

A RADICAL COSMOPOLITANISM: SOCIALITY,
UNIVERSALITY, AND DEMOCRACY

By

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For the teachers who started me on this path:

William Myers and Dale Quin

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INTRODUCTION

Democracy has not enjoyed the triumph that the ubiquity of the term suggests. Governments and societies across the globe lay claim to the name ‘democracy,’ in spite of the facts of rampant corruption, drastic inequality, and economic oligarchy that characterize many of them. The democratic regimes of the United States and Western Europe often pay more heed to the demands and interests of the economically powerful than to those of the less-privileged majority, let alone those of citizens of other states. From the perspective of an understanding of democracy as collective self-determination or popular sovereignty, the description of these situations as ‘democratic’ is at least questionable, if not implausible. At the same time, however, democracy is widely seen as the good toward which states should aim. In the realm of political theory, discussions of the commonplace nature of the term ‘democracy’ have themselves become commonplace. Nevertheless, a large gap remains between democratic ideals and current political realities. Some would deny this claim on the basis of a more minimal conception of democracy as, for instance, a procedure by which elites compete for state authority, which is won via gaining the majority of the votes of otherwise politically inactive citizens.¹ Along with many other democratic theorists, I reject such an account as only nominally democratic. Yet these others might still maintain that a more radical conception of democracy, according to which the situations described above fall far short of being democratic in any way, lies too far removed from the realities of political life to be a defensible view. Instead, they might still encourage a view that offers more modest ideals that are more easily aligned with facts, thus narrowing the gap between the ideal and the real.

¹ The *locus classicus* for this view is Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*.

This approach, however, drastically attenuates democracy's capacity to play the role that, as I argue in this project, it ought to play: that of a robust normative ideal against which we can critically articulate, and work to alter, the shortcomings of current political and social arrangements. In the face of widespread appeal to the value and importance of democracy, raising the bar for what counts as democratic can serve a crucial role in pursuing justice and achieving social transformation. I defend such a democratic ideal here under the heading of a political view that I call, not just 'radical democracy,' but '*radical cosmopolitanism.*'

Both radical and cosmopolitan approaches to democratic theory capture compelling intuitions about what the democratic ordering of social and political life requires. Radical democracy, as its name suggests, emphasizes a *rootedness* of political activity in the concrete social relations and interactions of individuals, as well as a commitment to a *transformative* project of the ongoing democratization of these relations and interactions. This approach embodies the recognition that the rigorous demands of a commitment to democracy as popular sovereignty involve a robust mode of citizen participation that goes beyond the mere casting of a ballot. This recognition has driven the deliberativist program in democratic theory, according to which democratic legitimacy results from the collective deliberation of citizens.

Cosmopolitanism, as a democratic theory, captures the insight that, especially in a globalizing and increasingly interconnected world such as our own, the results of collective decisions taken in a given polity affect parties outside the boundaries of that polity, such that the demand for the accommodation of the interests of those affected by such decisions risks rendering territorial boundaries morally arbitrary. As such, democratic governance must be conceived in a way that extends beyond the limits of territorially-bounded nation-states. While the substance of these claims remains to be explicated and defended, I find the intuitions

captured by both the radical and cosmopolitan programs compelling from the point of view of a robust and normatively demanding conception of democracy. The radical cosmopolitanism I defend here stems from the attempt to incorporate both radical and cosmopolitan elements in theorizing the democratic commitment that collective decisions must accommodate the heterogeneous and proliferating voices and interests of those subject to them.

A difficulty immediately emerges, however, as radicalism and cosmopolitanism in democratic theory capture intuitions that, while arguably compelling, are also arguably *conflicting*. The more participatory and ‘directly democratic’ elements of radical democracy seem to presuppose fairly strictly delimited political communities with internally shared political cultures. As such, radical democracy tends to encourage a greater *localization* of political activity, rather than the broadening out and extension beyond borders that cosmopolitanism encourages. Cosmopolitanism also seems to pull in the opposite direction from radicalism insofar as it emphasizes the need for supranational institutions that, by their very scope, will be further removed from the demands of particular, contextually-situated interests and perspectives. Negotiating this conflict thus becomes necessary for the radical and cosmopolitan view defended here.

