge: MIT Press 1996) p. 158.

[9] Habermas, PDM p. 296.

[10] Jurgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action* Vol I. *Reason and the Rationalization of Society*. Trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press 1984) p. 392. Hereafter TCA Vol. I.

[11] Habermas, TCA Vol I p. 392.

[12] Habermas, PDM p. 315.

[13] Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, p. 163-164.

[14] Romand Coles, "Identity and difference in the ethical positions of Adorno and Habermas," in *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995) p. 25.

[15] Jessica Benjamin, The Shadow of the Other : Intersubjectivity and Gender in Psychoanalysis. (New York: Routledge Press 1998) p. 28. Hereafter SO.

[16] Benjamin, SO p. 29.

[17] Jessica Benjamin, *Like Subjects, Love Objects: Essays on Recognition and Sexual Difference*. (New Haven: Yale University Press 1995) p. 160 ff. Hereafter LSLO.

[18] Benjamin, LSLO p. 183.

[19] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*. Second Edition. (Chicago: Chicago University Press 1998) p. 176. Hereafter THC.

[20] Arendt, THC p. 179.

[21] Habermas, PDM p. 296-7.

[22] Habermas, MCCA 137.

[23] Benjamin, SO p. 95.

[24] Habermas, TCA I p. 302.

[25] Habermas, MCCA p. 160 (emphasis added).

[26] Habermas, MCCA p. 162 (emphasis added).

[27] Habermas, TCA Vol. I p. 28.

[28] Paul Roazen, *Freud: Political and Social Thought* 3rd ed. (New Brunswick NJ: Transaction Publishers 1999) p. 69.

[29] Habermas, MCCA p. 188.

[30] Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays*. Trans. William Hohengarten. (Cambridge: MIT Press 1996) p. 190.

[31] Habermas, TCA Vol. I p. 288.

[32] Habermas, TCA Vol. I p. 286.

[33] Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics*. (New York: Routledge 1992) p. 163.

[34] Habermas, MCCA p. 133.

[35] Habermas, PDM p. 296.

[36] Habermas, MCCA p. 134.

[37] Habermas, MCCA p. 133.

[38] Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, p.192.

[39] Jurgen Habermas, "Hannah Arendt's Communications Concept of Power." *Social Research* 44 (1977) p. 4.

[40] Habermas, "Arendt's Concept of Power," pp. 4-5.

[41] Habermas, "Arendt's Concept of Power," p. 8.

[42] Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*. (New York: Penguin Books 1993) p. 162. Hereafter BPF.

[43] Arendt, THC p. 200.

[44] Benjamin, LSLO p. 43.

[45] Benjamin, LSLO p. 38 (emphasis in original).

[46] Benjamin, LSLO p. 24.

[47] Winnicott, *The Child, The Family and the Outside World*, p. 74.

[48] Susan Bickford, *The Dissonance of Democracy: Listening, Conflict, Citizenship*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1996) p. 63.

[49] Hannah Arendt, "Introduction *into* Politics" in *The Promise of Politics* (New York: Schocken Books 2005) p. 175.

[50] Habermas TCA Vol I. p. 286-7.

[51] Habermas, MCCA p. 19.

[52] Habermas, TCA p. 28.

[53] Jurgen Habermas, "Reconciliation Through the Public Use of Reason: Remarks on John Rawls' Political Liberalism." *Journal of Philosophy* Vol. XCII No. 3 p. 349. (emphasis added).

[54] Habermas, TCA Vol 1 p. 392.

[55] Habermas, TCA Vol II p 29.

[56] Benjamin, SO p. 104.

[57] Habermas, MCCA.

[58] Habermas, MCCA p. 120.

[59] Habermas, MCCA p. 120.

[60] Habermas, MCCA p. 121.

[61] Habermas, MCCA p. 121.

[62] Habermas, MCCA p. 121.

[63] Habermas, MCCA p. 123.

[64] Habermas, MCCA pp. 124-125.

[65] Habermas, MCCA p. 125.

[66] Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development.* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA 1982).

[67] Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics.* (New York, Routledge Press 1992).

[68] Benhabib, *Situating the Self,* p. 152.

[69] Benhaib, *Situating the Self,* p.159.

[70] Benhabib, *Situating the Self,* p. 186.

[71] Benhabib, *Situating the Self,* p. 187.

[72] Benhabib, *Situating the Self,* p. 185.

[73] Benjamin, SO p. 84.

[74] Benjamin, SO p. 85.

[75] Habermas, TCA Vol I p. xv.

[76] Habermas, MCCA p. 154.

[77] Habermas, *Justification and Application* 48-49.

[78] Habermas, *Justification and Application* 48-49.

[79] Habermas, *Justification and Application* p. 49.

[80] Habermas, *Justification and Application* p. 15.

[81] Habermas, TCA Vol 1 p. xxxi (translator's introduction).

[82] Habermas, PDM p. 309.

[83] Habermas, TCA Vol I p. 382.

[84] Habermas, TCA Vol. I. p. 385.

[85] Tracy Strong and Frank Andreas Sposito, "Habermas' Significant Other," in *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas* (Cambridge University Press 1995) p. 279.

[86] Habermas, PDM p. 306.

[87] Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p. 26.

[88] Habermas, MCCA, pp. 142 ff.

[89] Habermas, MCCA p. 142

[90] Habermas, MCCA p. 143.

[91] Habermas, MCCA p. 143.

[92] Habermas, MCCA p. 143-44.

[93] Habermas, MCCA p. 153.

[94] Habermas, MCCA p. 122.

[95] Habermas, MCCA p. 199.

[96] Habermas, MCCA p. 199.

[97] Habermas, *Justification and Application* pp. 130-131.

[98] Habermas, TCA Vol II p. 77.

[99] Habermas, *Justification and Application* p. 42, 43.

[100] Habermas, *Justification and Application,* p. 44.

[101] Habermas, *Justification and Application* pp. 45-46.

[102] Habermas, TCA Vol. I p. 391.

CHAPTER 5: SPACES OF FREEDOM IN HANNAH ARENDT

"We first become aware of freedom or its opposite in our intercourse with others, not in the intercourse with ourselves."

--Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*

Introduction

"[F]reedom is … a supreme gift which only man, of all earthly creatures, seems to have received, of which we can find traces and signs in almost all his activities, but which, nevertheless, develops fully only when action has created its own worldly space where it can come out of hiding, as it were, and make its appearance."[1] Like Rawls, Arendt acknowledges the value of plurality; like Habermas, she views speech and action as the appropriate media of politics. Despite these affinities, however, Arendt's vision of the public realm is very different from theirs. Arendt's public space is remarkably devoid of the normative elements that Habermas and Rawls affix to their theories of politics and public deliberation. Her terminology reflects this difference; instead of an overlapping consensus among reasonable citizens, or a common situation definition motivated by rational agreement, Arendt speaks eloquently of action, appearance, plurality, virtuosity, love of the world. For Arendt, the public space of politics does not exist to serve the normative aim of justice. It exists solely in the service of human freedom.

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In this chapter I argue that another way to frame the differences between Arendt on the one hand and Rawls and Habermas on the other is through the lens of interpersonal psychology. As I have argued in previous chapters, both Rawls and Habermas strive towards a politics of intersubjective recognition; Rawls through political liberalism, Habermas through communicative action. However, the underlying psychology of both theories stops short of full intersubjectivity and remains instead within an intrapsychic framework of engagement. The intrapsychic nature of both political liberalism and communicative action is reflected in three dimensions: (1) the assimilative mode of deontology, which posits either universal agreement or understanding; (2) the omnipotent stance of the moral point of view, whether generated from a veil of ignorance or an ideal speech situation, and (3) the defensive stance against conflict and contestation, even if only verbal, in the political engagement. In all three of these dimensions, the underlying moral psychology reinforces the intrapsychic mode of political thought by failing to theorize the appearance of the other as a separate subject through the process of destruction and survival. Only an appreciation of other people as outside of one's own projections of them can serve as a basis for recognition and respect, so central to a deliberative democratic politics.

Though Arendt is no friend of psychoanalytic theory, and has no developmental psychology of her own, her political theory gives remarkable expression to the concepts of interpersonal psychology. Arendt's public realm creates room for the intersubjective encounter, in all its multiple psychological layers. Appearance is central to Arendt's

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politics, which depends on speech and action among *different* individuals about things in their common human world. Arendt sets up few if any filters, cognitive or otherwise, in her public realm, save her insistence that only public matters, not private ones, be admitted to political space—a distinction we will take up in the next chapter. In Arendtian politics there is no imperative of consensus or aim of universal understanding; quite the contrary, in public there is unpredictability and uncertainty, part and parcel of plurality and the web of relationships that action generates. She portrays political interaction as agonistic and contestatory, but not violent, and in this way her vision shares with Winnicott and Benjamin an understanding of the space between self and other created by contest—"destruction and survival." Arendt famously distinguishes "power" from "violence," a distinction supported by interpersonal psychology, which views violence as the outermost perimeter of omnipotent thinking—that is, treating others as objects rather than subjects. But most importantly, Arendt confronts, in a way Habermas and Rawls do not, the fear and anxiety that political engagement generates, and the very human responses to anxiety that can close public spaces of freedom. Arendt's explanation of the temptation to substitute "making" for "acting," and her strong critique of philosophy in the realm of politics, parallel in important ways the psychological understanding of the constant tension between self and other, omnipotence and intersubjectivity.

Arendt's different view of politics is based on a different understanding of freedom, one that is not intrapsychic but intersubjective. Arendtian freedom requires

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not just a certain form of action but also the appropriate place for its exercise. "The crucial point about this kind of political freedom is that it is a spatial construct."[2] Although political freedom needs space to appear, Arendt is so anxious to convince us of the importance of the public that she often indulges in overstated oppositions between politics and other spaces. Her tendency to do this is compounded by the fact that she views both of these other spaces as sources of things that *threaten* politics. When the private concerns of the household overtake the public sphere, for example, politics is reduced to "activities connected with sheer survival ... for the sake of life and nothing else."[3] When the mindset of homo faber seeps beyond the space of work into politics, we think we can treat other men as material, which she describes as the temptation to substitute "making for acting." Finally, both familial and individual concerns, coupled with the unpredictability of the public realm, tempt us to withdraw from the public realm entirely, giving in to the "conscious despair of all action."[4]

In both the household and in work, however, the predominate feeling of freedom is that of sovereignty, of control over others (slaves) or over inanimate material (fabrication). In psychological terms, these are both intrapsychic spaces, free from interference by other subjects. Arendt wants us to move beyond this idea of freedom as individual control toward a more "worldly" (read: "intersubjective") freedom. Freedom for Arendt does not come from sovereignty or control, it is rather "an attribute of the way human beings organize themselves and nothing else. Its place of origin is never inside man, whatever that inside may be, nor is it in his will, or his thinking, or his

feelings; it is rather in the space between human beings, which can arise only when distinct individuals come together, and can continue to exist only as long as they remain together. Freedom has a space, and whoever is admitted into it is free; whoever is excluded is not free."[5]

Now we may note that Habermas' critique of subject-centered reason is very similar to the ideas expressed by Arendt above. Habermas also argues for a shift away from "narcissistically inflated autonomy" and "cognitive-instrumental mastery" toward intersubjective reason. What differentiates Habermas from Arendt, however, is precisely the spatial dimension. Habermas would agree that we cannot *will* each other to freedom, but he might not agree that we cannot *think* our way there. Arendt rejects the idea of political freedom springing entirely from "inside man." Political freedom can only appear in the space between people, which is what allies her so nicely with interpersonal psychology. Arendt, like Winnicott and Benjamin, perceives multiple spaces of freedom for individuals who are able to move between them, alongside and always in tension with the temptation to retreat to intrapsychic space when one is threatened or anxious.

If we compare Arendt's vision of politics in public space with that of Rawls and Habermas, we can get a better grasp of the difference between the intersubjective approach of Arendt and the intrapsychic approach of Rawls and Habermas. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, these differences fall roughly into three areas; adherence to deontology, the constructivism of the moral point of view, and the

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sublimation of contestation. All of these, I have argued above, obscure the subjectivity

of the other and reinforce the intrapsychic stance of omnipotence. Arendt now gives us

the political vocabulary and vision to see how this plays out against an intersubjective

idea of politics.

Deontology, Plurality, Reality

At first glance, highlighting the spatial in Arendt might seem like a curious

exercise. Space seems more like her background than her foreground; as a theorist who

wants us to "think what we are doing," it might seem strange to shift our focus to *where*

we are when we are doing. However, the spatial permeates her phenomenological triad

of labor, work, and action. "Labor" is unremittingly, painfully private, while "action"

must occur in public to *be* action. "Work" awkwardly straddles both spaces by needing

privacy for creativity and execution but also needing the public *agora* for display and

exchange. And "the social," as Hannah Pitkin has observed, is a devouring blob of a

concept, one that is neither private nor public but overgrows them both, thereby creating

its own "curiously hybrid realm."[6]

The spatial figures prominently in Arendt's thought as a whole, not just in

relation to the public arena. "[W]herever human beings come together—be it in private

or socially, be it in public or politically—a space is generated that simultaneously

gathers them into it and separates them from one another. ... Wherever people come

together, the world thrusts itself between them, and it is in this in-between space that all

human affairs are conducted."[7] Arendt's use of spatial metaphors is consistent with her

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broader phenomenological approach to human interaction. We can understand who we are, to some extent, based not (or not only) on what we *think* but on what we *do*. And what we do, in turn, derives its importance from *where* we do it. The *we* in this formulation is intentional, but it is not intended to connote a commonality of meaning or purpose. For Arendt the space between humans both relates and separates any number of different individuals.

