

Iris Marion Young
***On the Politization of The Social in
Recent Western Political Theory***

Political theorists in the last quarter century have been primary custodians of a conception of the political as an active, participatory, and rational activity of citizens. This conception contrasts with the concept of politics usually assumed by popular opinion, journalism, and much political science. By politics these often mean the competition of elites for votes and influence, and processes of bargaining and among those elites about the shape of policy. Hannah Arendt's work remains a milestone in twentieth century political theory because she gave us an inspiring vision of the idea of the political as active participation in public life that many political theorists continue to guard and preserve.

In that vision the political is the most noble expression of human life, because the most free and self-determining. Politics as collective public life consists in people moving out from their private needs and sufferings to encounter one another in their specificity. Together in public they create and recreate through contingent words and deeds the laws and institutions that govern and frame their collective life, the resolution to their ever-recurring conflicts and disagreements, and the narratives of their history. Participation in such public life makes a world for people, where things and ideas are affirmed as real by virtue of appearing in that public affirmed by a plurality of subjects; that same public appearance affirms the reality of the individual person, who acts through speech. Social life is fraught with vicious power competition, conflict, deprivation, and violence, which always threaten to destroy political space. But political action sometimes revives, and through a remembrance of the ideal of the ancient *polis* we maintain the vision of human freedom and nobility as participatory public action (Arendt, 1958).

Arendt distinguished this concept of the political from the social, a modern structure of collective life which she believed increasingly eclipsed the political. In the modern world institutions, economic forces and mass movements collude to create a realm of need, production and consumption outside the family. Government institutions increasingly define their job as managing, containing and attending to this social realm – through education, public health policy, policing, public administration, and welfare.

Political economy grows with a vengeance, the state as a giant housekeeper, with a massive division of labor and social science apparatus. As a result people's lives may be more or less well taken care of, and government more or less efficient in its administration, but genuine public life sinks into the swamp of social need.

Despite wishing to preserve her vision of the political, for the most part political theorists have rejected Arendt's separation of the political from the social, and her backward looking pessimism about the emergence of mass social movements of the oppressed and disenfranchised. The more common judgement is that social justice is a condition of political freedom and equality (Bernstein, 1986; cf. Conovan, 1978), understood as the ability to participate actively in public affairs through word and deed. If we rule out economic issues and issues of social and cultural relations as appropriate to a genuine public discussion, moreover, it is not clear what active citizens have to talk about together (Pitkin, 1981).

In this essay I construct an account of political theory in the last two decades as thinking through the implications not of the eclipse of the political by the social, but rather of the politicization of the social. The story I tell is of course a construction, from my own point of view, which emphasizes some aspects of political theorizing in the last twenty-five years, and deemphasizes others. The theme of the politicization of the social, for example, will lead me to say little about the massive literature in recent political theory which takes some aspect of the historical canon of political theory as its subject. Likewise I will make little reference to recent political theory that makes use of the techniques of rational choice theory. My story partly seeks to construct recent political theory as a response to contemporary social movements. The trends in political theory I reflect on find mass social movements of poor and working class people, movements concerning labor, civil rights, feminism, and environmentalism, as the primary sites of active and participatory politics in the late twentieth century. Most of my attention will be on English-language political theory, though I will refer to some French and German writers.

My account divides the politicization of the social in recent political theory in to six sub-topics: social justice and welfare rights theory; democratic theory; feminist political theory; postmodernism; new social movements and civil society; and the liberalism-communitarianism debate. Recognizing that many works in recent political theory overlap these categories, I nevertheless try to locate most works in one of them.

I. Social Justice and Welfare Rights Theory

In 1979 Brian Barry could look back on two decades of political theory and find the first nearly barren and the second producing bumper crops (Barry, 1989). With him I will locate the publication of John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (1971) as the turning point. It is no accident that the decade of the 1960's intervened between the barren field of political theory and the appearance of this groundbreaking book. Despite its rhetoric of timelessness, *A Theory of Justice* must be read as a product of the decade that preceded it. Would civil disobedience occupy a central chapter in a basic theory of justice today?

A Theory of Justice mapped a theoretical terrain from the thicket of demands and responses to the Black civil rights movement and journalistic attention to poverty: social justice. Whatever Rawls's insistence on the priority of the principle of equal liberty, most attention focused on Rawls's second principle, which referred to social and economic equality. Whether Rawls intended so or not, moreover, most interpreted *A Theory of Justice* as recommending an activist and interventionist role for government not only to promote liberties, but to bring about greater social and economic equality.

Hitherto principled political commitment to social equality and distributive economic justice were most associated with socialist politics. Insofar as commitment to such principles had made their way into public policy in liberal democratic societies, many understood this as a result of the relative success and concessions from the dominant economic powers (Piven and Cloward, 1982; Offe, 1984). *A Theory of Justice* presented norms of social and economic equality within a framework that claimed direct lineage with the liberal tradition.