This tension arguably emerges from an attentiveness, on the part of radicalism and cosmopolitanism, to apparently conflicting demands. While radical democrats tend to focus on claims coming from particular, socially situated perspectives and concrete contexts, cosmopolitans hope to accommodate the claims of all, regardless of social situation or context, through, for instance, the institutionalization of human rights norms. Put more broadly, radicals tend to be attuned to the particular and eschew claims to universality on the basis of an emphasis on the perspectival situatedness of all claims, while cosmopolitans incline toward an abstraction

from such particularities that is often motivated by moral universalism.² The concepts of universality and particularity at work here play a central role in the account given in this project. Indeed, within the general framework offered here, the apparent conflict between radicalism and cosmopolitanism exemplifies the broader tension between particularity and universality.

In order to negotiate this tension, I situate my radical cosmopolitanism within a broader normative view that I develop by drawing on the work of George Herbert Mead and that I call ‘*universalist perspectivalism*.’ Such a view captures the interplay between universality and particularity at work in democratic ideals insofar as it focuses simultaneously on the centrality of perspective as the particular social location of social agents, both individuals and groups, and on the openness of these perspectives to negotiation via democratic deliberation and evaluation from the point of view of an appeal to a broader framework.

To develop this overarching theoretical framework, I turn to an account of human sociality, focusing in particular on the structures of intersubjectivity that emerge from communication. I argue that the communicative dimension of sociality involves implicit appeals to universality as openness to an indefinite number of perspectives and contexts. The normative consequences I draw from this account can only be adequately translated into the political realm via a conception of cosmopolitan democracy, that is, a conception of democratic legitimation that goes beyond the bounds of territorially-defined nation-states to take into account the interests of all affected by political decisions. This conception must also maintain a radical dimension, an attention to particularity and local contexts, in order to be fully democratic. The ideal that I articulate is radically democratic insofar as it requires the freedom of social agents to criticize and work to reform the social order, as well as the collective intersubjective legitimation

² Exemplars of these approaches can be found in the work of Chantal Mouffe and Jürgen Habermas, respectively. Both Mouffe’s and Habermas’s work is discussed in the chapters below, largely because they capture these opposing approaches so nicely.

of the collective coordination of human social life via the interplay of the perspectives of all subject to its decisions. In this way I develop a robust normative ideal of democracy from its roots in the communicative dimension of sociality by drawing out of the latter the broader normative view I call ‘universalist perspectivalism.’ This last in turn is brought to bear on the realm of political theory in the form of radical cosmopolitanism. In what follows I roughly trace the trajectory through which I develop this position in the rest of this project.

I motivate my account by beginning with the commitment to the articulation of a normatively forceful and politically useful account of radical democracy. To this purpose, I engage in Chapter I with the work of Chantal Mouffe, currently the most prominent theorist of ‘radical democracy.’ Mouffe’s model, like my own, rests on an account of the central characteristics of human sociality. For Mouffe, this sociality is fundamentally antagonistic, embodying a dimension of struggle and conflict that Mouffe refers to as ‘the political.’ The discursive field of the social is always already shot through with antagonisms, and is hence a political terrain; as such, the social realm as a whole is collapsed into the political or conflictual, with the result that we cannot articulate a normative perspective from which we can evaluate the interplay amongst antagonistic discourses. Mouffe thereby jettisons the normative force—and hence the radically critical and potentially transformative force—of a radical democratic ideal. In this opening chapter, then, I simultaneously pinpoint the shortcomings of Mouffe’s account and gesture in the direction of what we need to replace it with by emphasizing the importance of articulating a conception of sociality that is independent of the political.

Chapter II presents the beginning of the constructive work of articulating an account of sociality that is both more descriptively adequate and normatively robust than Mouffe’s. For this purpose I draw on the work of George Herbert Mead, beginning with an explication of his

unique perspectival interpretation of sociality, which emphasizes the context-transcending potential within all given contexts. Such potential paves the way for the capacity of individuals to transcend the limitations of their own perspectives via engagement with the perspectives of others. I explore this capacity via an engagement with Mead's social psychology, which gives an account of the emergence of intersubjective communication via such perspective-sharing.

Attention to this communicative dimension of sociality reveals that meaningful communication involves an inherent claim to shareability across all perspectives that constitutes the root of the concept of universality that I defend throughout this project. Universality, on this account, involves the open-ended accountability of meaningful claims to an indefinite range of perspectives. This accountability implies an unreachable limit-concept of the accommodation of all perspectives, on the basis of which I articulate the concept of the *normative perspective of the universal*, which motivates the normative demand for the transcendence of the given normative framework of one's context or immediate community via the appeal to a broader framework and to previously excluded perspectives. The normative perspective of the universal provides the paradigm for the type of regulative ideal that does crucial normative work in later chapters. Given the dual centrality of the Meadian concepts of perspective and universality to the framework that I begin to develop in this chapter, I describe this framework as that of universalist perspectivalism.