Arendt's affinity for the spatial can be traced to the profound influence of her teachers, Heidegger and Jaspers.[8] Although Arendt was often critical of Heidegger's philosophy, especially of his distinction between authentic and inauthentic existence, she is also indebted to Heidegger's thought when it comes to her own project of rehabilitating respect for the political. In Heidegger's concept of the world, and of *Dasein* as "being-in-the-world," Arendt finds an important corrective to the stance of philosophy that prefers to judge political events from the standpoint of the detached observer. Heideggerian "thrownness"—the irreducibly situated nature of our being-in-the-world -- also always includes a being-with-others rather than a being in isolation. It is Heidegger's insights that allow Arendt to move forward with the idea that man as an acting being is always at the center of politics. As DanaVilla notes, "Heidegger's conception of *Dasein* as primordially both a being-in-the-world and a being-with-others helped her to place worldliness and human plurality at the heart of human freedom rather than at the extreme margins."[9] The shift in focus, from self to world, is pivotal for her specifically worldly concept of freedom. Despite Arendt's harsh critique of the

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Heideggerian self in "What Is Existenz Philosophy?" she remains fully aware that "Heidegger's project of overturning a whole raft of Cartesian prejudices about a subject detached from the world and others is of the greatest interest to any political theory that takes *worldliness* and *human plurality* as fundamentally constitutive of political experience itself."[10]

In Jaspers' philosophy Arendt finds a focus on communication rather than contemplation, another aid in drawing our attention away from man in his isolation and toward men in their plurality. Like Heidegger, Jaspers was critical of the ideal of a wise man or *sophos* standing above the realm of human affairs in order to commune with an eternal ideal. Jaspers instead conceives of philosophy as a special kind of communicative practice, where truth is not revealed but rather mediated in discussions of multiple "truths." Jaspers notes a distinction between what each man in isolation thinks is true and what, with others, becomes actually and humanly true. However, in Arendt's opinion, Jaspers stops short of a wholly political understanding of communication, remaining instead within the paradigm of "the dialogue of one with oneself in solitude." She claims that Jaspers, like other modern philosophers, err in believing that "the intimacy of the dialogue, the 'inner action' in which I 'appeal' to myself or to the 'other self' ... can be extended and become paradigmatic for the political sphere."[11]

What Arendt draws from both Heidegger and Jaspers is an appreciation for the space between Being and thought that is the result of the sheer contingency of human

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existence. Arendt argues—relentlessly, desperately—that for too long philosophy has sought ways to escape human contingency, with the result that politics is subjugated to other ideas—history, truth, reason, the good. "[M]odern philosophers have conjured up all kinds of necessity, from the dialectical necessity of a world spirit or of material conditions to the necessities of an allegedly unchangeable and known human nature, in order to cleanse the last vestiges of that apparently arbitrary 'it might have been otherwise' (which is the price of freedom) from the only realm where men are truly free."[12] But such attempts only efface human plurality and contingency, and in affirming both of these, Arendt "opens up a space for freedom, a space denied by the contemplative philosophical tradition (with its fixation on an order of Being) *and* Heidegger's notion of an authentic Self."[13]

Plurality and a space for its appearance are important for Arendt on two levels. First, the space of appearance opened up by speech and action affords the opportunity for us to recognize each other as unique individuals, since we always disclose something of ourselves when we speak and act. Second, the plurality of the public realm offers us a way to see beyond our own private space in the world. This liberation from one's own subjectivity, though often difficult, is an important freedom for Arendt, one that is possible only in the public sphere. Without plurality, we cannot gain the multitude of perspectives we need in order to see reality as it appears to us all, and we cannot feel at home in the human world.

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Rawls and Habermas look at plurality a little differently. Though both appreciate the space for plurality generated under liberal democratic institutions, they worry about the divisive elements of diversity and especially its impact on equality and mutual respect. Rawls in particular worries about the potential for violence in a pluralistic society, while Habermas seems more concerned about other illegitimate influences in the deliberative sphere, such as money or power. (In the next chapter we will discuss the difference between Habermas' view of power and Arendt's view.) To remedy these concerns about plurality, both Rawls and Habermas enlist a moral constructivism designed to "uncover" or "elicit" the common rational ("reasonable," for Rawls) core inherent in every individual, underneath the contingencies of culture, social position, belief, and the like. This allows them to posit, whether in the form of a "sense of justice" or "universal understanding," a (potential) commonality or identity of interest between all human beings. The purpose of politics is to create the conditions – make room for-- this identity to reveal itself.

Although both theorists acknowledge the plurality of modern political life, they also both remain committed to a Kantian deontology. Their deontology starts from the position that all individuals are free and equal, deserving of respect as human beings. What merits our respect is our capacity for autonomy or self-governance, the ability to abide by universal principles that all can comprehend through the use of their common human reason. A deontological approach thus posits a split between the right and the good, the *right* representing what all could will in common, and the *good* representing

those different views on how one should live, who one should be, etc. For deontological liberalism, the right is always prior to the good; that is, what matters morally is our universally shared capacity for reason.

Because of this, in a paradoxical way, deontological theories like those of Rawls and Habermas perceive this capacity for autonomy as "real," meaning morally relevant because shared by all, and other human characteristics or capacities as "contingent," meaning morally irrelevant, because not shared (or shareable) by all. Their belief persists even in the face of a political reality that does *not* evidence a universal capacity for autonomy or mutual respect. To maintain this belief, then, deontological liberalism has to convince itself (and us) that the capacity for autonomy is "really" there, even though it is not visible. It is "really" there but hard to discern because of the "distortions" or "contingencies" of human experience. Respecting and recognizing others becomes a matter of clearing away these contingencies in order to get at the capacity for autonomy that is "really" there. Both Rawls and Habermas, we will see, talk about mutual respect in this way.

Arendt starts by acknowledging that "[p]olitics deals with the coexistence and association of *different* men."[14] Reality for Arendt is not a common core of rationality or reasonableness but a shared, differentiated, plurivocal public space that exists alongside other spaces like home and work. Because a space for plurality is so important for her, recognition looks very different for Arendt than for a deontological liberalism; she focuses on the individual "who" that appears in speech and action. In

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addition, an appreciation of plurality as intersubjectivity generates a different idea of what counts as "real" politically and what counts as real for moral theory. I take up each of these ideas – recognition and reality – in the following sections.

Plurality and Recognition

Each human is different from "any other who is, was, or will ever be."[15] If we were not so distinct, we would not need speech or action to communicate with one another, as our needs and wants would be identical and known to all. However, speech and action do more than simply convey need; they also reveal our uniqueness and individuality. Arendt argues that "only [man] can communicate himself and not merely something—thirst or hunger, affection or hostility or fear. ... Speech and action reveal this unique distinctness, ... and human plurality is the paradoxical plurality of unique beings."[16] Speech and action are important not only because of what we can do with them but also because of what we can see in the doing. No matter how we approach the interaction, we appear to each other when we speak in public. "In acting and speaking, men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world, while their physical identities appear without any activity of their own in the unique shape of the body and sound of the voice."[17] Seeing each other as people, as actors, rather than simply as proponents of this or that position, is vital for maintaining a public space inhabited by many. "This disclosure of 'who' in contradistinction to 'what' somebody is – his qualities, gifts, talents, and shortcomings, which he may display or hide—is implicit in everything somebody says and does."[18]

From a psychological perspective, this Arendtian idea of appearance cannot be overemphasized, because recognizing others as individual subjects is essential to constructing intersubjective spaces. The public space of freedom allows individuals to be recognized *as individuals*, as more than simply what they produce or how they live in private. "*Who* somebody is or was we can know only by knowing the story of which he is himself the hero—his biography, in other words; everything else we know of him, including the work he may have produced and left behind, tells us only *what* he is or was."[19] Full appearance is important because it reminds political citizens that actors are real people, not just our own ideas of them. Through speech and action, "men distinguish themselves instead of being merely distinct; they are the modes in which human beings appear to each other, not indeed as physical objects but *qua* men."[20] In this statement, Arendt tells us that she is aware of the dangers of objectifying others, what we recognize as the dangers of omnipotent or intrapsychic thinking.

For Rawlsian citizens appearance in the public realm is more complicated. As we noted, Rawls does create a separate space for politics, bounded by principles and procedures designed to foster equality and mutual respect. When individuals are in this space they are to see each other as citizens, and to demonstrate their commitment to mutual respect they agree to see each other only as "reasonable and rational," rather than having this or that comprehensive doctrine, or being a member of this or that culture or social class. As Rawls argues, "[f]rom the standpoint of justice as fairness, it is not true that the conscientious judgments of each person ought absolutely to be

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respected; ...We are not literally to respect the conscience of an individual."[21] (Rawls

later explains that we respect the other "as a person" which means having the two moral

powers—a sense of justice and a conception of the good.) Seeing each other this way

allows citizens to think their way to consensus and commonality, and to bracket

disagreements that are "morally irrelevant." As I argued in the chapter on Rawls,

however, reducing our vision of others to a prescribed set of preferred characteristics is

not only impossible but also undesirable.

Psychologically, choosing what aspects of a person to see and what ones to

ignore is a mental operation of omnipotence. We interact with others not as they are but

as we want them to be. It is important to note here that omnipotence need not include a

derogatory view of the other; it can also create an imagined identity between self and

other in an assimilative stance. Consider as an example political liberalism's criterion of

reciprocity. We fulfill our duty of reciprocity when we engage in the following thought

process: our exercise of political power is proper "only when we sincerely believe that

the reasons we offer for political action may reasonably be accepted by other citizens ...

."[22] What matters is *our* belief that our reasons are sufficient, which points to the

intrapsychic nature of this respect. If others do not accept our reasons, and we sincerely

believe other reasonable people would, what then? Are we justified in seeing—and

thus treating—them as unreasonable?

We cannot help but see the particular other before us, try as we might to ignore

or bury those specifically human characteristics that she displays. In fact, the impact of

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the other on ourselves is a necessary condition for intersubjective recognition. It is how we see that others are outside of our mental projections, and subjects in their own right. Instead of searching for the universal in the other, we need to learn how to register and reflect upon, others' particularities and their impact on us. Ignoring differences, even in the name of consensus or respect, makes it easier to objectify the other rather than treating her, and acting with her, as an individual. An intersubjective idea of reciprocity, for example, would counsel offering reasons for political action *even if we do not think* the other could reasonably accept them, but trying to understand why they might withhold their acceptance. Here is where the distinction between understanding and agreement again becomes relevant; I can understand why you think the way you do and still not agree with your definition of the situation.

We find similar difficulties with appearance in Habermas, but because he is more attentive to intersubjectivity, the issues center around both language and thought. Communicative action requires citizens to simultaneously narrow and widen their vision; to *narrow* our views of each other to subjects capable of offering and redeeming validity claims, and to *broaden* our views of humanity as potentially engaged in an intersubjective relationship of mutual understanding. As with Rawls, however, both points of view rest on an assimilative view of others, one that asserts a commonality belied by practical experience. Habermas also subscribes to the deontological idea of respect, which discounts the concrete "who" and looks instead for a projected autonomy. "[W]e respect a person as such not on account of some outstanding

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characteristic or other. We respect a person as such on account of his capacity to act autonomously, that is, to orient his actions to normative validity claims."[23] Instead of highlighting the external space between individuals as generative of freedom, which is more in line with intersubjective psychology, Habermas repeatedly insists that reason operates *internally* to motivate attitude change and mutual agreement, an argument that reinforces the intrapsychic nature of his theory.

Arendt's multidimensional account of public appearance makes no promises concerning mutual understanding or agreement. It offers no reassurances that speaking and acting together will encourage us to see each other as reasonable and/or rational. In fact, as we will see, the public realm of action is fraught with unpredictability, the "moral haphazardness" that always attends a multiplicity of actors. (We will turn in the next chapter to a discussion of whether her lack of reassurances produces problems of its own). But to Arendt these difficulties and challenges are the price we pay for inhabiting a human, public world together, and for resisting the temptation to "force the other to be or want what we want," in Benjamin's words. It is a price she is, moreover, glad to pay. For when multiple unique beings speak and act with each other, even if the engagement is (verbally) hostile or acrimonious, the space for appearance is regenerated and held open by the contributions of varying points of view. In addition to seeing each other as individuals, however hard or infuriating that may be, politics also allows us to perceive a space outside of our own experience. That freedom, so different from sovereignty, is one of the most important elements of Arendt's thought.

Plurality and Reality

The ability to appear in public creates a space of freedom necessary for the construction of both individual identity and the human world. "Without a space of appearance and without trusting in action and speech as a mode of being together, neither the reality of one's self, of one's own identity, nor the reality of the surrounding world can be established beyond doubt."[24] Here Arendt challenges the more familiar explanations for social cooperation, such as a biological advantage, or greater safety in numbers, or moral or intellectual progress. The point Arendt wants to make about plurality is epistemological, and much more radical than I think most of her commentators appreciate. We need each other, Arendt says, in order for reality to appear to us. "The presence of others who see what we see and hear what we hear assures us of the reality of the world and ourselves ... For us appearance – something that is being seen and heard by others as well as ourselves – constitutes reality."[25]

As we discussed in the chapter on Habermas, however, Arendt's reality is different from philosophical reality, with its universal reason, overlapping consensus, and common situation definitions. She does not argue that the objective world discloses itself more readily to numerous eyes. As Susan Bickford elegantly explains, "[i]t is not that a multiplicity of perspectives lets us perceive a reality that is beyond perspective or beyond appearance; rather the multiplicity of perspectives on what appears is what *constitutes* reality."[26] Paradoxically, reality for Arendt does not require us all to see

things the same way. Reality, rather, requires different perspectives in order to appear. "If it is true that a thing *is* real ... only if it can show itself and be perceived from all sides, then there must always be a plurality of individuals or peoples and a plurality of standpoints to make reality even possible and to guarantee its continuation. In other words, the world comes into being only if there are perspectives; it exists as the order of worldly things only if it is viewed, now this way, now that, at any given time."[27]

The contrast between this view of social reality and Rawls' view could hardly be greater. First, consider Rawls' approach to the contingent circumstances that create plurality in the first place. He argues that personal and social contingencies are arbitrary from a moral point of view, and that "the arbitrariness of the world must be corrected for by adjusting the circumstances of the initial contract situation ... ."[28] To do this, Rawls introduces the veil of ignorance, designed to conceal precisely those elements of individuality necessary for recognition. Rawls even says as much, though he presents this as a strength rather than a problem: "Hence in justice as fairness one does not take men's propensities and inclinations as given, whatever they are, and then seek the best way to fulfill them. Rather, the desires and aspirations are restricted at the outset by the principles of justice ... ."[29] Thus it is not only how we see *each other* that political liberalism restricts, it also restricts how we see *political reality*. Constructing an overlapping consensus, for example, does not mean actually engaging one another on our beliefs or comparing our different views of the world and our place in it. We cannot, Rawls says, tailor a political conception to fit actually existing comprehensive

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doctrines, which are, after all, a product of contingency. Doing that, remember, is "political in the wrong way." The right way, Rawls argues, is to start with an imagined ideal of a society as a fair system of cooperation between free and equal persons, leave aside comprehensive doctrines that actually exist, and construct a *freestanding* political conception independent of contingent comprehensive doctrines that can distort the ordering of public values.

Political reality for Rawls thus consists in a mentally projected plurality, one that sees everyone not as they are but as "free and equal;" that is, possessing the two moral powers, a capacity for a sense of justice and a capacity for a conception of the good. The capacity for a sense of justice, however, assumes a specific way of relating to others, one that respects them because they view everyone as equal, not because they hold a different position from everyone else. The multiplicity of views, so central to Arendt, is filtered out through the sieve of "contingency" in Rawls. The spaces of freedom are accordingly compressed.

Habermas also resists the idea that plurality generates reality even amidst disagreement. We can recall the importance, for example, of the common situation definition—that performative attitude that seeks to transcend disagreement in order to actualize the mutual understanding inherent in speech. This concept is crucial for Habermas, because without such a commitment to action oriented to understanding, participants are at risk of being treated as means by actors behaving strategically. To protect each other from this risk, Habermas argues, we need to repair the distortions

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created by self-assertion and adopt the moral point of view, from which "there emerges" an ideally extended perspective from which to judge disagreements.