A major issue of political conflict in the last two decades, as well as earlier, is about whether a liberal democratic state should legitimately aim to ameliorate social problems and economic deprivation through public policy. If Rawls supplied the philosophical framework for one side in this debate, Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (Nozick, 1974) supplied a framework for the other. Is a politicized commitment to more egalitarian patterns of distributive social justice compatible with liberty or not? Many articles and collections of essays over this period debate this issue (Arthur and Shaw, 1978; Kipnis and Meyers, 1985).

Several political theorists continue the Rawlsian project of demonstrating that liberty is not only compatible with greater social equality, but requires it. Amy Gutmann adds participatory democracy to the values that

egalitarian liberalism must promote (Gutmann, 1980). Contemporary normative arguments for welfare rights, or a welfare liberal conception of justice, similarly aim to systematize a social democratic political program consistent with liberal values and explicitly refuting more libertarian interpretations of those values (Wellman, 1982; Goodin, 1988; Sterba, 1988). Kai Nielsen argues for the compatibility of liberty and equality in a more explicitly Marxist and socialist vein, devoting a large chunk of his argument to a refutation of Nozick (Nielsen, 1985). Even some Marxist inspired interpretations of justice aim to make an anti-exploitation social and economic theory compatible with a Rawlsian normative theory (Peffer, 1990; Reiman, 1990). Others insist, however, that different social class positions generate different pictures of society, and different incompatible, conceptions of justice (e.g., Miller, 1976). Thus Milton Fisk argues that liberal egalitarianism is a contradictory normative theory responding to the contradictory social formation of welfare capitalism, and that both are the outcome of an uneasy class compromise (Fisk, 1989). I believe that there is considerable truth in the claim that both the liberal democratic welfare state and a normative theory that attempts to reconcile the liberal tradition with a commitment to radical egalitarianism are fraught with tensions. Perhaps the promised third volume of Brian Barry's *Theories of Social Justice* will further clarify the requirements of just economic distribution.

With the publication of Charles Beitz's *Political Theory and International Relations*, (Beitz, 1979), these issues of social justice came to be extended to relations between peoples globally. Beitz argued that Rawls's principles of justice could be used as the basis for evaluating and criticizing the distributive inequality between developed societies of the North and less developed societies of the South. Political theorizing about social and economic inequality across national boundaries remains underdeveloped. Some important work has begun, however, on immigration issues and international justice (Carens, Whalen, 1988); environment and international justice (Goodin, 1990); hunger and obligations to distant peoples (Shue, 1980; O'Neill, 1986).

II. Democratic Theory

Literature on social justice and welfare politicizes the social by asking whether government ought explicitly to try to ameliorate social oppression and inequality. But Arendt's critique of such expanded attention to the social as conceiving public life as social housekeeping might apply to much of this literature. With some exceptions, this literature tends to conceive citi-

zens as rights bearers and receivers of state action, rather than as active participants in public decision-making.

Nurtured by social movement calls for participatory democracy in the 1960's and 70's, in the last two decades normative theorizing has flowered that takes speech and citizen participation as central. Carole Pateman's still widely cited *Participation and Democratic Theory* (Pateman, 1970), set much of the agenda for contemporary participatory democratic theory. That work criticized a plebiscite and intergroup pluralist conception of democracy, and rearticulated an ideal of democracy as involving active discussion and decisionmaking by citizens. It argued that social equality is a condition of democratic participation, and that democratic participation helps develop and preserve social equality. This means that the sites of democratic participation must include social institutions beyond the state in which people's actions are directly involved, particularly the workplace.

C. B. Macpherson articulated a framework for critique of the passivity and utilitarianism of dominant conceptions of liberal democracy, and for an alternative more active conception of democracy. It is a measure of how much intellectual discourse has changed in the last twenty years that today reflection on conceptions of human nature seems quaint. Yet Macpherson's analysis of political theories according to whether they assume the nature of human beings as primarily acquisitive consumers of goods or primarily as developers and exercisers of capacities remains a useful way to orient democratic political theory. The perspective of possessive individualism will inevitably regard the political process as a competition for scarce goods, where the competitors' desire for accumulation knows no limits. If one redefines the human good as the development and exercising of capacities, however, then democratic theory takes a wholly different turn. Distributive justice becomes only a means to the wider good of positive freedom, which is itself a social good because realized in cooperation with others. Freedom is the opportunity to develop and exercise one's capacities, and actively engaged citizen democracy is both a condition and expression of such freedom (Macpherson, 1973; 1978; cf. Carens, ed., 1992).