Chapter III begins the development of the normative implications of my account of the communicative dimension of sociality in earnest. The problem that I use my framework to tackle in this chapter is that of normative majoritarianism: the idea that, in the absence of an entirely perspective-transcendent standard of correctness in a given normative sphere, correctness is simply constituted by the agreement of a given community. Drawing on Ludwig Wittgenstein's

discussion of rule-following and private language, I argue that such a stance collapses ‘being right’ into ‘seeming right’ at the communal level, such that the concept of rightness or correctness loses all normative force whatsoever. In this chapter I deploy the normative perspective of the universal in the communicative and epistemic realms respectively in two sections. In both cases the context-transcendent capacity of intersubjective communication serves to overcome normative majoritarianism without appealing to a standard of correctness that is inaccessible to a perspectival construal. This maneuver opens up space for the possibility of a critical perspective on any given community agreement while remaining tied to the situatedness of correctness in perspectives. I first deploy this strategy in the communicative realm via an engagement with the problem of meaning as it emerges in Saul Kripke’s interpretation of Wittgenstein on rule-following, as well as in Simon Blackburn’s critique of Kripke. I argue that the skepticism regarding correctness in rule-following that appears to emerge from this dispute can be avoided via the appeal to the normative perspective of the universal, which allows for the articulation of a conception of correctness that outstrips any given community consensus.

In the second section of this chapter I take on the question of epistemic correctness, articulating a universal-perspectivalist account of objectivity via an engagement with Mead’s philosophy of science. Drawing also on Helen E. Longino’s more contemporary work in the philosophy of science, I argue that the intersubjective core of this epistemic ideal requires the subjection of knowledge-claims to legitimation via the input and negotiation of various perspectives. I go beyond Longino’s work by insisting on the need for a regulative ideal to motivate this social account of objectivity. Again, the normative perspective of the universal plays the role of this regulative ideal and is here described as ‘veritistic objectivity.’ In both sections, then, my contention is that the regulative ideal outcome of inquiry is what makes sense

of the demand for continued inquiry, by holding out the possibility that we remain mistaken and need correction from perspectives that we have heretofore failed to take into account.

In Chapter IV I bring the discussion of universalist perspectivalism into the moral realm, articulating a conception of the moral point of view of impartiality that corresponds to the previous chapter's conception of objectivity. I develop this conception in dialogue with discourse ethics, which is paradigmatic of the attempt to draw conclusions for moral theory out of the presuppositions of intersubjective communication. At the conceptual level, I explicitly navigate the tension between universality and particularity in this chapter, focusing on the interplay of these concepts in the work of Jürgen Habermas, Iris Marion Young, and Seyla Benhabib. While each of these thinkers provides crucial resources for a universal-perspectivalist understanding of impartiality, each also misses important aspects of the overall picture. I argue for an understanding of impartiality as the correlate of the normative perspective of the universal in the moral realm, where it involves a moral demand for attention not only to a broader perspective that transcends the individual idiosyncrasies of my own perspective, but also to the perspective of concrete others. Impartiality so conceived is simultaneously 1) rooted in particular contexts and attention to particular perspectives, on the one hand, and 2) abstracted to the limit of a regulative ideal of universal impartiality that gives normative force to the demand that we approach the coordination of our social life from a standpoint that heeds the claims and accommodates the perspectives of others. As such, it incorporates the conception of universality, with its internal relation to particularity, that characterizes universalist perspectivalism.