Though we might expect that bringing more perspectives in line with one another would have a liberating effect—liberating one from endless arguments or hopeless conflict, for example—Arendt writes that actually the opposite is the case. Where plurality disappears, freedom disappears as well. Under conditions of mass society for example, "all people suddenly behave as though they were members of one family, each multiplying and prolonging the perspective of his neighbor. In both instances, men have become entirely private, that is, they have been deprived of seeing and hearing others, of being seen and being heard by them. They are all imprisoned in the subjectivity of their own singular experience, which does not cease to be singular if the same experience is multiplied innumerable times."[30]

Arendt's picture of public space is much more supportive of both plurality and intersubjectivity. Differences in perspective do not necessarily call for "reconciliation" or "restricting," and when Rawls and Habermas maneuver them out of the political framework they also shrink the space for plurality to appear. Rawls and Habermas do not see the value in deep differences that challenge one's point of view, because these differences can drive people further apart, and produce potentially violent consequences. Engaging otherness in all its specificity does not feel like freedom for these two theorists, as we can glean from their developmental psychology. For them, freedom remains closely allied with sovereignty, the undisturbed freedom to see the

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world however one will and to act (or withdraw) accordingly. And consistent with this

intrapsychic standpoint, the moral point of view persists in seeing others how the

subject chooses, regardless of how they actually appear, speak, or act.

The Anxiety of Action

Arendt is one of the few theorists to take seriously the anxiety that attends

political action. Again, she has no explicit political psychology of her own, and yet she

displays an intuitive understanding of the effects of political action on the psyche.

Specifically, because of her phenomenological and spatial framework, Arendt is keenly

aware of the contrast between the interior space of thinking and imagination and the

external, shared space of speech and action. The first space, which we would call

intrapsychic, Arendt affiliates with philosophy on the one hand, and work or fabrication

on the other. These two mindsets, she argues, are linked by the common elements of

control and predictability. The second space, which we now recognize as potentially

intersubjective, resists such individual control but is instead defined by plurality,

natality, and unpredictability. Arendt's key insight about the relationship between these

two spaces is that the contingency of the second is uncomfortable for many, which leads

us to try to graft the mindset of philosophy onto politics, a move she calls substituting

"making" for "acting." We are familiar with this move under the term omnipotent

thinking, a tendency we all share but which is more common under situations of stress,

anxiety, or fear.

One of the main anxiety-producing elements of politics is that it takes place in a realm that seems to be without logic or pattern, particularly in a large and diverse citizenry. Arendt describes this frustration as follows:

> Facts have no conclusive reason whatever for being what they are; they could always have been otherwise, and this annoying contingency is literally unlimited. It is because of the haphazardness of facts that pre-modern philosophy refused to take seriously the realm of human affairs, which is permeated by factuality, or to believe that any meaningful truth could ever be discovered in the 'melancholy haphazardness' (Kant) of a sequence of events that constitutes the course of the world. Nor has any modern philosophy of history been able to make its peace with the intractable, unreasonable stubbornness of sheer factuality...[31]

Social facts in particular are stubborn and unpredictable, which is why both Rawls and Habermas work so hard to limit their influence in a philosophical justification of liberal pluralism. Habermas finds it "hardly satisfying" when "what comes to be valid for an individual or collective is arbitrary," when the principle that carries the day depends on "contingencies or greater rhetorical skill." He is frustrated by the social fact that some believe in the maxim "love your neighbor as yourself" while others believe in the maxim "slay your neighbor if he gives you trouble." Rawls too dislikes the social fact of contingency, especially those that cause irreconcilable conflict between comprehensive doctrines. For example, a *modus vivendi* is an insufficient political solution for Rawls not because it might have been unfairly achieved but because it is based on factual circumstances that might change over time.

Where only a *modus vivendi* is in place, "society's stability depends on a balance of forces in contingent and possibly fluctuating circumstances."

But in addition to this, the multiplicity of actors in the public realm has its own set of characteristics that add to the annoying contingency of facts. The first of these is natality, which accompanies each individual into the public realm, both in his physical appearance and in his approach to the world. This natality gives man the chance to interrupt the predictable march of human events and begin something totally new. "[W]ith each birth something uniquely new comes into the world. With respect to this somebody ... it can be truly said that nobody was there before."[32] Each birth is a potentiality for action, something completely new and unforeseen. "The fact that man is capable of action means that the unexpected can be expected from him, that he is able to perform what is infinitely improbable."[33] The second characteristic is the boundlessness of action, which refuses to remain under our guidance once we turn it loose. Individual actions spiral outwards towards others, who in turn react and start a different strand. This means that action is often unpredictable, no matter how much thought or preparation we take beforehand. Actions touch off other processes and reactions, which in turn affect both the actor and others with whom he comes in contact. Arendt notes that "it is because of this already existing web of human relationships, with its innumerable conflicting wills and intentions, that action almost never achieves its purpose... ."[34]

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The third frustrating characteristic of action is the resultant narrative that appears during and after an event. "[T]he story that an act starts is composed of its consequent deeds and sufferings. These consequences are boundless, because action ... acts into a medium where every reaction becomes a chain reaction and where every process is the cause of new processes."[35] The stories are not subject to control, however, because the actor cannot control or "make" the stories about herself. The stories people tell are *about* different agents, but this agent is not the *author* or producer of the story. Because an actor always moves among and in relation to others, he is never only a doer but also potentially a sufferer. Especially as our public realm grows larger and more diverse, the hazards of action seem to increase accordingly. "All this is reason enough to turn away with despair from the realm of human affairs and to hold in contempt the human capacity for freedom, which, by producing the web of human relationships, seems to entangle its producer to such an extent that he appears much more the victim and sufferer than the author and doer of what he has done. Nowhere, in other words, ... does man appear to be less free than in those capacities whose very essence is freedom and in that realm which owes its existence to nobody and nothing but man."[36] (We see this frustration in Habermas when he discusses socialization and identity: "The more the subject becomes individuated, the more he becomes entangled in a densely woven fabric of mutual recognition, that is, of reciprocal exposedness and vulnerability."[37])

Small wonder, then, that we no longer consider politics a space of freedom. The burdens of action, particularly its haphazardness, are threatening. "Exasperation with

the threefold frustration of action—the unpredictability of its outcome, the irreversibility of the process, and the anonymity of its authors—is almost as old as recorded history. It has always been a great temptation to find a substitute for action in the hope that the realm of human affairs may escape the haphazardness and moral irresponsibility inherent in a plurality of agents."[38] Arendt argues that philosophy has done its fair share of suggesting substitutes for action in the hopes of regaining some stability and control over its unpredictability. One substitute is the application of "work" in the space of "action," wherein we convince ourselves that "we can 'make' something in the realm of human affairs –make institutions or laws, for instance, as we make tables and chairs, or make men 'better' or 'worse' …[or] the utopian hope that it may be possible to treat men as one treats other 'material'."[39] Another alternative to engaging plurality is a complete withdrawal from the public world into the solitude of thought. "Our philosophical tradition is almost unanimous in holding that freedom begins where men have left the realm of political life inhabited by the many, and that it is not experienced in association with others but in intercourse with one's self … ."[40] She argues that the frustrations of action caused philosophy (specifically Plato) to give up on a differentiated idea of freedom, and to define freedom only as free will, the ability to choose for oneself. As such, freedom migrated inward, becoming "inner freedom, the inward space into which men may escape from external coercion and *feel* free. … These inner experiences are derivative in that they always presuppose a retreat from the world … into an inwardness to which no other has access."[41] Thus freedom

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shifts from co-acting with others, and "the ideal of freedom ceased to be virtuosity ...

and became sovereignty, the ideal of a free will, independent from others and eventually

prevailing against them."[42]

With the help of interpersonal psychology, we can see the desire to substitute

making for action and the retreat into "inner freedom" as two sides of the same coin.

Arendt perceives this also, and in an ingenious argument exposes the link between

thinking in solitude and treating others as objects. She intuitively understands the

distinction between intrapsychic and interpersonal interaction. The space for work and

the sovereignty we exercise there, along with the space for thought and reflection, both

remain connected to the practice of politics, as we will see in the next chapter. Arendt's

point is not that the public space of speech and action is somehow existentially superior

to work or thought, but that it demands a different way of relating to others. Like

interpersonal psychology, Arendt too appreciates the importance of multiple spaces of

freedom.

The Satisfactions of Work

Homo faber can use his body freely to make and to create things outside of

himself. In contrast to labor, which Arendt views as cyclical, exhausting, and worldless,

work engages man in the production of things for the world through his own will. In

work man can be sovereign, can leave his mark on the world or create something new

for the human space, something both in his control and durable. "*Homo faber* is indeed

a lord and master, not only because he is the master or has set himself up as the master

of all nature but because he is the master of himself and his doings. This is true neither

of the *animal laborans*, which is subject to the necessity of its own life, nor of the man

of action, who remains in dependence upon his fellow men."[43] In contrast to labor and

action, "[t]he ideals of *homo faber*, the fabricator of the world, ... are permanence,

stability, and durability."[44] The activity of work stands in contrast to the inarticulate

privacy of labor by giving man another place to be, or something on which to stand.

Arendt writes that the products of work "withstand" and "stand against" both man's

needs and the biological process of nature, and that thus "the things of the world have

the function of stabilizing human life ... men, their ever-changing nature

notwithstanding, can retrieve their sameness, that is, their identity, by being related to

the same chair and the same table."[45]

However, all work has in it an element of violence, and "*homo faber*, the creator

of the human artifice, has always been a destroyer of nature."[46] Arendt writes that

"[t]he experience of this violence is the most elemental experience of human strength

and, therefore, the very opposite of the painful, exhausting effort experienced in sheer

labor. It can provide self-assurance and satisfaction, and can even become a source of

self-confidence throughout life...".[47] This feeling of strength is also a feeling of

sovereignty, such as can only be exercised over mute materials or (possibly) animals,

but it is not appropriate in the realm of human interactions. For this reason, work is not

public, even though *homo faber* brings his works to the *agora* for display.

Arendt finds an important connection between *work* and *thought*. The work of fabrication, she argues, is performed under the guidance of a model, an idea that the worker has of the object to be made or constructed. This idea, image, or model guides the fabrication process but also exists outside of it; it "does not disappear with the finished product, which it survives intact ...".[48] As a mental projection, a product of man's creative mind, the model exists in a different space than either the work or the finished product, and in this space it is subject only to the changes that man's mind chooses to make. Arendt speaks here of the "splendid isolation" of the worker who is focused solely on his craft. "This isolation from others is the necessary life condition for every mastership which consists in being alone with 'the idea,' the mental image of the thing to be."[49] The model can remain in this sense a true and unchanging ideal, disconnected as it is from worldly reality and from the process of fabrication. As such, it is a highly compelling mental artifact.

The satisfactions of work, therefore, come not only from the creative process but also from the control we can exercise over the materials. Objects, unlike subjects, can be worked over, molded, and shaped to conform to our image or ideal. Mostly they conform to our expectations and do what they are told. (One exception is phyllo dough, which I truly think has a mind of its own and seems to want to end up in a wad on my kitchen floor.) We can control objects (within the limits of our abilities) without worrying that they will deceive or trick us. We can own them outright, excluding all

others if we desire. These are the aspects of sovereignty and will that Arendt locates in

homo faber, and none of them are true of our interactions with subjects.

That does not prevent us, however, from trying to import the ideals of

fabrication into the sphere of politics in order to limit some of its unpredictability. In

the passage quoted earlier, Arendt describes our thinking we can "make" institutions or

laws, or else treat men as material by making them "better or worse." Leaving aside for

the moment the notion of making institutions or laws – an idea we will take up in the

next chapter—I want here to address the idea of making men into one thing or another,

a very old problem for political theory.

Philosophy, Making, and Acting

Arendt charges philosophy, more specifically Plato, with the bait-and-switch

substitution of making for acting. Like many, Plato is exasperated by the

unpredictability of the realm of human affairs, made real in the trial and death of

Socrates. Plato depicts Socrates expressing that same exasperation, with statements

such as "we have apparently discovered that many opinions held by many people about

such matters as beauty and justice are floating around somewhere in between reality and

unreality."(480d).[50] Most people are "denizens of that intermediate zone of

flux..."(480d) where not truth but illusion holds sway. Unpredictable and unruly, the

multitude is at points a mutinous crew, a frenzied mob, caught up in the "never-ending

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round of birth and death," content to inspect "swarms of irrelevancies" instead of seeking the Eternal or the Good. "For all these reasons the philosopher holds his peace and minds his own business, standing aside and, as it were, seeking a sheltering wall against the storm and blast of dust and rain. Observing others given over to lawlessness, he is content if he can keep himself free of iniquities and evil deeds and depart this life content, at peace, and with blessed hope."(496d).

But Arendt goes on to say that philosophy doesn't actually mind its own business, after all. In the *Republic*, she argues, the philosopher initially escapes the human realm in order to practice the art of contemplation, which she describes as a speechlees beholding, a stillness-in-the presence-of. Plato writes that "he whose mind is fixed on eternal realities has no time to lower his gaze to a point where he may be lured by the petty affairs of men into strife, envy, and hatred. Instead, he keeps his sights fixed on those things that belong to the unchanging and eternal order."(500c). Arendt argues that keeping one's sights on such things is indeed philosophical contemplation, but that other things inevitably happen once the philosopher interacts with others, when he returns from the light to the cave.

In Plato's hands, in order to control the unruly demos, the Good has to be, in Arendt's words, transformed into something useful, an ideal of "good for something, or fit." Hence, she argues, Plato subtly transforms the good from an object of contemplation to a tool for measuring the conduct of man.[51] The good becomes the pattern that the philosopher (craftsman, doctor) can use to rule mankind, since they are

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architects of a just city. "Their work will frequently require them to look in two directions; they must look at justice, beauty, and temperance in their ideal forms and then again at what they are trying to reproduce in men. They will draw from both sources, blending and tempering until they arrive at a living figure..."(501b).

Whether or not we agree with Arendt's reading of Plato, her account of how philosophy uses an ideal as a model for human fabrication is a fascinating one. When we situate it in the context of the deontological liberalism of Rawls and Habermas, moreover, several parallels become immediately clear. Both theorists engage in what they call moral constructivism, which starts with the ideal of autonomy (as opposed to heteronomy) and works backwards to construct a framework that free, equal and autonomous citizens would recognize and adopt. What it does not do, as we have seen, is start with citizens as they are and work to "construct" institutions or laws suited to them. Rawls and Habermas "look in two directions," at their ideal of justice and its just citizen, and then at political institutions or interactions designed to make people behave or think like that. Arendt would have us call constructivism what is actually is—a mode of making in the political realm – though dressed in the cloak of freedom.