Several recent political theorists take as a basic values such an expanded notion of freedom, as an absence of domination and positive capacity for self-realization and self-determination. Equality can be best understood as compatible with freedom in this sense, rather than in the narrower, usually property-based sense of freedom as liberty from interference. Thus one aspect of contemporary democratic theory concerns articulation of the conditions of genuine democratic citizenship. People who are deeply deprived cannot be expected to exercise the virtues of democratic participation, and

are seriously vulnerable to threats and coercion in the political process. Too often wealth or property function as what Michael Walzer (1982) calls "dominant" goods: inequalities in these economic relations will generate inequalities in opportunity, power, influence, and the abilities to set one's own ends. So serious commitment to democracy presupposes social measures that limit the degree of class inequality and guarantee that all citizens have their needs met (Bay, 1981; Green, 1985; Cunningham, 1987; Cohen and Rogers, 1983). Most of those who theorize this relation of social and political equality to democracy concentrate on issues of class. Influenced by feminist analyses, however, a few notice the need to address issues of the gender division of labor to support political equality and participation (Green, 1985; Walzer, 1982; Mansbridge, 1991).

Participatory approaches to democratic theory hold that democracy is a hollow set of institutions if they only allow citizens to vote on representatives to far away political institutions and protect those citizens from government abuse. A fuller democracy in principle means that people can act as citizens in all the major institutions which require their energy and obedience. As I will discuss in a later section of this paper, this conclusion has opened both contemporary political practice and theory to interest in civil associations outside both state and corporate life as the most promising sites of expanded democratic practice. Following Pateman's lead, however, contemporary democratic theory has also shown a renewed interest in workplace democracy. Though practices of workplace democracy, several writers argue, citizens can both begin to realize the social and economic equality that they find a condition for democratic participation in the wider polity, and at the same time live the value of creative self-governance in one of the most regular and immediate aspects of modern life (Schweickart, 1980; Dahl, 1978, Gould, 1988). The relative impotence of political theory in setting the agenda of political debate may be revealed by the fact that such thoroughly articulated arguments have little influence on discussion of workplace practices.

At the beginning of the period I am reviewing, the theory of political democracy was largely identified with a theory of interest group pluralism. Inspired by contemporary participatory democratic experiments and institutions, important critiques of this interest group pluralism emerged with well developed alternative conceptions of democracy based on active discussion. In *Beyond Adversary Democracy*, Jane Mansbridge (1980) argued that conceptualizing the democratic process as the competition among interests is too narrow, and she offered a model of 'unitary' democracy as one in which participants aim at arriving at a common good through discussion. Wisely, she also argued that unitary democracy has limits, and suggested that

both adversary and unitary democracy are necessary in a robustly democratic polity.

Benjamin Barber took up the impulse of this classification and critique, but argued in *Strong Democracy* (Barber, 1984) that an ideal of unitary democracy is too conformist and collectivist. He proposed a model of strong democracy instead, as a participatory model in which citizens form together a public committed to a common good but where social pluralities of interest and commitment remain. It is not clear to me, however, that Barber's and Mansbridge's models are all that different.

Following these important texts, recent years have seen an explosion of theorizing about democracy as a discussion based form of practical reason. Ideals and practices of democratic decisionmaking that emphasized reasoned discussion have received important further development and refinement (Cohen, 1989; Spragens, 1990; Sunstein, 1988; Michelman, 1988; Dryzek, 1990; Fishkin, 1991). Though I consider this an extremely important trend in contemporary political theory, as currently articulated the notion of deliberative democracy has at least two problems. On the whole the models too much assume the need for a unity of citizens as either a starting point or goal of deliberation (Young, forthcoming). Theories of deliberative democracy, moreover, have for the most part not grappled with the facts of modern mass democracy that led to the development of a theory of interest group pluralism. On the whole they have not considered the question of democratic representation in large-scale mass polities. John Burnheim has put forward some creative ideas about a system of participatory based representation (Burnheim, 1985), and Charles Beitz (1989) and Norberto Bobbio (1984) have also given central consideration to this question. Future work on the question of theorizing of structures of representation in a participatory and deliberative democracy would do well to build on the recent magnum opus of the patriarch of liberal pluralism himself, Robert Dahl (Dahl, 1989).

III. Feminist Political Theory

Civil rights and poor people's movements provide a context for theorizing social justice and welfare rights. Experiments in participatory democratic practices in cooperatives, communes, and neighbourhood organisations fuel reconsideration of ideals of participatory and deliberative democracy. The contemporary feminist movement has inspired perhaps the most sweeping reconceptualizations of political theory. As in every other discipline

in the humanities and social sciences, feminist scholarship in political theory has questioned basic assumptions in the canon discourse itself, and proposed considered reconceptualizations of central ideas in the field. Feminist political theory involves politicizing the social by questioning a dichotomy of public and private and thereby proposing that family relations, sexuality, and the gendered relations of street school and workplace are properly political relations. That gender relations are political implies that they are structured by power, and that they are relations whose institutionalization ought to be subject to discussion, rather than emerging from tradition.

In other disciplines bringing gender into focus meant first making women visible – a historical actors, as writers, artists, and scientists, and as persons with sex and gender specific problems and experiences that merit both empirical and normative study. Whole concern to make women visible has not been absent from feminist political theory, from the beginning the primary direction of gendering political theory has been to make its maleness visible.