The democratic aspects of the normative ideal I have developed up to this point are more explicitly thematized in Chapter V, where I turn to the articulation of radical cosmopolitanism, the sociopolitical correlate of universalist perspectivalism. The ideals of collective legitimation

of claims and of universality as involving an openness to perspectives beyond delimited boundaries manifest themselves as the dual political demand for processes of radical democratization and the dialogical stance of cosmopolitan-mindedness. I draw the rudiments of these ideas from Mead's work on democracy and international-mindedness before engaging with contemporary discussions of cosmopolitan democracy. I reject the abstractly universalistic projects of Habermas and David Held, leaning more toward the emphasis on concrete universality that one finds in the work of Carol Gould. Gould's overall theoretical framework, however, is ultimately in tension with my own; the problem thus becomes to draw radically democratic and cosmopolitan insights out of my own account of the communicative dimension of sociality. For this purpose, I turn to the work of James Bohman. Bohman, working within a communicative framework with affinities to my own, develops a universal yet pluralistic cosmopolitan perspective, in the form of the perspective of *humanity*, which constitutes a global political community of multiple *dêmoi* or peoples. I again deploy the normative perspective of the universal in order to develop a similar Meadian account. I supplement this with a set of conceptual resources drawn from the work of Nancy Fraser in order to give greater focus to the radically democratic aspects of this cosmopolitan view, showing how it can accommodate these aspects without drawing sharp boundaries around political communities. The view that results is the radical cosmopolitanism of the project's title.

The project as a whole, then, draws on the resources of the communicative dimension of sociality in order to negotiate the tensions between universality and particularity and between radical and cosmopolitan democracy, arriving at a framework that accommodates both poles of these tensions as internally related to one another. My project thus makes a conceptual advance over theories on both sides that treat the poles as irreconcilable. The universalist perspectivalism

whose development begins in this project can contribute to debates, not only within moral and political theory, but also, as Chapter III indicates, in debates regarding normativity in the philosophy of language, philosophy of science, and social epistemology.

As a political theory, radical cosmopolitanism uniquely captures the aforementioned compelling intuitions of both radical and cosmopolitan democratic theories. It also, however, has ramifications that potentially reach beyond the conceptual, and can provide a resource for the critique and transformation of social structures and social relations that can be described as *unjust* insofar as they fall far short of the robust normative democratic ideal that it presents. Such an ideal, moreover, is precisely what is needed as a normative yardstick against which we can measure the contemporary political realm, such that we can motivate the criticism of the conditions of corruption, inequality, and economic domination. Such conditions lead to a removal of decision-making from the influence of those affected by decisions, with the result that the social and political order within which these conditions reign is only nominally democratic. The democratic ideal should be a challenge, not an accommodation, to this order. Those whose conception of a better world is foreclosed by dominant understandings of what is possible can appeal to this ideal to bolster their challenges—and this is precisely the purpose of this intervention. My emphasis on the participation of those currently excluded from political influence makes this project an inherently insurgent, grassroots, activist one, though it does not reject the possibility of institutional innovation as such. Rather than making specific institutional recommendations, this project aims more to contribute to the enterprise of social critique, which requires constant renewal so that it does not relinquish ideals in the face of the facts that fail them.

CHAPTER I

THE QUESTIONABLE RADICALISM OF THE POLITICAL

Chantal Mouffe has presented one of the most original accounts of radical democracy, one in which democracy's radicalization depends upon the ongoing politicization of ever more domains of social life, the opening of ever more relations of power to contestation and negotiation—a process she (along with Ernesto Laclau, her co-writer on *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (hereafter *Hegemony*)) refers to as the ‘deepening of the democratic revolution.’³ For Mouffe, the possibility of such politicization requires positing ‘the political’ as the root of all social life; ‘the political,’ which Mouffe describes in terms drawn from the work of Carl Schmitt, forms the basis upon which we can depict the politicization of the social ‘all the way down,’ as it were. This basis is in turn derived from an account of the social as a discursive space, which provides the standpoint from which Mouffe and Laclau elaborate their theory of hegemony. For Mouffe, antagonism and the incompleteness and openness of the social are the preconditions for the operation of hegemony and thus politics. Mouffe continually insists that this point explains the failure of any political view that maintains the possibility (or even the conceivability, in terms of a regulative ideal) of a rational consensus or a fully emancipated society—such views, resting on such ideals, fail to recognize the specificity and irreducibility of the political and the centrality of antagonism.

³ I focus on Mouffe's post-*Hegemony* work rather than Laclau's because she focuses most directly on developing a theory of radical democracy, and the aspects of the earlier text that I wish to focus on are developed more explicitly in her work. Dealing with Laclau's post-*Hegemony* work is beyond our scope here, for their positions diverge more significantly than the convention of treating them as a consistent intellectual unit suggests. I will indicate the rare (but significant) instances in which it appears that a concept from *Hegemony* appears to be Laclau's rather than Mouffe's. For the sake of brevity, I refer in the following pages solely to Mouffe except for the (frequent) cases in which I am dealing directly with the co-authored work. For a more in-depth account of the divergence between the two thinkers, both within and beyond *Hegemony*, see Wenman, “Laclau or Mouffe? Splitting the Difference.”