Interpersonal psychology adds to this an understanding of the temptation to making as the omnipotent impulse that is present in almost everyone. We all see others both as our mental pictures of them and as external objects that may thwart our aims or negatively impact us. Differences cause anxiety, anger, and aggression, which are unpleasant emotions that we seek to avoid. One way to avoid them, offered by Rawls

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and Habermas, is to see (register as relevant) only certain characteristics in others—their capacity for reason, for example, or their equal autonomy. Another way to avoid them is to split our image of people into complementary opposites—those that are reasonable (however defined) are "good," those that are not are "bad." Complementary thinking like this is quite common, and splitting is in itself not a problem; it is part of how we organize and navigate our world. But rigidly defined boundaries that are not open to contestation are a problem, and Benjamin wants us to understand that choosing to see others as either absolutely separate or ideally similar closes the intersubjective space between us, and allows us to persist in our intrapsychic, omnipotent thinking. If the other presents no problem for the self, then the self is again absolute, in control of both its boundaries and the interaction. Benjamin observes that "the negativity that the other sets up for the self has its own possibilities, a productive irritation, heretofore insufficiently explored."[52] Arendt notes that this negativity is excluded by an intrapsychic (philosophical) approach to politics, in which the highest ideal is "forms produced by a mind which ... does not even need the stimulation – or rather the irritation—of the senses by objects other than itself."[53]

Another advantage of using an ideal from outside the human world as a model for politics is that we can choose to disregard (or bracket) sense perception and seek understanding through the operations of the mind alone. In order for reason to operate within each subject's mind, a certain amount of abstraction from the multiplicity of reality is necessary for philosophical argument. Socrates informs us that "[a] man must

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be able to define the idea of the good in his discourse, distinguishing it and abstracting it from all other things."(534c). Rawls and Habermas seem to subscribe to this philosophy as well, for both insist that only abstract agreements are valid in the political realms. "We should be prepared to find that the deeper the conflict, the higher the level of abstraction to which we must ascend to get a clear and uncluttered view of its roots,"[54] writes Rawls. Habermas agrees, constructing a moral point of view that is "distanced from the controversy" while at the same time asserting that "[m]ore discourse means more contradiction and difference. The more abstract the agreements become, the more diverse the disagreements with which we can *nonviolently* live."[55]

Another ideal that serves as a model for both Rawls and Habermas is the moral point of view. As we saw in previous chapters, this is a point of view from outside of the controversy, one that takes into account multiple points of view but either orients them towards justice or else incorporates them via "reconciliation" with one's own point of view. Even though Rawls and Habermas both acknowledge that one should be ready to accommodate other points of view (where reasonable), the moral point of view does not align itself with any particular person or position. Its strength is supposed to issue from the principles it embodies rather than the people who support or frame it. In this way, the moral point of view allows participants to feel as though their decisions are not influenced by anyone else, but rather by the principles of right and justice. The moral point of view fosters autonomy as self-governance, precisely because we submit to principles – such as what all could will -- rather than people.

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Interpersonal psychology tells us that this is indeed an illusion, however, and Arendt (and other thinkers) argue that it is a dangerous illusion as well. The notion of an all-encompassing morality is an enticing one, but it is based upon an assimilative and intrapsychic approach to other subjects. It does not register the relevance of differences in its push to resolve moral differences. But more importantly, Arendt argues, "impersonal" ideas such as reason, knowledge, truth, faith, or progress have a way of removing political responsibility from individual actors and clearing the way for oppression. While we cannot control the political realm, we must continue to see it as a product of our own decisions and actions, or else we risk domination at the hands of others who act in the name of some suprahuman ideal. Jane Flax makes the same point, albeit a little more polemically. "One of the dangerous consequences of transcendental notions of justice ... is that they release us as discrete persons from full responsibility for our acts. We remain children, waiting, if our own powers fail, for the higher authorities to save us from the consequences of our actions. ... We need to learn ways of making claims about and acting upon injustice without transcendental guarantees or illusions of innocence."[56]

A world without moral reassurance is a worrisome one, however, and filled with unpredictability and instability. It is understandable that actors should try to mitigate the uncertainty in the realm of politics, and as Arendt noted earlier, the ideals of *homo faber* are durability and stability, as they work to make thinks for the human world that can "stand against" such change. With this in mind, we can now explain through the

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rubric of making versus acting the overarching concern with stability and certainty in both Rawls and Habermas. To be fair, Rawls is more aboveboard about his desire for security than Habermas, whose approach is more open to continuing revision and questioning of norms that have been discursively established. Rawls argues that a freestanding conception of political liberalism, which is political in the right way (not as a mere modus vivendi) commands the assent of people as free, equal, and autonomous. With a modus vivendi, Rawls argues, "we cannot by actual agreements get beyond happenstance...". With political liberalism, the political conception is "complete," and it gives a reasonable answer to "all or nearly all questions concerning constitutional essentials and basic justice." In addition, political liberalism takes certain rights off the political agenda in order to "fix, once and for all, their content ..."; leaving certain rights on the agenda "subjects them to the shifting circumstances of time and place, and by greatly raising the stakes of political controversy, dangerously increases the insecurity and hostility of public life."[57] Political liberalism helps frame the context such that "intractable conflicts are unlikely to arise."[58]

Such security and certainty, however admirable in aim, is only possible in an intrapsychic realm, where we can "make" others see the world and each other the same way. Intractable conflicts, though difficult, give evidence that plurality is still alive and that individuals are working through the difficulties of intersubjectivity. In Rawls' framework, and Habermas' as well, we can only imagine a world free of these conflicts from an intrapsychic view. "The sheer cognitive concern of consciousness with its own

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content … must yield certainty, because here nothing is involved except what the mind has produced itself; nobody is interfering but the producer of the product, man is confronted with nothing and nobody but himself."[59] Attempts to "overcome" plurality, whether via political liberalism or communicative action, do not respect individuals *qua* men but instead represent a respect for abstract principles. Arendt sees that such attempts result in either arbitrary domination of others or "as in Stoicism, the exchange of the real world for an imaginary one where these others would simply not exist."[60]

Omnipotent Thought and Political Violence

When we refuse to move beyond our intrapsychic stance, the other ceases to appear to us as a separate subject and remains for us a mental object. This is not just a psychological difficulty, it is a serious political problem. "What psychoanalysis considers the problem of overcoming omnipotence is thus always linked to the ethical problem of respect and the political problem of nonviolence."[61] Interpersonal psychology argues that trying to make men better or worse is a common omnipotent stance, where we try to impose our internal perceptions of others on them. When the other does not comply, however, the subject has a choice—she can either register the impact of the other and try to work with him, creating an intersubjective space for recogition, or she can persist in her intrapsychic approach, now frustrated by the other's refusal. Benjamin explains that when frustrated by another, or by a world that does not comply with our wishes, we feel angry and threatened, which we express by aggressive impulses. Aggression, Benjamin reminds us, is a necessary moment in intersubjective

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engagement, one that cannot be thought away or repressed without serious psychic consequences. The trick therefore is not to *eliminate* aggression but to *manage* it into more or less acceptable expressions. Politically, this means at a minimum agreeing to talk rather than fight, even if the talk is argumentative. Benjamin calls the a "negativity of nonviolence," a concept we will be working with in the last chapter.

The ethical problem of nonviolence, then, and its affiliated problems of respect and recognition, cannot be "solved" by an appeal to a universal commonality. The "plurality that strains subjectivity" needs a space to appear if we are to try to see others as subjects, let alone equal subjects. "In the absence of intersubjectivity, the subject of reflection can only reflect upon itself, not account for the possible transformation made by the intervention of an other whose negativity is fully independent of the subject."[62] If the subject persists in a fantasy of omnipotence—wanting the other to do or be what he thinks is best – he loses an important relation not only to the other but to external reality. His thought remains enclosed within his own mental framework, which oscillates between me and not-me, good and evil, rational and irrational, etc. Omnipotence, we recall, is a mental state of undifferentiation, an inability to see the other as outside our control. And without an appreciation of the other, the subject may feel justified in harming her, because she appears to him only as an object, not as a separate subject. "Violence is the outer perimeter of the less dramatic tendency of the subject to force the other to either be or want what it wants, to assimilate the other to itself or make it a threat. It is the extension of reducing difference to sameness...".[63]

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Intersubjective recognition requires us to see the other both as external and as nonthreatening. Without this space, temporary and transient as it may be, we cannot see the other as a separate subject, which makes it difficult to act with her. Actual verbal aggression and contestation, then, is something of a psychological achievement, a recognition of another who may survive to receive our communication, our attempts at destruction. At the same time, however, verbal aggression can be a sign of coercion, intimidation, or domination, especially if the other is not also given a chance to be heard. This kind of communication comes from an intrapsychic position, one that is not interested in constructing space between self and other. This can have disastrous consequences, for "[t]he loss of externality plunges the self into unbearable aloneness, or escape into merger with like-self beings, creating an identity that demands the destructive denial of the different."[64]

If omnipotent thinking is not appropriate for politics, then, how do we think about acting politically? Arendt worried a great deal about thoughtlessness, which after all was one of Eichmann's worst weaknesses. What does it mean to think with or about others in ways that are not intrapsychic or omnipotent? If we turn to Arendt's account of thinking, we can find there a vision of what political as opposed to philosophical thought might look like.

Thinking, Representative and Otherwise

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As Arendt's critque of philosophy makes clear, political thinking is different from philosophical thinking. Philosophical thought, concerned with an ideal or a realm of ends, frames action as the means by which an end posited or revealed by reason is pursued. Arendt viewed this kind of thought as the activity of subsuming particulars under theoretical universals, a deductive exercise that leaves space neither for reflection or plurality. The danger of this kind of thinking, for Arendt, is that it diminishes our capacity for judgment, which is neither solitary nor fixed on external "truths" but representative, attuned to the multiplicity of different points of view.

Arendt draws on Kant for part of her explanation of political thinking. In this mode, what matters is not agreement with oneself, but to "think in the place of everybody else," what Kant calls an "enlarged mentality." This thinking process "is not, like the thought process of pure reasoning, a dialogue between me and myself," but "needs the presence of others 'in whose place' it must think, whose perspectives it must take into consideration, and without whom it never has the opportunity to operate at all."[65] In a familiar passage, she writes:

> Political thought is representative. I form an opinion by considering a given issue from different viewpoints, by making present to my mind the standpoints of those who are absent; that is, I represent them. This process of representation does not blindly adopt the actual views of those who stand somewhere else, and hence look upon the world from a different perspective; this is a question neither of empathy, as though I tried to be or feel like somebody else, nor of counting noses and joining a majority but of being and thinking in my own identity where actually I am not. The more people's standpoints I have present in my mind while I am pondering a given issue, and the better I can imagine how I would feel and think if I were in their place, the stronger will be my capacity for representative thinking and the more valid my final conclusions, my opinion.[66]

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It is interesting here to note the differences between this idea of political thinking and the way citizens "think" about each other in political liberalism or communicative action. Both Rawls and Habermas talk about "reasoning together," which involves getting outside of one's own particular point of view in order to achieve the impartiality of the moral point of view. Both theorists, particularly Habermas, also stress the importance of taking multiple points of view into account. But the key difference lies in the outcome of this kind of thinking for Rawls and Habermas. The purpose of considering multiple points of view for them is to *reconcile* them into some agreement that conforms to the ideal of justice. The moral point of view, which takes into account multiple points of view, must nonetheless be "cleansed of empirical admixtures" that appear in the particularities of each individual, so that we can be motivated "solely on the basis of reasons." The moral point of view for Habermas is a generalized one, a "true third-person perspective" that abstractly steps outside an interpersonal interaction in order to simultaneously includes and coordinates the perspectives of self and other(s). For Arendt, in sharp contrast, the point of representative thinking is to *inform one's own opinion*. This difference is extremely important from the perspective of interpersonal psychology.

Arendt continues her intuitive grasp of intersubjectivity in her account of political thinking. First, as noted in the passage from Arendt above, she realizes that intersubjective recognition is not the same thing as empathy, which carries an

assimilative overtone of merger or overriding the boundaries between self and other.

Second, throughout her account of thinking, Arendt takes herself with her; she thinks *as herself* where actually she is not, in order to better inform her opinions. She makes the standpoints of others present to her mind, but retains ownership of her mind, and allows others to remain responsible for theirs. She does not think with others in order to construct a moral point of view, but rather to better inform her *dokei moi*, "it seems to me." The metaphor then of "training the imagination to go visiting" is especially well suited to an intersubjective understanding of respect. To visit another, you have to cross a space between the two of you. And no matter how long or short the visit, there are always two (or more) subjects present in the interaction, which together form the space in which appearance and action take place. Arendt's point in *The Life of the Mind* , Villa writes, "is that the activity of thinking, when purified of the 'taint' of the world of appearances, loses its link to the activity of judging. Her surprising thesis is that pure thought is the death of judgment."[67]

Some of Arendt's commentators have taken her discussion of Kant's enlarged mentality as an invitation to view her as a deliberative democrat. Richard Bernstein and Ron Beiner, for example, find support in Arendt's account of political thinking for an "idealized form of public argument in which judgments are formed through the submission of opinions to the judgments of others." [68] In this view, judging is commensurate with participation in public dialogue with others with whom I must come to some agreement and decision. This view of judging allows theorists like Habermas

to appropriate Arendt's vision of publicity and judgment in the service of an ideal "unforced public dialogue."

Dana Villa challenges this reading of Arendt, and argues persuasively that this is not how thinking prepares for judgment, nor how thinking is related to political action. He notes that there seems to be a tension in Arendt between two different versions of judgment, one proceeding from the point of view of a political actor (as in the passage above) and a different one that springs from a spectator's point of view.[69] In this second sense, thinking offers one a vantage point of impartiality, distanced from human affairs and able to reflect upon them as though from the outside. It would be easy, Villa notes, to look at this second kind of thinking as a flagrant contradiction in Arendt's thought. However, Villa argues that in fact there is no contradiction, as long as we remember the "dissolvent" role that thinking has to play in relation to politics.

The impartiality of which Arendt speaks when she discusses thinking is, again, not the same as a philosophical impartiality. What Arendt means by impartiality is better understood as a spatial construct; detached enough from the context of existing values, rules, and the like enough to reflect on them. As a model for this kind of thinking, Arendt turns to Socrates, who "exposed our unexamined prejudgments to the 'wind of thought', dissolving prejudices but putting no 'truths' in their place."[70] This kind of "critical thinking," as performed by Socratic dialectic, is "essentially a destructive activity."[71] It prepares the way for judgment not by amassing different points of view but (perhaps at the same time) by emptying one of one's preconceived

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notions or opinions. Villa argues that it is the negative preparation for thinking that

Arendt valued most, and which she feared was disappearing under the influence of mass

culture. "Judgment of a particular phenomenon or event can be the by-product of

thinking, not because it is in any sense the direct result of thought, but rather because

thinking clears the space which makes it possible."[72]

Though negative and potentially disruptive, thinking for Arendt always remains

in contact with this human world and the real others that inhabit it. The standpoints of

the actor and the spectator then are not two diametrically opposed kinds of judgment but

differentiated elements of a kind of "independent judgment," what Arendt calls the

ability to think for oneself, or "without banisters." Impartiality allows one to "say what

is," to discern the particular and the new, to challenge existing patterns of thought.

"What links Socratic dialectic and Kantian enlarged thought for Arendt is the way both

yield not *the* truth or an Archimedean standpoint, but a more impartial (and hence more

valid) 'it appears to me.' …Impartial judgment, as conceived by Arendt, remains

perspectival in character."[73]

This kind of destructiveness may be part of the negativity of nonviolence that

Benjamin recommends. Arendt's concept of thinking preserves an important space

between self and other, one that sees the other as a subject of desire with her own

internal thoughts and needs, but also the possibility that these might be shared. As

Benjamin writes, "I have to be able to accept the impossibility of incorporating

otherness, but retain the ability to imagine it without being threatened or undone by

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it."[74] Our imagination, both individual and collective, is also central to Arendt's idea of political space.