Since the groundbreaking publication of a collection of paper by Lorrenne Clark and Lynda Lange (1978) and Susan Okin's *Women in Western Political Thought* (1979), a large and sophisticated literature has grown analyzing and evaluating ideas of the canon writers of Western political theory from a feminist perspective. Most of this has concentrated on classic modern theorists, but some feminist critique has examined ancient writers as well (Saxonhouse, 1976).

Feminist political theory deconstructs the public-private dichotomy that runs through the canon story in the following way. The public realm of politics can be so rational, noble, and universal only because the messy content of the body, meeting its needs, providing for production, caretaking, and attending to birth and death, are taken care of elsewhere. Male heads of households derive their power to make wars, laws and philosophy from the fact that others work for them in private, and it is no surprise that they would model nobility on their own experience. But a modern reflexive political theory should recognize that the glory of the public is dialectically entwined with the exploitation and repression of the private, and the people restricted to that sphere so they can take care of people's needs. However the analysis proceeds, feminist political theory concludes that twentieth century politics requires a basic rethinking of this distinction and its meaning for politics (Elshtain, 1981; Nicholson, 1984; Young, 1987).

Much feminist political theory analyzes the masculinism of a universal reason that abhors embodiment and honors the desire to kill and risk life (Hartsock, 1983; Brown, 1989). Beginning with the ancients, courage tops

the list of citizens virtues, which promotes the soldier as the paradigm citizen. Machiavelli is celebrated as the father both of modern *realpolitik* and republicanism because he fashions the account of political man so clearly relying on images of risk, danger, winning, and the competition of sport and battle. Hannah Pitkin's brilliant study of Machiavelli relies on feminist psychoanalysis as well as critiques of the public-private dichotomy to expose the grounds of this masculinist citizen in a psychic opposition between self and other (Pitkin, 1984).

Many feminist critics focus on the idea of the social contract to uncover different assumptions about human nature, action and evaluation that exhibit masculine experience and develop a one-sided account of the possibilities of political life and political change. Several have focused on the assumptions of individualism, atomistic autonomy and independence that structure the image of this rational citizen in modern political thought. Carole Pateman argues that the idea of the individual assumed by social contract theory carries an image of the person as self-originating, without birth and dependence. If the original dependence of all human beings on others were to replace this assumption of self-generation, then the entire edifice that constructs social relations as effects of voluntary bargains would collapse. Some writers have explored alternative starting points for a conception of society and the political, which begins with premises of connectedness and interdependence rather than autonomy and independence.

Feminist arguments about individualism, the public-private dichotomy, contract theory, and the implicitly bias in Western ideas of reason and universality have influenced some work of male political theorists concerned with contemporary issues (e.g., Smith, 1991). But this work has had little influence on scholarship on ancient or modern political theory. Considering the scope and analytic depth that many feminist scholars have brought to examination of some of the most central ideas of the most central thinkers, it is puzzling why other scholars apparently felt obliged neither to revise their approaches in light of these critiques nor give arguments against them.

Feminist theorists have devoted at least as much scholarly energy to contemporary political theory and practice. Feminists have subjected many of the important terms of political discourse to searching analysis, including power (Hartsock, 1983), authority (Jones, 1993), political obligations

(Hirschmann, 1992), citizenship (Dietz, 1985; Bock and James, ed., 1992), privacy (Allen, 1989), democracy (Phillis, 1991), and justice (Okin, 1989).

The question and conclusions in this conceptual literature are extremely diverse, but the arguments tend to cluster around two projects. First, feminist analysis argues that theories of justice, power, obligation, and so on, reflect male gendered experience, and must be revised if they are to include female gendered experience. Often the criticism takes the form of arguing that the generality that political theorists claim for their concepts and theories cannot in fact be general because the theories do no notice the fact of gender difference and take these into account in formulating their theories. Thus Susan Okin argues, for example, that Walzer's arguments about justice become inconsistent when the facts of male domination within communities are taken into account.

Second, these conceptual analyses often claim that political theory too often tends to disembodify these central political concepts. Thus Nancy Hartsock argues, for example, that dominant theories of power repress the relation childhood experience of vulnerability, and presume a rigid self-other dichotomy that reduces power to competition and control. Thinking power in terms of embodiment would draw the attention of political theorists to power as power-to and not simply power-over (cf. Wartenberg, 1990). Much feminist discussion about the concept of equality, to take another example, has questioned whether equal respect for women should imply identical treatment to men, because women experience pregnancy and childbirth, and suffer other vulnerabilities because of sexist society (Bacchi, 1990).

IV. Post modernism

Most of the humanities and social science disciplines have been deeply rattled in the last two decades by the style of thinking usually called postmodernism. Political theory has been affect by this current, though the challenges and questions posed by postmodernism seem to nibble at the edges of the discipline rather than being felt at the core. Much would be gained and little lost, in my opinion, by a more sustained engagement by more political theorists with the implications of postmodern critiques of modern norms and ideals of subjectivity.