This is indeed a radical vision; but, while I share with Mouffe the motivation to articulate the possibility of a thoroughgoing politicization of social relations, of opening ever more domains of social life to radically democratic contestation, I cannot endorse the radicalism of ‘the political’ that Mouffe proposes. For Mouffe, radical democracy is predicated upon the eradication of the boundary that separates the political from the social. In this chapter, I argue that this view leads Mouffe to defend an account of the social as *purely political*, and that such an account is ultimately inadequate for the purposes of articulating a robust theory of radical democracy, for it uncouples the radical from the normative. This, I contend, is a mistake from the point of view of radicalism, albeit a mistake that purportedly radical theorists often make. In opposition to such a view, I argue, the radical and the normative are in fact inextricable. On the view I defend, maintaining a distinction between the political and the social is, *contra* Mouffe, precisely what is required to maintain the radicality and the normative and critical force of a conception of radical democracy; indeed, such a distinction is requisite for radical politicization itself.

The inevitable result of conceiving ‘the political’ in the fundamental and inherently conflictual—i.e. Schmittian—way Mouffe does is the inheritance of another aspect of the Schmittian legacy—the isolation of reason from decision. Such a decisionism is marked by the impossibility of a critical perspective from which judgments regarding the legitimacy of particular social arrangements can be not only made but also rationally contested and defended. The need for such a critical perspective thus leads us back to the need to reverse Mouffe’s collapse of the social into political, and to reinstate a version of the social/political distinction that retains the radically politicizing potential for which Mouffe aims, but does so without relinquishing the possibility of critical perspective in the way Mouffe does.

In this chapter's first section, I offer an account of the philosophical standpoint from which Mouffe develops her theory of radical democracy, focusing largely on the political account of the social developed in *Hegemony*, but also pointing out its emergence in the conception of the political offered in her later work. In the second section I examine the political implications that Mouffe and Laclau derive from this account. In so doing, I draw attention to some initial normative shortcomings that point to the need for a more thoroughgoing critique of Mouffe's conception of the political, as well as the reinstatement of an independent conception of the social that will allow for critical perspective and rational engagement with the legitimacy claims of social relations. In critiquing the rootedness of her position in *the political*, I argue that Mouffe relinquishes a type of *normative rootedness* that such a theory needs in order to be critical, radical, and politically efficacious. Merely political rootedness leaves us with a type of normative rootlessness that paralyzes the attempt to express the ethical or otherwise normative demands that democratic practice must heed, robbing social critique of its critical bite.

In the third section I turn my attention fully to this criticism of Mouffe's project. My strategy will be to point out two types of insufficiency in her account: insufficient normativity and insufficient radicality. The first, which I draw out via a brief discussion of the decisionism that emerges in Mouffe's work as well as an engagement with her deliberativist critics, involves the impossibility within her framework of evaluating discourses in ethical or epistemic terms that transcend the agonistic power struggles between them. This impossibility, I argue, is the result of the primacy of antagonism. While Mouffe rightly criticizes essentialist conceptions of the subject, such as the liberal subject who comes to politics with its identity and interests pre-given, she ultimately falls into an essentialism privileging a particular mode of social relatedness—antagonism—as the fundamental mode of relation. She thus neglects the communicative aspects

of sociality that go beyond antagonism and that have epistemic and ethical ramifications. This neglect robs her view of the capacities for critique and radical transformation; she has rendered impossible the attainment of a critical perspective from which challenges can be mounted against the social order within which that perspective arises. When the political itself exhausts the content of the social domain, we relinquish any normativity that might ground political practice. Doing so leaves us with a false dichotomy between, on the one hand, an unattainable (and potentially dangerous) type of universalism that appeals to a God's-eye-view, or at least that of a completely unencumbered and rational self; and, on the other hand, a provincialism or relativism that insists on the futility and the perniciousness of any appeals to rational consensus or universal validity.⁴ We can thus take up Mouffe's critique of the former while avoiding the slide into the latter. Attending to the social conditions for the possibility of the political allows us to avoid the insistence that any conception of rational consensus as a regulative ideal ignores the intransigent political and undermines the prospects for democracy. *Contra* Mouffe, one can argue that the notion of rational consensus constitutes a regulative ideal that lies beyond the realm of the political and that emerges from a normativity rooted in the communicative structure of intersubjective sociality that underwrites the political itself.