Conclusion

With the help of interpersonal psychology, we can begin to see what a different understanding of intersubjectivity would mean for politics. Instead of trying to construct a morally coherent point of view, or (worse) construct an ideal citizen or form of reasoning, Arendt's political theory starts with what is and works forward from there. She does not view conflict and contestation as detrimental, but as part of the process of keeping the public sphere open to plurality. She also introduces a different way of thinking about others, one that maintains the tension between self and other without denying or abrogating the difference between the two. And finally, she warns about the dangers of substituting making for acting in the realm of politics, of imposing our will on other human "material," even if we are able to rationalize it in the name of justice.

But Arendt is not without her own difficulties, however. In her defense of plurality, she underestimates the divisiveness of difference, the ways in which people do feel threatened by otherness instead of challenged or enlivened. She speaks of courage in the realm of politics, which she surely possessed herself, but she may be too sanguine about its appearance in others, especially those who are already marginalized or dispossessed. If Rawls and Habermas have an assimilative view of others as

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reasonable, Arendt may have too an assimilative view of others as performative, as eager to engage in the public political realm with all of its costs and anxieties.

In her drive to unseat philosophical approaches to politics, Arendt often leaves us without any reassurances in the political realm. One of the functions that deontology (and other "ologies", including theology) performs is that of a holding function, keeping anxiety about others at bay and reassuring actors of their worth and place in the world. Arendt isn't very good about recognizing this psychological need, and indeed may inflame our anxiety by emphasizing the flux and haphazarndess of politics so much. True, she does offer certain "islands of certainty" in the form of promises, and a kind of redemption in forgiveness, but these do not get much systematic treatment in her writing.

In the next chapter, I want to consider whether we can enlist the help of interpersonal psychology in Arendt's defense, in two ways. The first part of this approach will speak to the realm of action itself, and what we can do to entice those who are otherwise reticent to engage in it. In order to preserve a space for plurality, we need those who are largely invisible to appear in it, to lower the boundaries such that action is not prohibitively costly, either literally or psychologically. In other words, while we may be able to *think* without banisters, we can't be expected to *act* without them. One question for our conclusion, then, is what banisters can we find in Arendt's account of action.

The second approach also relies on interpersonal psychology, but it involves looking at politics as one space among many. Politics, though important, is not the only place where important things occur, and in order for us to support it we need other spaces in which to be as well. Arendt gives some indication of this when she realizes that "...this whole [political] sphere, its greatness notwithstanding, is limited – that it does not encompass the whole of man's and the world's existence. It is limited by those things which men cannot change at will. And it is only by respecting its own borders that this realm, where we are free to act and to change, can remain intact, preserving its integrity and keeping its promises."[75] The relationship between politics and other spaces of freedom is the second question for our conclusion.

[1] Hannah Arendt, "What Is Freedom? " in *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*. (New York: Penguin Books 1993) p. 169. Hereafter BPF.

[2] Hannah Arendt, "Introduction *into* Politics," in *The Promise of Politics* (New York: Schocken Books 2005) p. 119.

[3] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*. Second Edition. (Chicago: Chicago University Press 1998) p. 46. Hereafter THC.

[4] Arendt, *THC* p.188.

[5] Arendt, "Introduction *into* Politics," p. 170.

[6] Arendt, *THC* p. 35.

[7] Arendt, "Introduction *into* Politics," p. 106.

[8] Dana Villa discusses the nature of this influence in detail in *Politics, Philosophy, Terror: Essays on the Thought of Hannah Arendt* . (New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1999) pp. 61-81.

[9] Villa, *Philosophy, Politics, Terror*, p. 76.

[10] Villa, *Politics, Philosophy, Terror*, p. 74.

[11] Hannah Arendt, "The abyss of freedom and the novus ordo seclorum" in *The Life of the Mind* (New York: Harcourt Publishing 1971) p. 200.

[12] Arendt, "Truth and Politics," in BPF, p. 243.

[13] Villa, *Politics, Philosophy, Terror* p. 67.

[14] Arendt, "Introduction *into* Politics," p. 94.

[15] Arendt, *THC* p. 175.

[16] Arendt, *THC* p. 176.

[17] Arendt, *THC* p. 179.

[18] Arendt, *THC* p. 179.

[19] Arendt, *THC* p. 186.

[20] Arendt, *THC* p. 176.

[21] Rawls, TJ p. 454-455.

[22] Rawls, PL p. xlvi.

[23] Habermas, *Justification and Application* pp. 45-46.

[24] Arendt, *THC* p. 208.

[25] Arendt, *THC* p. 50.

[26] Susan Bickford, *The Dissonance of Democracy*, p. 63.

[27] Arendt, "Introduction *into* Politics," p. 175.

[28] Rawls, TJ p. 122.

[29] Rawls, TJ p. 27-28.

[30] Arendt, *THC* p. 58.

[31] Hannah Arendt, "Truth and Politics," in *BPF* p. 242-243.

[32] Arendt, *THC* p. 178.

[33] Arendt, *THC* p. 178.

[34] Arendt, *THC* p. 184.

[35] Arendt, THC p. 190

[36] Arendt, *THC* pp. 233-4.

[37] Habermas, MCCA p. 188.

[38] THC p. 220.

[39] THC p. 188.

[40] Arendt, "What is Freedom?" in *BPF* p.157.

[41] Arendt, "What Is Freedom?" in *BPF* p.146.

[42] Arendt, "What Is Freedom?" in *BPF* p. 163.

[43] Arendt, *THC* pp. 143-144.

[44] Arendt, *THC* p. 126.

[45] Arendt, *THC* p. 137.

[46] Arendt, *THC* p. 139.

[47] Arendt, *THC* p. 140.

[48] Arendt, *THC* p. 141.

[49] Arendt, *THC* p. 161.

[50] References are to paragraphs in Sterling and Scott, trans. *Plato: The Republic*. (W.W. Norton & Co. 1985).

[51] Arendt, "What is Authority?" in *Between Past and Future*.

[52] Benjamin, SO p. 85.

[53] Arendt, *THC* p. 283.

[54] Rawls, PL p. 46.

[55] Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, p 140. Interestingly, Habermas here goes on to note that his idea of unity is still "treated as the enemy of individualism," but that the fault for this lies not with philosophy but with society, which has become too complex to be "made transparent from within." The problem as Habermas sees it is that we have "become alienated from ourselves as communicatively acting subjects," an alienation that can only be remedied by the unity of reason. "Even the decentered society cannot do without the reference point provided by the projected unity of an intersubjectively formed common will." *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, pp. 140-141.

[56] Jane Flax, "The End of Innocence," in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, ed. Judith Butler and Joan Scott. (New York: Routledge Press 1992) p. 459-460.

[57] Rawls, PL p. 162.

[58] Rawls, PL p. 156.

[59] Arendt, *THC* p. 280.

[60] Arendt, *THC* p. 234.

[61] Benjamin, *SO* p. 94.

[62] Benjamin, *SO* p. 93.

[63] Benjamin, SO p. 86.

[64] Benjamin, *SO* p. 96.

[65] Arendt, "The Crisis in Culture" in *BPF*, p. 220.

[66] Arendt, "Truth and Politics in *BPF* p. 241.

[67] Dana Villa, *Politics, Philosophy, Terror*, p. 85.

[68] Villa, p. 97.

[69] Villa, pp. 98-106.

[70] Villa, pp. 100-101.

[71] Villa, p. 101.

[72] Villa, p. 101.

[73] Villa, p. 103

[74] Benjamin, SO p. 64.

[75] Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, p. 264.

CONCLUSION: TRANSITIONS TO FREEDOM

Even though Arendt is remarkably in tune with many of the same ideas as Winnicott and Benjamin, there are still places where she falls short of intersubjective understanding or moves toward a position of mental omnipotence in her theorizing. Arendt famously had no use for psychology, viewing it as an exercise for the self-involved. An excessive concern with the self, with the interior spaces of desire, need, and feeling are threatening to Arendt's view because they draw people away from shared spaces and the work of co-constructing the political world. "Modern psychology is desert psychology," she writes. "Insofar as psychology tries to 'help' us, it helps us 'adjust' to those conditions, taking away our only hope, namely that we, who are not of the desert though we live in it, are able to transform it into a human world."[1]

Such a transformation, however, requires a set of psychological capabilities that Arendt takes for granted. In this sense, Arendt is not so much a "reluctant modernist" as she is a "reluctant psychoanalyst." She invites us to look beyond our private needs toward the public out of a love for the world, to see and co-construct an intersubjective space of both responsibility and freedom. This space "gathers us together and yet prevents our falling over each other, so to speak,"[2] like the table in Arendt's famous analogy. But this human world will not survive without our care. If we expect a public space to remain free, we must undertake its maintenance; we must have a care for the world beyond our private needs and interests. To live one's life entirely in private,

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Arendt argues, is "to be deprived of the possibility of achieving something more permanent than life itself."[3]

Arendt is profoundly aware of the relentless pull of necessity and the private, of the overwhelming tendency of need to blot our all other concerns. This is part of the explanation for her unwillingness to admit so-called "private" need into the political space. *Amor mundi* requires a kind of heroism to turn toward those concerns that extend beyond the scope of one's own life. It requires us to remember that though our concerns are everything to us, they are nothing at all to the human world we share. The world exists before us and will outlast us, and as such it "simply cannot afford to give primary concern to individual lives and the interests connected with them."[4] A care for the world stands in sharp contrast to private concerns of family, home, and security of the life process. "It requires courage even to leave the protective security of our four walls and enter the public realm, not because of particular dangers which may lie in wait for us, but because we have arrived in a realm where the concern for life has lost its validity. Courage liberates men from their worry about life for the freedom of the world. Courage is indispensable because in politics not life but the world is at stake."[5]

Without this courage and love for the world, Arendt's public sphere withers and dies, which is why she is so anxious to keep private needs away from politics. Arendt lacks a developmental psychology for a reason, then, and it is because she, just like Rawls and Habermas, does not want to consider psychological need as politically relevant. By splitting the private from the public, however, Arendt buries the critical

connection between home and politics: that all citizens are born and raised somewhere, before they make their appearance in public. The capabilities necessary for politics— courage, love of the world, speech and action --- are developed within the highly asymmetrical and private relationships of parents and children. The household isn't merely important because it offers a refuge from publicity. It is an important space in its own right, one that contains both love and hate and the struggle to navigate the two, the ongoing project of asserting self while maintaining relationships. The work that goes on in the household is much more differentiated than political theorists generally recognize.

Arendt suffers from the same lack of vision as Rawls and Habermas in regards to the family, seeing it as a locus of love and harmony that somehow 'produces' the psychological capabilities necessary for politics. For Rawls and Habermas, these capabilities are cognitive and dissociative; seeing principles separate from concrete persons, constructing a moral point of view distanced from controversies. For Arendt, these capabilities are more associative, involving a desire to inhabit a shared, common world and a belief that difference and plurality are a political if not personal good. We bring these capabilities with us into politics, where they structure our interactions with others. Thus, the moral components of political liberalism and communicative action allow subjects to control both the *content* of interpersonal interaction (i.e. what counts as "reasons") and the *aim* of political relationships (i.e. justice as fairness or common situation definitions). The contrasting political focus of Arendt, by contrast, does not

allow subjects nearly as much control over either the content or the aim of political action. Because of this, her political realm generates much more anxiety and discomfort than one structured by deontological rules.

In private spaces, one of our most treasured freedoms is that of choosing our relationships with others. In politics, however, one never knows who is going to show up in public space, since democracy (in particular) has to take all comers. In politics, as in the family, we do not choose our conversation partners. The hard fact of otherness seems coercive, and in a sense it is. So we try to control other aspects of the political encounter, in order to limit our exposure. We restrict public space in order to contain its unpredictability, or we construct barriers to entry that we rationalize as in the best interests of all. How we inhabit physical space often reflects these defenses to otherness, as in examples of urban ghettoization, white flight from inner cities, or private, gated luxury communities. And the rise of economic consumption can also be read as a psychological defense against relative interdependence, for in consumption we do not need to rely on anyone else's point of view. As Marcuse, Adorno, and other Frankfurt School theorists were fond of pointing out, capitalism and ownership exclude otherness, and in the economic marketplace there is no need to construct relationships.

One of the most frustrating things about Arendt is that she has so little to say about enabling participation or even appearance in the public realm. Arendt argues that the value of the public political realm lies in its space of appearance for plurality, for the presentation of multiple points of view and for the creativity that diversity can produce.

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And while she writes eloquently about the frustrations of action, its unpredictability and natality, she does not pay sufficient attention to the possibility that many will be unable, psychologically or materially, to participate in the public realm she describes. (She notes the temptation to substitute making for acting in public, but this applies only to those who are already willing to appear). The benefits Arendt ascribes to the public realm can only be realized if it is as inclusive as possible, for any absence diminishes plurality and limits our shared horizon. In the interests of inclusiveness, therefore, economic need must count as a political issue of the highest order.

Arendt's disavowal of psychological theory also leads her to discount the potential for domination and intimidation in the public sphere. In her repeated insistence that "politics is for grownups,"[6] she constructs a public realm inhabited by adults who treat each other equally and who engage one another without asymmetry or dependence. In contrast to the privacy of the home or the education of children, politics always plays out in a public sphere that encompasses her ideal of equality, "neither ruling nor being ruled." She recognizes that people try to coerce one another, but she handles this difficulty by defining it away—power is co-acting, anything else is violence. In her political world, men recognize each other as equals; "[a]uthority ... is incompatible with persuasion, which presupposes equality and works through a process of argumentation. Where arguments are used, authority is left in abeyance."[7] But if Arendt is correct about our appearing to each other as a *who*, recognition of differences will necessarily create inequalities and asymmetries. Interpersonal psychology alerts us

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to the impact of the other on the self, the identifications and projections that are constantly taking place. Arendt does not address these interpersonal effects, however, preferring to let action speak for itself.

In her silences concerning the other we can detect the pull of assimilative thinking. Arendt does not theorize a negotiation of relationships in the household, or consider how we develop an intersubjectivity that holds both the other and the self in tension. In the public realm, Arendt assumes that all citizens are capable, whether materially or psychologically, of engaging in the public contestation that is politics. But if we are honest with ourselves, we have to admit that those who are already the least visible – the poor, the disenfranchised, the marginalized members of society – are unlikely to find their way into Arendt's public realm.

In this last chapter, then, I'd like to accomplish two tasks. First, I'd like to address Arendt's division between the household and politics from a psychological point of view. As we will see, Arendt's characterization denies the important connection between home and politics, which is the rearing and education of future citizens. The psychological skills that Arendt demands of her "grown-ups" have their genesis in the private space of home, specifically in the first relation of infant to mother. A feeling of agency, seeing others as subjects, appreciating intersubjective space—these all spring from childhood experience. And so the circumstances of childhood matter immensely to politics, including issues such as housing, quality child care, and public education.