The work of Michel Foucault stands perhaps most directly as a towering contribution to political theory, at the same time as it challenges many of its traditional assumptions. Foucault thinks that political theory and discourse continue to assume a paradigm of politics derived from a pre-mod-

ern experience, and that since the eighteenth century a new structuration of power has operated. The old paradigm still assumed by most political theory conceives power as sovereignty: the titular unity of the state, which hands down decrees to its subject that say what is allowed and forbidden. In this regime power is experienced as negative, the repressive force of prohibition and punishment.

Modern political institutions have shifted from a regime of sovereignty to governmentality: the application of principles and techniques of (patriarchal) household management to public institutions. Now the king and his agents do not reach out from the center to control the unruly subjects with fear. Instead ruling institutions percolate up from the ground, in the outlying capillaries of society, which discipline bodies to conform with norms of reason, order and good taste, for their own good. Power proliferates and becomes productive in the emergence of disciplinary institutions that organize and manage people in a complex division of labor: hospitals and clinics, schools, prisons, welfare organizations, police department. Contrary to its self-conception, the scientific mood of Enlightenment rationality does not generate a world of freedom beyond power, but a new set of microprocesses of power, which engage as well as constrain. Scientists and professionals themselves, rather than kings and presidents, are primary agents of this power, exercised through social scientific and managerial knowledge. Power operates less as juridical rules and more as scientifically and professionally defined codes of normal and deviant (Foucault, 1979; 1980; Burchell, et al., 1991).

Foucault certainly theorizes the politicization of the social. He describes strategies of power throughout the social body, in mundane corners of institutional life such as settlement houses or therapists' offices. His account of how principles of governmentality transfer techniques of home economy to public life has striking echoes with Arendt's story of the emergence of the social; it also resonates with Habermas's notion of the colonization of the lifeworld, that I will discuss below. Political theory has yet fully to absorb and evaluate their picture of power as the productive and proliferating process of disciplinary institutions. William Connolly has taken a leading role in showing Foucault's ideas as a challenge to political theory's uncritical reliance on Enlightenment ideas. He argues that norms are always double-sided and ambiguous, and that we should resist the bureaucratic impulse to discipline ambiguity (Connolly, 1982). A few political theorists have examined the concept of power in light of Foucault's work (Philip, 1983; Smart, 1983; Wartenberg, 1990; Spivak, 1992; Honneth, 1991). More engagement with

Foucault's ideas will require rethinking the concept of state, law, authority, obligation, freedom, and rights, as well.

The critical force of Foucault's analyses is apparent. But this theorizing cries out for normative ideals of freedom and justice by means of which to evaluate institutions and practices. Several political theorists make important arguments that Foucault's theorizing is implicitly contradictory because he refuses to articulate such positive ideals (Taylor, 1984; Fraser, 1989; Habermas, 1990, Chap 9 and 10).

Several other French writers associated with postmodernism have been important for political theory, including Lacan, Derrida, Lyotard, Baudrillard, and Kristeva. I will discuss only a few other themes that arise for political theory out of the work of these writers.

Postmodern thinkers have questioned an assumption that unified individual subject are the units of society and political action. Subjectivity is a product of language and interaction, not its origin, and subject are as internally plural and contradictory as the social field in which they live. This ontological thesis raises serious questions for political theory about the meaning of moral and political agency. Interpreting Merleau-Ponty along with some of the others I have mentioned above, Fred Dallmayr offers a vision of political process where a desire to control dissipates (Dallmayr, 1981).

Several writers take up the Derridian critique of a metaphysics of process to argue that a desire for certainty and clear regulatory principles in politics has the consequences of repressing and oppressing otherness, both in other people and in oneself (Young, 1986; White, 1991). In *Identity/Difference* William Connolly gives a twist to this thesis by claiming that such unifying politics produces a resentment too quick to blame and not open enough to ambiguity (Connolly, 1991). Bonnie Honig applies these sorts of arguments to the texts of political theorists such as Kant, Rawls and Sandel; she argues that their desire for a unifying theoretical center in political theory oppressively expels subject who deviate from their models of rational citizen and community (Honig, 1993).

I find the most important consequence of postmodern critiques of identifying thinking to lie in a reinterpretation of democratic pluralism. Democratic politics is a field of shifting identities and groups that find affinities and contest with one another (Yeatman, 1994). Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's book, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, (1985) has been influential along these lines. They argue that the Marxist concept of the revolutionary agency of the working class is a metaphysical fiction inappropriate to the contemporary period of proliferating radical social movements defined by

multiple identities and interests. Radical democratic politics should be understood as the coalescing of plural social movements in civil society, to deepen democratic practice both in the state and society. I heartily endorse a political theory that appreciates social heterogeneity and is suspicious of efforts to unify (see Young, 1990). Much of this writing, however, seems either to identify normative standards of justice and freedom as themselves suspicious, or not to refer to issues of freedom and justice at all. The task for a political theory sensitive to the repressive implications of identifying logic and exclusionary normalization is to develop methods of appealing to justice less subject to these criticisms.