Mouffe's purportedly radical political philosophy also has startling implications for any mode of political practice that actually takes itself to be radical; hence the second insufficiency mentioned above. For our purposes the term 'radical' can be understood in a dual sense as indicating both a rootedness and a transformative potential. Mouffe's lack of radicality in the latter sense can be most easily seen by contrasting Mouffe's conception of 'radical and plural

⁴ Offering a view that is an alternative to this false dichotomy is the task of later chapters. I describe the overall view that I defend as 'universalist perspectivalism' in order to highlight the simultaneous commitment to (1) a rootedness in perspectives that forecloses the possibility of transcending all perspectives in order to attain an aperspectival standpoint and (2) a robust conception of universality that allows us to nevertheless attain a critical and normative perspective on legitimacy claims.

democracy' with the socialist struggle that is the centerpiece of classical Marxist theory and that is often identified as being part and parcel of the project of the radical left. While *Hegemony* presents itself as still somehow socialist, the resources Laclau and Mouffe offer for the mobilization and theoretical articulation of such a movement are not clear. For Laclau and Mouffe, this struggle is already merely one among others, and it continually fades from view in Mouffe's later work. Sidelining this aspect of social struggle, I argue, runs the risk of relinquishing the truly radical, i.e. deeply transformative, potential of their project. This difficulty is only accentuated in Mouffe's post-*Hegemony* work, where she continues to defend the project of 'radical' democracy; however, it is unclear what qualifies Mouffe's proposed agonistic negotiation of egalitarian and liberal principles as in any way *radical*, let alone radically *democratic*.

Mouffe's account thus relinquishes a normative *rootedness* as well as transformative political efficacy; thus, I argue, it relinquishes its radicality on two levels, given the dual sense of radicality in play here. At this point, therefore, the second insufficiency merges with the first; both are traceable back to account Mouffe offers of the social as purely political. Indeed, given the link between the radical and the normative that I elaborate in my own constructive account, one could argue that *these two insufficiencies are in fact a single difficulty*. Hence, in concluding, I contend that what is needed is an account of the social that runs deeper and underwrites this conception of the political, highlighting the normative implications of the communicative aspects of sociality. The view I defend will take Mouffe's claims into account while overcoming the pitfalls of her position by providing the normativity that a project of radical democracy needs. This, however, is a task for later chapters. First we must understand Mouffe's project and give an account of its limitations.

1. The Social as Political

In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Laclau and Mouffe formulate the project that has become the centerpiece of the intertwining discourses regarding ‘post-Marxism’ and ‘radical democracy.’ These two aspects of their project are deeply linked for them insofar as the decisive break with Marxist class reductionism and economism that they enact in this text leads to the development of a new model for the politics of the left that purportedly enables an ambitious new mode of social struggle. However, their project is not a wholesale rejection of Marxist categories, and the respect in which their project appropriates two key Marxist categories (namely, Gramsci’s notion of hegemony and Althusser’s notion of overdetermination) in order to break with the Marxist tradition is crucial to understanding their account of the social.

The concept of hegemony in particular, especially as elaborated by Gramsci, plays a central role in allowing Laclau and Mouffe to break with the necessitarian logic that they identify as being bound up with Marxism. A great deal of their project in *Hegemony* consists in a genealogy of the concept of hegemony, which emerges from crises in the categorial framework of Marxist theory and finally asserts its irreducible character by undermining the claim of Marxism to have produced an account of social totality, and injecting a radical contingency into the Marxian necessary progression of history.⁵ Two noteworthy conclusions emerge from their account of the development of the logic of hegemony in terms of their relationship with Marxism. First, they break with the Marxist notion of the working class as the privileged agent of radical social change. In its place, they offer a picture in which the identities and interests of social agents are constituted entirely in and by antagonistic relations, rather than being antecedent; this applies to class as much as to any other ‘subject position.’ The second

⁵ For an alternate account of the history of the emergence of the concept of hegemony in Marxist thought that challenges the presuppositions of Laclau and Mouffe’s genealogy, see Lester, *Dialogue of Negation: Debates on Hegemony in Russia and the West*.

consequence of Laclau and Mouffe's post-Marxist turn involves radical struggle itself: the socialist or anti-capitalist struggle that is the centerpiece of Marxist theory no longer holds center stage. This struggle is now only one amongst a multitude of struggles (and indeed seems to increasingly take a back seat to others) in the politics of radical democracy, the aim of which Laclau and Mouffe describe as the 'deepening of the democratic revolution.' The notions of discourse, antagonism, hegemony, and articulation that underlie their political project are part and parcel of a view of the social that ultimately comprises an impoverished account of human sociality that is inadequate for the project of radical democracy.