Second, I'd like to sketch a modified version of Arendtian politics that begins to

address the psychological barriers to participation. From within the home we bring

forward our various psychological capabilities, including the positive ones Arendt

describes, but also anxieties about otherness, desires for control, tendencies toward

omnipotence and aggression towards difference. One of the most common criticisms of

Arendt is that she has no normative guidelines for political action, other than her vague

offers of promising and forgiveness. In her admiration for plurality and appearance,

Arendt offers no secure spaces within the public realm, no banisters for acting together.

We can recall how morality operated as a holding function, psychologically, for Rawls

and Habermas, protecting us from anxiety and danger, allowing us to filter out difficult

elements. This idealization has its own problems, a particular blindness to the needs

and experiences of the concrete other. But in her critique of philosophy in defense of

politics, Arendt goes too far in the other direction, splitting the holding function entirely

from politics, and locating it in the home. This is also an idealization, as it assumes that

by virtue of being an adult, one has the courage to enter the public realm. What we

need is a concept of political and private space that holds the tension between security

and action, neither splitting it or making it paramount. We need *a politics of

transitional objects,* designed to create a navigable space for interaction with others in

the world.

Can we remodel Arendt's public space? As we mentioned above, Arendt's ideal

of thinking without banisters may not work as well for acting without them, especially

in a contestatory and plural environment. What handholds might we envision to encourage political participation, while still respecting the freedom of action? I'd like to suggest that we draw from Rawls' political liberalism in order to augment Arendt's political realm. This may seem surprising, given the psychological critique offered in previous chapters, but I think that procedurally, Rawls structures the political sphere in ways that would complement Arendt's political theory. (These additions will not leave Rawls' political liberalism recognizable as such, however). Obviously, Rawls' restrictions on political speech will have to be modified, as will his deontological commitment to justice. But we can work within his ideas of "seeing" others as equal citizens, with certain rights, within a bounded political space, in order to make politics somewhat less risky. Combine this with Arendt's understanding of politics as performativity, and the public sphere begins to look like a space we can learn to love or at least tolerate; limited but important, and less fraught with existential danger.

The Public and The Private in Arendt

Interpersonal psychology seeks to expand our appreciation of multiple spaces of freedom, and to resist the tendency to equate freedom solely with sovereignty or autonomy, which are possible only in our interior mental space. Winicott and Benjamin argue that individual freedom exists in several places at once, within and between an interior mental life, an external world, and a shared intersubjective space. Despite the difficulties with omnipotent thinking and splitting in our interactions with each other,

we could not do without such intrapsychic mechanisms, which remain essential for imagination. "The mind's ability to manipulate, to displace, to reverse, to turn one thing into another, is not a mere negation of reality but the source of mental creativity."[8] These abilities must be balanced, however, by the recognition of others within an intersubjectively shared space. Both the tension between self and other, and the ability to move between inner and outer psychic spaces, are important for a feeling of self in the world.

Arendt also has multiple spaces in her theory of the human condition, including the familiar triad of labor, work, and action. Many commentators have noted, however, that only one of these seems to be a realm of freedom for Arendt, who privileges the public realm of action over all else in her writings, describing it as the arena for the "the shining glory of great deeds."[9] As George Kateb persuasively argues, if we "notice her judgment of nonpolitical things," we can only conclude that for Arendt there is "an existential supremacy of political action."[10] There is a persistent tension between the spaces of human interaction in Arendt, and because her writings are weighted so heavily in favor of the public realm, it is hard to imagine that any other spaces matter very much. Given her lifelong project of rescuing the political from the social and the private, Arendt often writes as though the public realm of politics is indeed existentially supreme, and that the private, for example, only threatens that space. If there is tension between politics and other activities, it is easy to think that Arendt resolves this tension always in favor of the political.

Such a one-dimensional attachment to politics would be surprising in a theorist so devoted to plurality, however. True, for Arendt the private is "that which needs to be hidden;" she consistently describes the private as dark, shadowy, almost invisible, and "even the twilight which illuminates our private and intimate lives is ultimately derived from the much harsher light of the public realm."[11] Given her starkly contrasting language, it would be easy to conclude that Arendt assigns to the private all that is base and shameful, and to the public all that is glorious and honorable. But though Arendt insists that freedom is possible in the public realm, she does not, like many other political theorists, assume that the public can stand alone. Despite the importance of politics, she realizes that political space can only appear in contrast to, or out of, other spaces of human interaction.

Arendt never argues that the public space is sufficient for human flourishing; she is supremely aware of the importance of differentiated spaces for thought, family, work, and love. Arendt's passionate arguments on behalf of the political are not meant to posit it as the greatest good, but to remind us of the dangers of allowing that space to disappear. The significance of Arendt's phenomenology, like that of interpersonal psychology, is that it gives us multiple spaces in which to move. We can read Arendt's project as not only resurrecting the public realm as a space of freedom, but also convincing us that humans *need someplace meaningful to go* outside of the privacy of the home and the solitude of the self. Her protests and alarums about the public realm

are meant to draw our attention to the importance of multiple spaces of freedom and to warn us of the imminent demise of one of them.

Arendt acknowledges that the privacy of the household is a vital space for love and for the rearing of children, even though it is also the province of labor and necessity. She insists that "it is by no means true that only the necessary, the futile, and the shameful have their proper place in the private realm."[12] The private has its own space separate from the public because "there are a great many things which cannot withstand the implacable, bright light of the constant presence of others on the public scene."[13] The home is a necessary space for retreat and shelter. In her essay on "The Crisis In Education," Arendt speaks about the crucial need for privacy in the raising of children. A child "requires special protection and care so that nothing destructive may happen to him from the world," she writes.

> "Because the child must be protected against the world, his traditional place is in the family, whose adult members daily return back from the outside world and withdraw into the security of private life within four walls. These four walls, within which people's private family life is lived, constitute a shield against the world and specifically against the public aspect of the world. They enclose a secure place, without which no living thing can thrive."[14]

Children especially, but also adults, need a space of privacy and security away from "the merciless glare of the public realm," for whenever human life is consistently exposed to this glare, "its vital quality is destroyed."[15]

And so privacy, in particular a private place, is important because it offers "the only reliable hiding place from the common public world, not only from everything that

goes on in it but also from its very publicity, from being seen and being heard."[16] Without the private realm, the public "loses the quality of rising into sight from some darker ground which must remain hidden if it is not to lose its depth in a very real, non-subjective sense."[17] Our creativity, emotions, and depth need privacy in order to flourish, for "a life spent entirely in public, in the presence of others, becomes, as we would say, shallow."[18]

But at other times the home for Arendt is merely the Other of action, which is free and principled, light and glorious. Home, by contrast, is an unworldly space, dedicated to laboring in the service of human necessity. Home serves the needs of the body, of sustenance, of day to day living. Labor's lack of durability, what Arendt calls its "futility," is juxtaposed to its "great urgency;" labor is "motivated by a more powerful drive than anything else, because life itself depends on it."[19] Though labor is necessary for the reproduction and sustenance of life, even of more than one life, it never "produces" anything but life.[20]

Labor subjects us to a "constant, unending fight against the process of growth and decay through which nature forever invades the human artifice."[21] The labor of preserving the human world from natural decay is the "monotonous performance of daily repeated chores," and "the daily fight in which the human body is engaged to keep the world clean and prevent its decay bears little resemblance to heroic deeds; the endurance it needs to repair every day anew the waste of yesterday is not courage, and what makes the effort painful is not danger but its relentless repetition."[22]

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Indeed, it is in her remarks on pain that we encounter the starkest contrast to the public world of politics. Laboring, concerned as it is with the needs of the body, is a very private activity. "Nothing, in fact, is less common and less communicable, and therefore more securely shielded against the visibility and audibility of the public realm, than what goes on within the confines of the body, its pleasures and its pains, its laboring and consuming. Nothing, by the same token, ejects one more radically from the world than exclusive concentration upon the body's life, a concentration forced upon man in slavery or in the extremity of unbearable pain."[23] The experience of great bodily pain is "at the same time the most private and least communicable of all" feelings.[24] Similarly, Arendt says that the only activity that corresponds to the worldlessness of extreme pain is laboring, where the body "remains imprisoned in its metabolism with nature without ever transcending or freeing itself from the recurring cycle of its own functioning."[25]

Arendt's view of the household prevents her from theorizing the most important connection between it and the political realm; that citizens are born and raised there. Arendt's descriptions of the home are in some ways analogous to Freud's descriptions of the unconscious; both are dark, shadowy, unintelligible, filled with strong emotion. Her personal dislike of housework and labor permeates her perception of these other functions of the home, which are much more differentiated than she admits. Her complaints here sound childish at times, railing against a necessity that after all affects everyone. (I hear my 11 year old echoed in her comments: "Do I *have* to clean my

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room?") Despite her language about home as a private space away from politics, Arendt doesn't really see the value of being at home, in the responsibility for the creation of one's own space and the work of rearing children.

Arendt's theory of the private is also remarkably undifferentiated, save her recounting of the inequalities that seem permanently lodged there. To the ancients, "[p]rivacy was like the other, the dark and hidden side of the public realm, and while to be political meant to attain the highest possibility of human existence, to have no private place of one's own (like a slave) meant to be no longer human."[26] Arendt argues that according to Greek thought, citizens belonged to two orders of existence; one his private life of the household and the other "second" life, his *bios politikos*. For full citizenship, both were necessary; "without owning a house a man could not participate in the affairs of the world because he had no location in it which was properly his own."[27]

The household was the center of strictest inequality; the master ruled over both other family members and slaves, for "it was a matter of course that the mastering of the necessities of life in the household was the condition for freedom of the *polis*."[28] In the Greek view of the world, to labor meant to be a slave to necessity; because men were dominated by the necessities of life, they could only be free by dominating others (slaves) whom they subjected to labor and necessity by force. "The 'good life,' as Aristotle called the life of the citizen, therefore was not merely better, more carefree or nobler than ordinary life, but of an altogether different quality. It was 'good' to the

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extent that by having mastered the necessities of sheer life, by being freed from labor

and work, and by overcoming the innate urge of all living creatures for their own

survival, it was no longer bound to the biological life process."[29]

In Arendt's understanding, the Greeks thought that a life spent in the privacy of

one's own world (*idion*), outside of the public world, was "idiotic" by definition.

"Freedom originally meant nothing more than being able to go where one pleased, but

this included more than what we understand today as freedom of movement. It did not

mean merely that one was not subject to coercion by another person, but also that one

could remove oneself from the entire realm of coercion — of the household, along with

its 'family' …".[30] The polis was free not only because of what would happen there; the

polis was free *because it was not private*. As one theorist puts it succinctly, "It is as

though, for Arendt, freedom means getting out of the house."[31]

The inequality between parent and child, she argues, is a condition that needs to

be surmounted completely in order to act in the political realm. Arendt assumes that the

inequality that pervades the parent/child relationship is insurmountable, or at least,

inarticulable. Not only is politics for grown ups, but grown-ups have no need of further

education. In a strongly worded passage, she writes:

Education can play no part in politics, because in politics we always have to deal with
those who are already educated. Whoever wants to educate adults really wants to act as
their guardian and prevent them from political activity. Since one cannot educate
adults, the word 'education' has an evil sound in politics; there is a pretense of
education, when the real purpose is coercion without the use of force.[32]

This statement also explains her ideal of equality in the public realm. "To be free meant both not to be subject to the necessity of life or to the command of another *and* not to be in command oneself. It meant neither to rule nor to be ruled."[33]

Having moved away from intrapsychic space towards intersubjectivity, interpersonal psychology can now offer us a more robust and differentiated theory of family and home, including a less rigid division between home and politics. We know that early relationships in the family shape and influence the "relationships" so important for action, they affect how we see each other as siblings and later as citizens, and even our ability to recognize and work towards intersubjective recognition. Winnicott explains that if all goes well in separation and individuation, the older child comes to have an interest in the outside world that is a continuation of his excitement at the novel and unexpected from infancy. This interest persists alongside a vital inner life, however, and often in tension with it. How we process and deal with those tensions is both a personal and a political matter.

The space inside the home, moreover, is not exempt from psychological tension and domination. While we expect to see asymmetry and inequality between parent and child, often the paradigm of domination plays out between parents, to the detriment of both themselves and their children. The temptation that Arendt identifies in politics— namely substituting making for acting – can just as easily find expression in the private realm, again often with devastating results for (mostly) women and children. This too must be a concern for politics, one that Arendt never even approaches.

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Arendt's most perceptive comments, I believe, concern her appreciation for the different perspectives of home and politics. Both spaces are important for Arendt, but clearly the world looks very different depending on where one stands, in her view. What we are interested in here, however, is the role each space plays in a differentiated idea of freedom. We are free to interact differently with family members than with strangers; we may think differently about ourselves in private than in public. But most importantly, these two spaces can keep either one from becoming overwhelming, from seeming like "all there is," in a sense. Even within a family sensitive to intersubjective space, a feeling for the world can only develop by exposure to a broader public. "Being seen and being heard by others derive their significance from the fact that everybody sees and hears from a different position. This is the meaning of public life, compared to which even the richest and most satisfying family life can offer only the prolongation or multiplication of one's own position with its attending aspects and perspectives."[34] The family, in Arendt's understanding, can only confirm our private perspective, which limits us to our own particular understanding of the world. Outside of the family, in the public sphere, we encounter a multitude of perspectives that challenge and enlarge our own. This is why the freedom to leave the family and move into the public arena was so important for Arendt, and also why those who were bound to the private sphere could not be considered free. "The subjectivity of privacy can be prolonged and multiplied in a family, it can even become so strong that its weight is felt in the public realm; but this

family "world" can never replace the reality rising out of the sum total of aspects presented by one object to a multitude of spectators."[35]

If the private sphere and the home are essential for the development of individual citizens, we cannot split them neatly into separate categories as Arendt does. However, the privacy of the household is an important counterbalance to political action; Arendt's language about the importance of having a space away from the glare is accurate. Both the public and the private mutually reinforce each other, even as they pull against each other. This tension, though fluid and shifting, is necessary in order to protect multiple spaces in which to move. Allowing one to absorb the other diminishes our freedom, and so the important political question, for Arendt as well as for interpersonal psychology, is one of boundaries.