V. New Social Movements and Civil Society

I have suggested that we might understand many of the important developments of contemporary political theory as expressions of and responses to contemporary political movements that focus critical reflection on social relations not traditionally thought of as political. I have mentioned some of these already, particularly the women's movement. In the last twenty years movements have proliferated whose style and demands go beyond claims for rights or welfare: environmentalism, peace movements, group based movements of national resistance and cultural pride, gay and lesbian liberation. Some recent social and political theory conceptualizes the political styles and implications of these sorts of movements, often called "new social movements" (Melucci, 1989; Boggs, 1986; West, 1990, Moors and Sears, 1992).

These movements are called "new" for at least two reasons. First, on the whole their issues do not primarily concern inclusion in basic citizenship rights nor the enlargement of economic rights. Their issues are more specifically social – respect and self-determination for cultural difference, responsibility and pluralism in everyday lifestyle, reflection on power in social interaction, participation in decisions in social and economic, as well as political, institutions. Secondly, the form of organization of these movements does not replicate the mass movement form of political party or union, a unified bureaucracy seeking power through resource mobilization. Instead, these new social movements tend to be networks of more local groups, each with their own principles and style, that nevertheless act in concern en masse in some protest actions.

Some important political theory reflects systematically on the normative political principles embodied in some of these movements. The envi-

ronmental movement, for example, provides substance for reflection on basic normative issues of value, social rationality, and democratic participation (Sagoff, 1989; Goodin, 1991; Dryzek, 1988; Ekersley, 1993).

Despite the importance of anti-racist social movements emphasizing self-determination, cultural pluralism and reparations for past injustice, there has been surprisingly little work by political theorists about race and racism. In this connection, Cornel West's work must count as making important contributions to political theory (West, 1982; 1992), along with the work of philosophers such as Bernard Boxill (1984), Howard McGary and Bill Lawson (1992). Andrew Sharp's carefully argued book, *Justice and the Maori*, stands as a model of theorizing of indigenous people's movement in the context of advanced industrial society. Some political theorists in Australia and Canada have begun to take up the challenge of normative theorizing about indigenous peoples issues (Carens, 1994; Kymlicka, 1993). Though there is significant work on indigenous peoples issues by legal theorists in the United State (e.g., Williams, 1990), I see few signs that U.S. philosophers and political theorists are reflecting on the specific normative issues concerning Native Americans.

Some recent theorizing about the role of state and bureaucracy in advanced industrial societies helps set a context for understanding the new social services holds that such operations of disciplinary social power also create their own resistances. Along somewhat different lines, Claus Offe gives an account of the modern welfare state as having depoliticized processes of social control and public spending. The state has become an arena where officials conduct their real business more or less behind closed doors, and experts administer policies with a technical know-how that does not bring normative ends into view. Social movements politicize some of this activity from a positions outside state institutions (Offe, 1984).

In his concept of the "colonization of the lifeworld", Jürgen Habermas offers a theoretical context for conceptualizing the meaning of new social movements. State and corporate institutions in the twentieth century, he claims, develop complex production and administrative activities that are guided by technical reason, and increasingly "uncoupled" from the everyday life context of meaningful cultural interaction. The activities and affects of these tehnicized economic and administrative system, further, come back to regulate and restructure the everyday lifeworld in accordance with its own imperatives (Habermas, 1983). The natural wilderness is restructured to a theme park, or everyday consumption is rules by spatial and packaging decisions that serve the interests of profit rather than consumer desire. This theory interprets many new social movements as a reaction to this coloniza-

tion of the lifeworld. People seek through their political action to open greater space for collective choice about normative and aesthetic ends, and to limit the influence of the systemic imperatives of power and profit.

If it is true that state activity is largely technicized, then state institutions cannot function as the site of deliberative politics in advanced capitalist society. Rather, politics, in the sense of people meeting together to discuss their collective problems, raise critical claims about action, and act together to alter their circumstances, happens more in critical public spheres outside the state and directed at its action. Habermas's major work of the early 1960's *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Habermas, 1962; 1989), has received new attention by political theorists interested in participatory politics and critical normative discourse in late twentieth century society (Calhoun, 1991).

For the purpose of such theorizing, a concept of civil society as the locus of free and deliberative politics has been emerging. The concept of civil society was used in the opposition movements of Eastern Europe throughout the 1980's, and this usage has influenced some of these theoretical developments. The concept has also been influential in opposition movements in South Africa and Latin America.