Laclau and Mouffe acknowledge that their conception of the political, which is inextricably tied up with the notion of hegemony, plays an ontologically basic, even transcendental, role in their work. It is from this point of view that they offer a critique of discourses that attempt to delineate an account of the social realm as totalized, sutured, complete, and hence not riven by antagonism. It is in this respect that, in a previous essay, Laclau has proclaimed the 'impossibility of society'⁶; this formulation implies the impossibility of the achievement of society as a totality and hence the impossibility of a final objective articulation of the constitution of the social realm. The impossibility of a complete objective account, or ontology, of the social as totality or as an object follows from the inherent incompleteness of the social, which in turn is due to its irreducibly political nature.

Thus, rather than offering an ontology of the social, Laclau and Mouffe submit an account of the social as political, of which the central category is their notion of hegemony. It is this latter notion that injects radical contingency into the Marxist categorial framework, leading to the turn to a post-Marxism influenced by poststructuralism and deconstructionism and based on a new theory of *discourse*. For Laclau and Mouffe, the philosophical standpoint from which

⁶ See in particular Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time* 89-92.

to elaborate their theory of hegemony is one in which the social is conceived as a *discursive space*. This formulation, in their view, leads to an account of the political as irreducible. To fully understand the nature and implications of this depiction of the political, however, we must more fully elaborate the account that Laclau and Mouffe set forth in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* of the social as a discursive space that is always already antagonistically constituted.

In the first two chapters of *Hegemony*, the notion of the political emerges as Laclau and Mouffe trace the genealogy of the concept of hegemony through critical conjunctures in Marxist theory. A crucial point in Laclau and Mouffe's development of the concept of hegemony occurs when they delineate the dual potential of the concept, which has the capacity to underwrite either an authoritarian politics (as in the case of Leninism) or a democratic politics. The logic of hegemony involves the proliferation of sites of antagonism beyond the 'fundamental' bourgeois-proletarian antagonism of Marxism, opening up the possibility for the legitimation of struggles on the part of agents not limited to the working class. As a result, a *dislocation* between the masses and the working class appears, whereas before the working class was seen as sole revolutionary agent, as universal class, around which popular-democratic demands must be articulated. The popular-democratic is thus released from its previous subordination to class interpellations. In defiance to the claims of the essential primacy of a particular class or social agent, the logic of hegemony entails that the political tasks taken up by a group modify and partially constitute that group's identity. It is not the case that preconstituted groups endowed with intrinsic interests approach a political task in a relation of exteriority; the task itself is partially internalized by the group as part of its identity and its interests. Rather than being the act of a preconstituted subject or the reflection of preconstituted interests, political activity performatively and discursively produces political subjects, their interests, and the discursive

totalities to which they relate. The constitution of identity and interest by hegemonic articulations plays a central role in the anti-essentialist project that Laclau and Mouffe are pursuing. Notions such as class alliance, as a result, cease to make sense, insofar as hegemony is not a matter of aggregating compatible interests, but rather of reconstituting interests and the identities of the social agents making demands on behalf of these interests.

Some of the political consequences of these ideas can be made explicit by considering the so-called ‘new’ social movements. From the point of view of Laclau and Mouffe, the development of a non-essentialist account of the subject, particularly in the form of the critique of the essentialist conception of the working class as primary revolutionary agent, allows for the legitimation rather than the dismissal of new social movements (*Hegemony* 87). No particular movement is privileged, but this does not entail an essential fragmentation; rather, they constitute themselves and their interests within the establishment of hegemonic relations with other social agents, whether consisting of antagonism (in which the existence of one social agent threatens to negate that of the other) or of the articulation of relations of equivalence into a collective will.⁷ As no social movement has a constitutive identity, it is always *overdetermined* by the ensemble of social forces at play around it. Therefore, while the new social movements clearly cannot be situated in relation to a single hegemonic center, they also cannot adequately be described as completely autonomous or fragmented.