Political Relationships and Bounded Space

Arendt argues that Western political thinkers have for many years mistakenly assumed that there is something naturally political in man or that politics is the expression of some inner human essence. "This is simply not so; *man* is apolitical. Politics arises *between men* and is established as relationships."[36] Action establishes relationships among actors, regardless of its specific content. Thus, "the boundlessness of action is only the other side of its tremendous capacity for establishing relationships, that is, its specific productivity... ."[37] The boundlessness of action can be somewhat contained, however, by limitations and boundaries that we ourselves construct; Arendt mentions institutions and laws that protect private property, establish states and create

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political space. These man-made boundaries are important because of the inherent

boundlessness of action; and "this is why the old virtue of moderation, of keeping

within bounds, is indeed one of the political virtues par excellence, just as the political

temptation par excellence is indeed *hubris* ... and not the will to power, as we are

inclined to believe."[38]

Such boundaries have always been essential to maintaining separate spaces,

even though they frequently change. Today, for example, we think of laws as specific

prohibitions or permissions, a modern incarnation of what Arendt calls the decalogue of

"thou shalts" and "thou shalt nots." But in antiquity, the law's function was more

political. "The law originally was identified with this boundary line [between one

household and another], which in ancient times was still actually a space, a kind of no

man's land between the private and the public, sheltering and protecting both realms

while, at the same time, separating them from each other."[39]

From the point of view of interpersonal psychology, we can think of boundaries

as transitional objects. Knowing what kinds of relationships are expected or appropriate

is enormously helpful in encouraging people to enter public space. This is especially

important in politics, where many things are open to discussion. It can help participants

to know, for example, that only certain topics or decisions are "on the table," that there

is a format for speaking, etc. But most importantly, I think, is a protection of the

individual's space for self-presentation, one that allows him to decide how much of

himself to reveal or disclose. The same plurality that Arendt praises can also be

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frightening for many; politics is one area in which we do not choose our audience or our interlocutors. In order for people to feel at all comfortable in this space, they must retain some measure of control over their own expressions.

Anxiety over the lack of boundaries or handholds in politics may help explain why it seems that more and more political issues get pushed into the judicial sphere for resolution. Despite the fact that lawsuits are prohibitively expensive for most, they offer a set of rules and guidelines that political deliberation does not. The plaintiffs and defendants are defined in the pleadings, and a judge rules on whether other parties have enough "standing," meaning interest, in the issue to allow them to get involved. Legal proceedings provide avenues and rules for discovery, which ascertains the relevant facts. They allow parties to "speak" through their representative lawyers, rather than engaging one another directly. But perhaps most importantly, they offer a definite conclusion in the form of a ruling or a verdict, with yet another set of rules on how to proceed from that point forward. The judicial process seems much less open ended than politics, and so may seem like a more secure avenue for redress.

I think Arendt would be critical of a "turn" to judicial resolution, however, precisely because it does not have the goal of protecting a space for plurality. Politics needs its own space for reasons other than simply resolving conflicts. This is one reason why I prefer to draw on Rawls rather than Habermas for the idea of political boundaries. To begin with, Habermas does not develop a firm distinction between what is political and what is not; his theory would seem to blur the line between public and

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private in communicative action. As Benhabib notes, "[c]ommunicative ethics promotes a universalist and postconventionalist perspective on all ethical relations: it has implications for familial life no less than for the democratic legislatures."[40] Habermas' ideal discourse also removes the pressure to "decide" or "act" based on the deliberation, a pressure I will argue shortly is an important one for politics. But mostly I draw on Rawls because he approaches politics as a bounded space, even if his boundaries are firmer than we might like.

Rawls recognizes that citizens will have both political and nonpolitical aims. Political liberalism concerns their political aims, which involve constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice. Politics for Rawls thus occupies its own specific space; it is about certain things, starting with an initial definition of "constitutional essentials" that is of course open to discussion. Rawls also incorporates some procedures for structuring political discussion, such as public reason and the burdens of judgment, which would serve as transitional objects for initiating the political conversation. These however should operate as suggestions rather than requirements; that is, no one should be excluded for not adhering to these suggested discursive restraints. The equal right to participation must be one of the most important, if indeed plurality is to have space for appearance in public.

Rawls requires that citizens view each other as free and equal, abstracting from contingencies such as social or cultural differences. As I have argued above, this is an unnecessarily limited view of the other, but I'd like to retain Rawls' impulse here. In

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order to recognize the other as a separate subject, we have to be able to engage the imagination somewhat, to search for points of commonality and difference within the conversation. Political liberalism specifies in advance what that commonality is (autonomy), but that need not be the case. What matters is the effort to connect or engage, not seeing the other as the same as oneself. Along these lines, then, we should expect to see rather more conflict in discussion than Rawls would like, but as we know this is part of the cycle of destruction and survival, where intersubjectivity is created. While there should be limits on aggression and conflict, verbal expression needs space to play out in a negativity of nonviolence.

Finally, political liberalism cannot specify the internal reasons for one's support of a political solution; doing so crosses the line in terms of intersubjective respect. We may wish and hope that citizens come to political participation with a sense of justice already in hand, but we cannot marginalize or exlude them from the conversation if they do not. Rawls' demand that the overlapping consensus be political "in the right way" has always seemed to me sharply at odds with one of the best impulses of liberalism, that which censures a man's actions but not his thoughts. This means that political liberalism must be content with a *modus vivendi*, even though it would like its overlapping consensus to command the assent of all free and equal citizens. The advantage to a *modus vivendi*, however, is that it exists as a separate thing that citizens can work to create in the political realm; like a constitution or a set of laws, people can work together to create or defeat it. This concept of a work in progress is extremely

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important from a psychological standpoint. It allows citizens to take responsibility for their acts and creations, to extend the relationships beyond discussion into action. A *modus vivendi* is a "good enough" politics, in Winnicott's terms. To ask for more is to indulge in philosophical fantasy.

Approaching politics as a bounded space also allows us to ask important questions about what needs are addressable politically and what needs are not. Recognizing that all citizens have psychological needs does not answer the question of whether they are appropriate for political solutions. This means that what "counts" as political may shift from time to time, depending on the circumstances and needs of those who show up in public. Consider for example Arendt's treatment of pain as a private matter. Her separation of "social" questions from "political" ones is based on the assumption that pain precludes all other concerns. Necessity is always pre-political for Arendt, for in antiquity "[p]ublic life was possible only after the much more urgent needs of life itself had been taken care of."[41] The urgency of our bodies' needs makes a concern for the world too difficult; those in dire need are, understandably, not able to look beyond their own self-preservation. The "problem of poverty," Arendt argues, obscures the space of freedom, as it did in the French Revolution, with the appearance of the *sans-culottes*. "When they appeared on the scene of politics, necessity appeared with them, and the result was that the power of the old regime became impotent and the new republic was stillborn; freedom had to be surrendered to necessity, to the urgency of the life process itself."[42]

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Pain is problematic because it is hard to watch, it calls forth a response to need that we might prefer to overlook. Pain is difficult, but not impossible, to communicate, and is often visible even without words. While it may be that the experience of pain is private, is all pain apolitical? What about that pain that it is within our power to alleviate? Splitting the social from the political is one way of dealing with this problem, but it is a psychologically risky one. Without spaces to speak about pain, people often find other avenues for expression, such as hanging nooses on trees or bringing guns into classrooms. For the events of the French Revolution tell us not just that necessity can dominate freedom, but that *recognition is something for which people will risk their lives*. By excluding those in need from the public sphere, we not only efface the plurality and reality of our shared world, we deny them the opportunity to speak and be heard, to ameliorate their pain somewhat through admission into a shared space. Arendt beautifully articulates the importance of recognition in a passage in *On Revolution* where she discusses the curse of poverty. What is so painful for those that suffer want is that

> their lives are without consequence, and that they remain excluded from the light of the public realm where excellence can shine; they stand in darkness wherever they go. As John Adams saw it: "the poor man's conscience is clear, yet he is ashamed ... He feels himself out of the sight of others, groping in the dark. Mankind takes no notice of him. He rambles and wanders unheeded. In the midst of a crowd, at church, in the market ... he is in as much obscurity as he would be in a garrett or a cellar. He is not disapproved, censured, or reproached; *he is only not seen* ...To be wholly overlooked, and to know it, are intolerable."[43]

Regardless then of the outcome, political discussion provides space for appearance and recognition, provided it is sufficiently inclusive. Beyond this, at some point the thinking and discussions need to stop, and we need to get on with the doing.

Apart from institutional boundaries, however, there are internal, intrapsychic ways of thinking about politics that can contain it and keep it from feeling so risky. Arendt frequently talks about politics as performance, an approach that is very much in tune with interpersonal psychology.

Performance, Virtuosity, and a Space for Play

The end or *raison d'etre* of the political is "to establish and keep in existence a space where freedom as virtuosity can appear."[44] Arendt often refers to the political realm as a stage for performance, where men actively reveal themselves and appear to each other. In appropriating the metaphor of appearance on the stage, Arendt runs confidently against the grain of a political tradition that has, at least since Plato, rebelled against "mere appearance" as destructive of political authenticity. As we shall see, Arendt is after a space of freedom that a politics of authenticity forecloses.

It may be helpful here again to recall the modern versions of politics Arendt wishes to dislodge. First, she wants to move away from the idea of politics as merely a means for groups to secure social or political goods (resources or rights, etc). She rejects the idea of politics as simply a place where people express their private needs. To combat these views, she offers the concept of the political persona, one distinct from but related to the private person, a kind of mask that maintains a distance but allows

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one's voice to be heard. Adopting a political persona allows one to enter the theater of the political, to display one's views for discussion for a specific and limited purpose. Who we are in public need not reveal all of ourselves; conversely, we ought not expect politics to address all of our needs.

When we act in public we do not all act at the same time. "Performing artists ... need an audience to show their virtuosity, just as acting men need the presence of others before whom they can appear; both need a publicly organized space for their 'work,' and both depend upon others for the performance itself."[45] The actor needs the audience just as the audience needs the actor; they reciprocally define each other in the performance itself, and work together to keep the space open. "[J]ust as the actor depends upon stage, fellow-actors, and spectators, to make his entrance, every living thing depends upon a world that solidly appears as the location for its own appearance, on fellow-creatures to play with, and on spectators to acknowledge and recognize its existence."[46] In this understanding, citizens play with different political ideas via the persona they adopt upon entering the public realm. In maintaining a space between the private and the public self, citizens can both protect themselves somewhat from the contestation in public, and also leave room to evaluate the interplay of politics as it unfolds. The "role" of an audience member also allows those who are too timid to speak to be fully engaged.

Arendt compares this dramatic idea of freedom with another politics of performance in Machiavelli. "Freedom as inherent in action is perhaps best illustrated

by Machiavelli's concept of *virtu*, the excellence with which man answers the opportunities the world opens up before him ... Its meaning is best rendered by 'virtuosity,' that is, an excellence we attribute to the performing arts (as distinguished from the creative arts of making), ..."[47] The Greeks always used images of flute-playing, dancing, healing, seafaring when discussing politics, drawing their metaphors from things where virtuosity mattered.

Susan Bickford captures the interdependence of actor and audience in her analysis of political listening. "Reception and appearance are bound up together, as acts of unique humans, as the constituents of worldly reality. So the further unarticulated paradox of plurality is that the appearance of individuality in the world requires togetherness. This togetherness, this 'presence' of others that makes real my distinctive public self, involves not the mere existence of other human beings, but their active attention."[48] The audience is every bit as important as the actors, for they gain a perspective that the actors, whose attention is consumed by the acting, cannot have. Attention, like recognition, is a gift of the audience to the actor. In this space is a give-and-take, a back-and-forth, that is important for intersubjectivity.

Using the performative metaphor of music, Nietzsche in one of his loveliest aphorisms describes how approaching the unfamiliar across a distance can actually create a connection between performer and audience.

> This is what happens to us in music: First one has to *learn to hear* a
> figure and melody at all, to detect and distinguish it, to isolate and delimit it as a
> separate life. Then it requires some exertion and good will to *tolerate* it in spite

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of its strangeness, to be patient with its appearance and expression, and kindhearted about its oddity. Finally there comes a moment when we are *used* to it, when we wait for it, when we sense that we should miss it if it were missing . . . That is how we have *learned to love* all things that we now love. In the end we are always rewarded for our good will, our patience, fairmindedness, and gentleness with what is strange; gradually, it sheds its veil and turns out to be a new and indescribable beauty. That is its *thanks* for our hospitality.[49]

Arendt pushes the performative metaphor even further with her concept of the mask in politics. In plays, ancient actors would adopt a *dramatis personae*, an alternate persona which they would make manifest by the wearing of a mask. Arendt writes that the dramatic mask "had to hide, or rather to replace, the actor's own face and countenance, but in a way that would make it possible for the voice to sound through."[50] The sound of the voice is critical for Arendt's use of this idea, for it is through the voice that the actor appears; the mask does not work to deceive or manipulate but rather to facilitate the performance. Behind the mask is "a 'natural man'—that is, a *homo* in the original meaning of the word, indicating someone outside the range of the law and the body politic of citizens."[51] Taking on the role of a citizen creates a distance between the "natural" and the political self, possibly taking much of the risk out of appearing in public. Because of the exposure inherent in speech, a willingness to act and speak at all requires a kind of courage. "And this courage is not necessarily ... related to a willingness to suffer the consequences; courage and even boldness are already present in leaving one's private hiding place and showing who one is, in disclosing and

exposing oneself."[52] Thinking about political engagement as a performance may lessen the amount of courage required to participate.

Arendt was keenly aware of the public antipathy toward regarding politics as theater, and particularly toward the idea of a space between a public and a private self. It is out of concerns about such a space that Plato warns against the sophists, who use words merely to manipulate and control. "Since appearances always present themselves in the guise of seeming, pretense and willful deception on the part of the performer, error and illusion on the part of the spectator are, inevitably, among the inherent potentialities."[53] But action in the form of self-presentation presumes a reflexivity, a self-awareness of the space one is in and the boundaries between spheres of existence. To be able to "play" with different ideas in politics would indeed be a space of freedom.

I do not want to suggest for a moment that politics is anything less than serious, however. By invoking "play," I mean only to invoke ideas of a space between a symbol, for example, and what is symbolized. Play in this context is simply another way of characterizing intersubjective space, of noticing that the ideas I attribute to people are often just that—my ideas of them. A space between a private self and a political self permits, paradoxically, a closer engagement with otherness, in that one can "try on" different perspectives without feeling that one's core self will be dissolved in the process. Dana Villa makes this point using Richard Sennett's work on the *theatrum mundi*, Appearance in public in the eighteenth century was governed by a set of conventions that enabled an "impersonal sociability" between citizens. These

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conventions "opened a communicative space that worked by creating a distance between the actor and his acts or appearances. Within this conventionally defined space, judgment and understanding focused on the act, the gesture, the word, rather than the agent behind them."[54] A space between the actor and his acts, therefore, allows one to disagree with one's opponent "without feeling the need to demonize the *person* of the opponent."[55]

This is yet another facet of the freedom afforded by Arendtian politics. Not merely a freedom from necessity, but a freedom to develop a nimbleness of movement between private and public concerns. Villa, quoting Sennett, calls this "the ability to play with and invest feeling in external images of self."[56] This is a space of freedom that a politics of authenticity misses, whether authentic presentation of a whole, unified self or authentic devotion to cooperative searches for truth. If we rid ourselves of the notion that we can only present who we *really* are in public, we are free to develop one interesting political approach suggested by Winnicott, one that combines the idea of virtuosity and performance. In contrast to Arendt's ideal of neither ruling nor being ruled, Winnicott suggests that we consciously reenact this inequality, by choosing roles of leader and follower.