Leading proponents of the theory of civil society are John Keane (1984; 1988), Jean Cohen (1983) and Andrew Arato (Arato and Cohen, 1992). These theorists draw on Habermas's analyses of late capitalism to argue that the sphere of civil society, as distinct from both state and corporate economy, as the primary locus of politics, in the sense of people deliberating together about their collective life and raising normative issues about how things ought to be. Civil society consists in voluntary associative activity – the array of civil associations, non-profit service organizations, and so on, in which people participate that are only loosely connected to state and corporate economy. Civil society is the arena in which social movements flower. Activities of civil society do require a strong liberal state that protect the liberties of speech, association and assembly. But the activities of civil society are more directly participatory than the way citizens relate to state decisionmaking apparatus.

Both Cohen and Arato and Keane thus look to civil society as the arena for deepening and radicalizing democracy. The public spheres of civil society can and should be enlarged by pushing back the bureaucratized functions of the state and structuring more areas of social life in terms of voluntary participatory organizations. These civil organizations can also serve as the stage from which to launch criticism of state policy and action. The program of radical democracy can be furthered, finally, by the creation within

corporate institutions of workplace democracy, which have the voluntary and participatory character of civil association. Thus the vision of social change embodied in the theory of civil society sees a proliferation of groups and activities, with somewhat different issues and concerns, promoted limited goals of social transformation all of which involve expanding the possibilities for democratic participation. Such a vision coincides with the ideas of some of the contemporary theorists of participatory democracy and with postmodern theorists like Laclau and Mouffe.

I find the social theory of bureaucratization and commodification that the theory of civil society relies on useful. Thus I find attractive the idea that institutions and movements of civil society are the primary arena for politics in the Arendtian sense of people moving out from preoccupation with their private lives to meet and discuss their collective issues. Looking to civil activity as the place where active deliberation and democratic egalitarianism can be promoted and deepened, moreover, is important.

The political theory of civil society, however, seems to have occluded some concerns that are more apparent when theorizing focuses on what state policy ought to do, namely concerns about economic inequality. New social movement theorizing retains these concerns to some degree. But in their emphasis on cultural issues and the politics of identity, concerns about access to and power over resources seem less salient.

The concept of civil society is also ambiguous about issues of economic justice. Not all theorizing about civil society and political theory distinguishes between the economy and civil society as Cohen and Arato do. Often the theorizing that does identify the freedom of civil society also with the freedom of the market (see, e.g., Kukathas and Lovell, 1991). Then the theory of civil society emerges as a new form of anti-state liberalism, particularly arguing that state intervention in economic activity for the purposes of redistribution or responding to social needs unjustifiably interferes with freedom. Since all civil society theorizing agrees that modern welfare state bureaucracies tend to be undemocratic and dominative, there is a real question of how a commitment to the active promotion of social justice can be made compatible with this view of politics and democracy (Young, forthcoming).

VI. Liberalism and Communitarianism

Michael Sandel's *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (1982) levelled an ontological critique at the concept of self Sandel claimed Rawls presupposed

in his theory of justice. Rawls's account presupposes a moral self prior to social relationships guided by principles of justice, Sandel argued, a self "unencumbered" by particular culture and commitments into which he or she is thrown. Principles of justice generated from such an abstract notion of self can serve only to regulate public relations among strangers in the most formalistic way. For a robust political theory of social union, Sandel suggested, justice must be supplemented by recognition of particular community bonds and commitments that constitute selves.

In *After Virtue*, Alistair MacIntyre (1983) levelled a more historically oriented challenge to liberalism. The economic and ideological changes of modern society create a modern dilemma of relativism. Religious and moral questions – questions about the good, the just, the virtuous – have become matters of private conscience or contesting political opinion. Liberalism is a system of formal adjudication among such competing and incommensurate opinions among which there is no means of deciding some are right and others wrong. In this modern world-view moral agents are released onto the landscape as disconnected, commodified and often cynical atoms. The late modern malaise can best be treated by looking for living communities of shared values and virtues that can serve as contemporary analogues of medieval guild communities, and other traditional self-ruling communities bound by common commitment to particular excellences.

Communitarianism can be interpreted as a form of politicizing the social. It claims to anchor political values like justice, rights, freedom, in particular social and cultural contexts. Thus it interprets the social as prior to and constitutive of the political. Its ontological critique of liberalism rejects abstract individualism. Its political critique suggests that liberal norms and values implausibly claim to transcend and bracket particular cultural contexts, and to apply to all societies in the same way. But some communitarian discussion suggested that culture shapes moral norms, and that these culturally based values may sometimes conflict with liberal norms. Liberals then wondered whether it wasn't communitarian which sent us down a road of normative relativism coupled with intolerant particularism.

By the mid 1980's the so-called liberalism-communitarian debate was flooding the pages of journals and books in political theory. But the debate was both too abstract and founded on a false dichotomy. Despite the fact that the aim of communitarians was to situate moral and political norms in the particular social contexts of full blooded agents, they rarely discussed any particular communities (cf. Wallach, 1987). It was difficult to find, moreover, any communitarian who would reject liberal values of equal respect, freedom of action, speech and association, or tolerance (cf. Gutman, 1985).