"The psychological consideration here is that there is in the history of every individual the fact of the parent-child relationship."[57] This experience of inequality may be the only truly universal moral feeling, which would explain the immense attraction of a democratic theory that promises only self-rule. Understandably, freedom from

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domination is one of the primary political goals. However, such freedom does not necessarily mean that there is no leadership in democratic politics. In a representative system, we exercise our self-rule by choosing those who will lead us; our leaders stand in the parental role for a limited time and for limited purposes. As Winnicott explains, "[i]t is as if it is convenient to play a game of parents and children because things work out better that way. In other words, because there are advantages in the parent-child relationship, some of this is retained; but, for this to be possible, a sufficient proportion of individuals need to be grown up enough not to mind playing at being children."[58]

Playing at being children, however, does not mean retaining a childish omnipotence, trying to demand that the world conform to one's own ideals. Grown ups who play at being children provisionally adopt the position of follower in the interests of getting things done in the public sphere. They realize that maintaining a space for political freedom requires a plurality of roles, not all of which will be dominant ones. In the interests of politics, however, they retain their own space for judgment while agreeing not to contest leadership on certain issues. And they also recognize, Arendt's sentiments aside, that the public realm is actually a space for education, because no one perspective can encompass the whole political situation. Arendt's insistence that education is not appropriate in public contradicts her desire that we learn to see other points of view. We have access to this "education," understood broadly as exposure to the new, only if we are willing to give up on the illusion of all-knowing omnipotence. We have to be mature enough not to mind playing a supporting role.

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Performativity, then, is not meant to suggest a play for attention or power over others. It suggests rather a particular way of thinking about political engagement, one that maintains a space between a self and its beliefs, and sees that space in others as well. This also helps to delimit political space, to prevent it from being overrun with needs that politics cannot address. As Dana Villa writes, " ... the real problem is not how to encourage and make room for expression, unruly or otherwise. Rather, it is how to promote an ethos of independent thought and action, one that is sufficiently impersonal to be both morally serious and publicly oriented."[59]

This combination of moral seriousness and public orientation finds expression in Arendt's concept of acting from principle. Whereas in private we act out of motivation or will, in public our action springs from something "altogether different." Arendt identifies a mode of action that is acting from principles, which "do not operate from within the self as motives do ... but inspire, as it were, from without."[60] Because such a principle survives the actions that attempt to embody it and because it is not bound to a particular person or group, Arendt says that "the inspiring principle becomes fully manifest only in the performing act itself ... ."[61] Such principles are much more general than what we usually consider as motives. The kinds of principles Arendt mentions are honor, glory, love of equality, virtue, excellence, but also fear or distrust or hatred.

Arendt does not specify a normative framework for action, though, and this is a source of concern for some of her readers. It bothers George Kateb, for example, that

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Arendt's idea of freedom lacks any kind of moral compass. "What is involved is not altruism, but self-forgetting—self-forgetting as death-forgetting."[62] Kateb worries that acting from principle has no internal safeguard against acting from truly evil inspirations. "One acts from a principle," Kateb writes, "when one spends one's political life, one's worldly career, dominated by the effort to live up to the objective requirements of a single loyalty, and to do so at whatever cost to one's interests."[63] Whether that single loyalty is evil, Kateb notes, Arendt does not seem concerned to address.

It may well be that Arendt dismisses too quickly the kinds of moral concerns that Kateb raises. Clearly it is more important to her that we act in the public sphere from principle (good or bad) than that we remain enclosed in our private spaces. Openness may be more important to her than morality. But this is because her primary concern is human freedom. Acting from principle does mean, as Kateb notes, "to be free of self."[64] But this freedom from self is not a freedom from responsibility, rather it is a freedom from the self of private need so that one can be free *for* the concerns of the world. The principles of which Arendt speaks are always concerned with human relationships in this world; they are much more intersubjective than the moral principles advanced by Rawls and Habermas. The principles that inspire from without draw our attention away from our needs towards something in the world. In this sense, Dana Villa's interpretation seems more apt. He recognizes that what acting from principle introduces is a deliberate impersonality for the actor, the option to not be dominated by

felt need. "[T]he main reason Arendt links the freedom of action to the 'inspiration' of principles is that she is looking for a way to *depersonalize* political action, to separate it from the inner determination of 'the assertive will, the calculating intelligence, the impassioned heart, or the urges of the body or spirit.'"[65]

As interpersonal psychology makes clear, however, we can only depersonalize politics to a certain extent. Relationships are the raw materials of politics because the people around us motivate us to act, influence how we think, co-construct our world. Every moral principle comes to us through some embodied human, whose relationship impacts and alters us in ways we may not choose. I've highlighted one relationship in this dissertation, that of mother and infant, but there are numerous others that political theory stops short of including. Once we take seriously an intersubjective space of freedom, the idea of being moved by principles or reasons *alone* begins to have a hollow ring.

The difficulty is that interpersonal influence is double sided. Other people both feed us *and* wound us, they motivate us *and* injure us, they free us *and* imprison us. Intersubjectivity is a "fragile, unenclosed space, … a possible reciprocity of difference and recognition, from which negativity, both creative and disastrous, cannot be excluded."[66] Appealing to a moral point of view obscures the reality of personal influence, in both its positive and negative valences. By looking at politics on its own human terms, however, we can attempt to enclose that space somewhat, and while we cannot exclude disastrous possibilities entirely, we may be able to limit them somewhat

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through institutions, laws, and other human artifacts. Like the string that Winnicott's

patient used to connect himself with his parents, we can structure ("work on")

procedures that make it easier for us to come together.

Political Equality and Imagination

Finally, a space between self and acts also contributes to the construction of

equality, which Arendt consistently distinguishes from a natural attribute of man. In

classical Greece freedom was not the democratic, egalitarian ideal we think of today.

Only a few could belong to the polis, mostly heads of households who neither labored

nor worked. "To be sure, this equality of the political realm has very little in common

with our concept of equality; it meant to live among and have to deal only with one's

peers, and it presupposed the existence of 'unequals' who, as a matter of fact, were

always the majority of the population of the city-state."[67] The idea of natural rights, of

an equality that everyone deserves just by virtue of being human, is not part of

Arendtian equality.

Arendt says all men are not created equal, nor does history support the idea that

we are very good at seeing each other this way. Arendt marshals painful and difficult

evidence for her proposition that humans do not now nor have they ever considered

each other as equals, that a natural right to equality is almost a cruel myth. In *Origins of*

Totalitarianism, Arendt describes in vivid detail the reactions of Europeans to

"savages" they encountered in Africa. Not only were these indigenous peoples not even

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considered equal, the European settlers did not even consider their massacre murder, since that concept applies only to the killing of human beings.

If equality is important for us, Arendt argues, we must look for it in the human sphere of politics rather than the natural world. "The equality attending the public realm is necessarily an equality of unequals who stand in need of being 'equalized' in certain respects and for specific purposes. ... Political equality, therefore, is the very opposite of our equality before death... ."[68] Arendt is especially eager to prevent our construing equality as sameness, which would have the disastrous result of leveling the plurality so necessary to human freedom. As Margaret Canovan writes, "sameness is different from equality. The latter is a political condition in which people who are not the same are equalized by sharing a common political world that has space for their differences—differences of interest and opinion, of religion and ethnicity and of sheer individuality."[69] This kind of equality, however, is extremely difficult to achieve, as it depends on our willingness to act with others rather than dominate or assimilate them.

Our discussions of Rawls and Habermas show that their ways of viewing others as "equal" are assimilative and omnipotent. Both political liberalism and communicative action impose an ideal of autonomy on all others, in order to generate a mutual respect for normative principles. How we view others as like or different from ourselves will vary with our individual experiences, resulting in a more uneven, but genuine, interaction. Political equality does need to be "constructed," but by that we mean simply "imagined," not specified as to content. As Martha Nussbaum explains:

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We are reminded that the vision of human equality is just that, a vision, an imagining, a seeing of something in something. ... It is only through the generous work of the imagination that we people the world around us with life, going beyond what is straightforwardly present in perception to suppose the presence of ... thought, feeling, and dignity in our fellow citizens. ... To think the equality of black and white is to cast aside the idea that a human being can be a mere object, an "animate tool," as Aristotle defined the slave. It is to think instead that the black person has an inner world and depth; it is to probe into this depth.[70]

Imagining an inner world is not the same as seeing its content, which is why equality cannot be restricted to a conception of persons as free and equal, reasonable and rational. Enumerating in advance what counts towards equality still allows us to objectify those who do not comply with our ideal. This imagining occurs in multiple spaces, but is especially important in the bounded space of politics. This is where we agree to treat all equally—as equal bearers of subjectivity, equally entitled to participate in the plurality that holds public space open. All are equally entitled to a response from us, whether positive or negative, once in the public sphere. And we bear the responsibility for allowing others to exist as subjects in their own right, while at the same time asserting ourselves in tension with our relationship to them. We must take ownership of our own destructive tendencies, and recognize them in others, without giving up on the potential for shared public space. Benjamin explains that psychologically, our commitment to intersubjective tension is " ... motivated not by a compulsion to restore unity but out of the wish to be less resentful and afraid of projected anger, less terrified of loss, less punitive toward what one desires."[71]

[1] Arendt, *The Promise of Politics,* (New York: Schocken Books 2005) p. 201.

[2] Arendt, *The Human Condition.* Second Edition. (Chicago: Chicago University Press 1998) p. 52. Hereafter THC.

[3] Arendt, *THC* p. 58.

[4] Arendt, "What Is Freedom?" in *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought.* (New York: Penguin Books 1993) p. 156. Hereafter BPF.

[5] Arendt, *BPF,* p. 156.

[6] See Arendt, *BPF* pp.190-192.

[7] Arendt, *BPF* p. 93.

[8] Jessica Benjamin *Like Subjects, Love Objects: Essays on Recognition and Sexual Difference.* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1995) p. 44. Hereafter LSLO.

[9] Arendt, *THC* p.35.

[10] George Kateb, *Hannah Arendt: Politics, Conscience, Evil.* (New Jersey: Rowman and Allanheld 1983) pp. 5-6.

[11] Arendt, *THC* p. 51.

[12] Arendt, *THC* p. 73.

[13] Hannah Arendt, THC p. 51

[14] Arendt, *BPF* p. 186.

[15] Arendt, *BPF p.* 186.

[16] Arendt, *THC* p. 71.

[17] Arendt, *THC* p. 71.

[18] Arendt, *THC* p. 71.

[19] Arendt, *THC* p. 87.

[20] Arendt, *THC* p. 88.

[21] Arendt, *THC* p. 100.

[22] Arendt, *THC* pp. 100-101.

[23] Arendt, *THC* p. 112.

[24] Arendt, *THC* p. 50.

[25] Arendt, *THC* p. 115.

[26] Arendt, *THC* p. 64.

[27] Arendt, *THC* pp. 29-30.

[28] Arendt, *THC* p. 31.

[29] Arendt, *THC* pp. 36-37.

[30] Hannah Arendt, "Introduction *into* Politics," in *The Promise of Politics* (New York: Schocken Books 2005) p. 121.

[31] Norma Claire Moruzzi, *Speaking Through the Mask: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Social Identity.* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 2000) p. 139.

[32] Arendt *BPF* p. 177.

[33] Arendt, *THC* p. 32.

[34] Arendt, *THC* p. 57.

[35] Arendt *THC* p. 57.
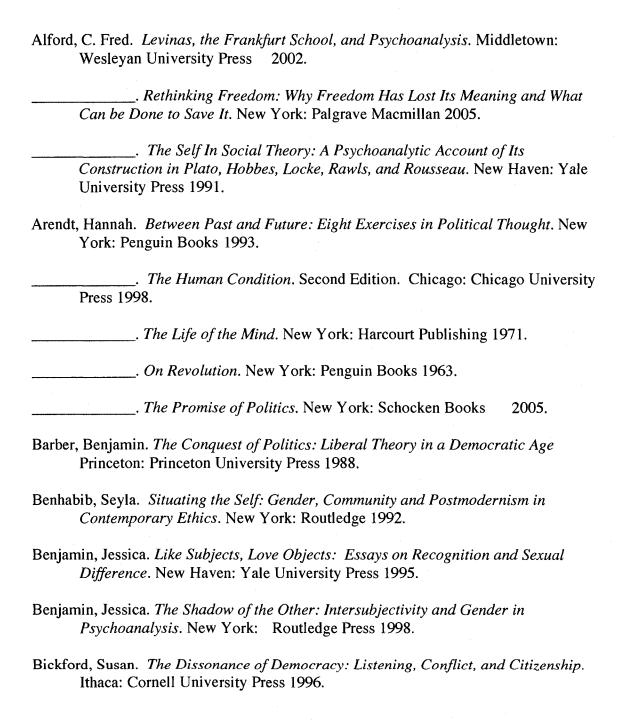
[36] Arendt, "Introduction *into* Politics," p. 95.

[37] Arendt, *THC* p. 191.

[38] Arendt, *THC* p. 191.

[39] Arendt, *THC* p. 63.

[40] Seyla Benhabib, Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics. (New York: Routledge 1992) p. 39.

[41] Arendt, *THC* p. 72-73.

[42] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution.* (New York: Penguin Books 1963) p. 54.

[43] Arendt, *On Revolution.* (New York: Penguin Books 1990) p. 69.

[44] Arendt, *BPF* p. 154.

[45] Arendt, *BPF* p. 154.

[46] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* p. 22.

[47] Arendt, *BPF* p. 153.

[48] Susan Bickford, *The Dissonance of Democracy: : Listening, Conflict, and Citizenship* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1996) p. 63.

[49] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* Trans. W. Kaufmann (Random House 1974) p. 262.

[50] Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 106.

[51] Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 107.

[52] Arendt, *THC* p. 186.

[53] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* p. 36.

[54] Dana Villa, *Politics, Philosophy, Terror:* p. 148.

[55] Villa, *Politics, Philosophy, Terror*, p. 148.

[56] Villa, *Politics, Philosophy, Terror*, p. 149-150.

[57] D.W. Winnicott, *Home Is Where We Start From: Essays by a Psychoanalyst.* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co. 1986) p. 254.

[58] Winnicott, *Home is Where We Start From*, p. 254.

[59] Villa, Politics, Philosophy, Terror: Essays on the Thought of Hannah Arendt . (New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1999) p. 109.

[60] Arendt, *BPF,* p. 152.

[61] Arendt, *BPF,* p. 152.

[62] Kateb, *Hannah Arendt: Politics, Conscience, Evil* p. 13.

[63] Kateb, *Hannah Arendt: Politics, Conscience, Evil,* p. 13.

[64] Kateb, *Hannah Arendt: Politics, Conscience, Evil* p. 11.

[65] Villa, *Politics, Philosophy, Terror*, p. 140 (emphasis in original) (footnote omitted).

[66] Benjamin, *The Shadow of the Other: Intersubjectivity and Gender in Psychoanalysis.* (New York: Routledge Press 1998) p. 105. Hereafter SO.

[67] Arendt, *THC* p. 33.

[68] Arendt, *THC* p. 215.

[69] Margaret Canovan, *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of her Political Thought* (Cambridge University Press 1992) p. 242.

[70] Martha Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge University Press 2001) p. 665.

[71] Benjamin, SO p. 105.

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