Few self-proclaimed liberals, on the other hand, were ready to deny the power of particular cultural commitment in individual lives, though they might disagree with communitarians about the normative significance of these facts.

The liberalism-communitarianism debate did expose how much contemporary liberal political theory abstracts from social group affiliation and commitment to consider individuals only as individuals. It thus posed individuals. It thus posed an important challenge of whether and how liberal theory ought to include recognition of particular contexts of social and cultural group difference. Will Kymlicka's *Liberalism, Community and Culture* (1989) represents a turning point in this debate. Unlike many writings in this discussion, Kymlicka is not abstract about community and culture, but rather discusses the particular cultural and political situations of Native peoples in relation to the liberal state of Canada. Staunchly adhering to the values of modern political liberalism, Kymlicka argues that these are not only compatible with, but require, the constitutions of cultural rights that may sometimes imply special rights for endangered or oppressed cultural minorities. The key to his argument that such cultural rights follow from liberalism is his construction of individual rights as including an individual right to cultural membership, and thus to the maintenance of the culture of which one is a member.

Another Canadian contributor to this more contextualized discussion of cultural rights, Charles Taylor, is less certain that a principle of cultural recognition is compatible with at least some versions of liberalism (Taylor, 1992). If we understand liberalism to require a universality to the statement of rights, such that laws and rules should apply equally to all in the same way, then politically recognizing and maintaining particular cultures sits uneasily with liberalism. The recognition and preservation of minority cultures may require special treatment and special rights for which there are good moral arguments, but arguments beyond the liberal individualist tradition (cf. Young, 1989; 1990, especially Chapter 6).

A different set of recent works has also aimed to produce a reconciliation between the stances of liberalism and communitarianism that were posited in the early 1980's. Liberalism has typically been interpreted as neutral among values and equally accepting of ways of life as long as their activities leave one another alone. Communitarianism, on the other hand, especially in MacIntyre's version, takes the good, as the ends of action, and virtue, as the disposition to bring about these good ends, as the moral commitment that liberalism has abandoned to relativism. Some writers have rejected the characterization of liberalism as neutral among ends and virtues, and

have argued that liberalism itself implies particular cultural values, normative ends, and behavioral virtues (Macedo, 1990; Galston, 1991).

It is fitting to end my story of two decades of political theory by referring to the same writer with whom I began: John Rawls. The arguments of *Political Liberalism* (1993) are, to a significant degree, attempts to respond to the liberalism-communitarianism debate and the social context of multiculturalism in liberal society. Rawls moves in the opposite direction from Kymlicka and some of the other writers who aim to reconcile the values of political liberalism with public recognition for particular cultural norms and ways of life. Freedom and respect for particular "comprehensive doctrines," as he calls them, instead requires that they all agree on a set of principles guiding the interaction of distinct communities, but transcending them all. Multiculturalism is possible in a liberal society only if we re-draw a fairly clear border between what is properly public, the business of the constitutional and legal rules governing the whole society, and what is private, in the sense of matters of individual and community conscience and commitment.

Although the overlapping consensus that Rawls believes is produced by the willingness of different cultures and communities of conscience to set fair terms of cooperation retains attention to social and economic inequality as well as liberty, I find this work to constitute a retreat from the social. Rawls thinks that conflicts and ambiguities produced by the being together of concrete communities, about issues of sexuality, family, video content, religious dress in public, and countless other issues, are best handled by reestablishing a legal and political discourse that only admits into its realm issues already framed in terms of generalizable norms. Many today believe that the demands of social need, social context, value conflict, and conflict over public recognition for minority cultures and ways of life, have overloaded political institutions. They thus think that the only solution is for the political institutions to restrict themselves to enforcing the criminal law, protecting constitutional liberties, and organizing small bits of aid for the very needy. The boundary of the political should be redrawn to exclude the social.

While Rawls himself continues to say that the difference principle is important, the emphasis in *Political Liberalism* is on the procedural mechanisms for arriving at and maintaining committed consensus on civil rights and liberties. Proposals to redistribute wealth and income so as to maximize the expectations of the least advantaged are much more controversial today than they were twenty years ago, even as the ranks of the least advantaged have been swelling. Being less advantaged overlaps significantly,

moreover, with social positioning in terms of race, gender, ethnicity, and culture. Thus political claims about family values or recognition for cultural minorities have much to do with claims of social justice. Even where less tied to issues of economic disadvantage, the "politics of identity," whereby groups make claims for public recognition of the specificity of their cultural values, are not going away. For all these reasons the current temptation of political theory to retreat from the social threatens to make it even more irrelevant to politics than usual. Fortunately, there are signs that many political theorists will continue engaging these fiercely difficult political issues of the late twentieth century.

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