The Althusserian notion of overdetermination as it is taken up by Laclau and Mouffe can serve as an entry to point to a more complete discussion of the account of the social as political that they outline in the latter half of the text. This concept emerges from Althusser’s treatment of

⁷ This does not mitigate the primacy of antagonism. The formation of collective wills is predicated upon the existence of a common antagonistic other that threatens the identities that are being articulated in a chain of equivalence. In Mouffe’s Schmittian terms, collective identity relies on the drawing of a frontier between friend and enemy, i.e. it relies on the political moment of antagonism.

the notion of the social whole in terms of the familiar Marxian metaphor of base and superstructure. In “Contradiction and Overdetermination,” he attempts to theorize the relative autonomy of the superstructure and its reciprocal effectivity on the economic base using the concept of “overdetermined contradiction.” Here he claims that the effectivity of the superstructure on the base occurs in the form of “the *accumulation of effective determinations* (deriving from the superstructures and from special national and international circumstances) *on the determination in the last instance by the economic*” (113). Such accumulation, which he terms “overdetermination,” works to displace the economy from a central position in the totality; while the economic base retains its last instance determination, the superstructural instances never “step respectfully aside when their work is done or...scatter before His Majesty the Economy...From the first moment to the last, the lonely hour of the ‘last instance’ never comes” (113). Althusser thus tries to anchor his notion of social totality to the economic infrastructure without lapsing into a reductive economism; there remains a dominant contradiction, tied to a dominant economic structure, that is nevertheless overdetermined by an accumulation of other contradictions. Laclau and Mouffe take up the concept of overdetermination while simultaneously breaking with the last remnants of Althusser’s Marxism by maintaining that this concept is “strictly speaking, incompatible with...determination in the last instance by the economy” (98). This latter formulation is promptly rejected as incoherent and as leading to a failure on Althusser’s part to avoid economic determinism. Laclau and Mouffe thus decenter what remains the central contradiction for Althusser, the anchor that prevented him from providing a truly decentered account of complex totality. Of course, Althusser anchored the social whole in the last-instance determination by the economy precisely to avoid the kind of radical pluralism and contingency that he saw as leading to a theoretical void and the end of

radical political practice, whereas Laclau and Mouffe here embrace this move as offering new democratic potential.⁸ If there is no longer a central contradiction, the role of theory becomes quite different: it opens up democratic possibilities insofar as the matters of concern become contingent hegemonic relations.

In their criticism of Althusser, Laclau and Mouffe trace the concept of overdetermination back to its original use in Freud as “a very precise type of fusion entailing a symbolic dimension and a plurality of meanings” (97). Althusser’s application of this notion to the social whole thus allows for “the assertion that the social constitutes itself as a symbolic order” (97-98).

Althusser’s problem, however, is that he did not follow this concept to its logical conclusion, falling instead into the essentialism of last instance determination by the economy. In place of this, Laclau and Mouffe offer their account of *articulation*, which they equate with “a *political construction* from dissimilar elements” (85). They later explicitly define articulation as “any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result” (105); as such, this implies, within the conception of the social as a symbolic order, “the critique of every type of fixity...an affirmation of the incomplete, open and politically negotiable character of every identity” (104). The objects in this order are mutually constitutive, but are also mutually preventative of the final constitution of the identity of other objects.

This account gives rise to Laclau and Mouffe’s new conception of *discourse*, “the structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice” (105). Laclau and Mouffe insist that discourses are always limited, made contingent, threatened by an exteriority; however, it is important to point out that this exteriority is constituted by other discursive structures, rather than

⁸ Althusser’s worry is echoed in many of the Marxist responses to Laclau and Mouffe’s work that emphasize its explanatory vacuity and the lack of resources it provides for socialist strategy as such. I share this worry, though I arrive at it from a standpoint other than that of Althusserian Marxism. This concern is further explored in Section 3 below, where I focus on Marxist critics (among others) of Laclau and Mouffe.

anything extradiscursive. It is this point that allows for their development of a fundamental notion of *antagonism*. Exterior discourses prevent a discourse from ever being fully sutured or establishing a necessary set of relations or identities that are fully constituted or complete. Antagonism consists in the impossibility of the full constitution of a discourse as an object; its identity is always threatened, and hence conditioned and partially constituted, by that which lies outside of it—its constitutive outside. Antagonism thus entails the impossibility of the final suture of a totality; that is, it renders impossible the full achievement of *objectivity*.

For Laclau and Mouffe, objectivity occurs in the form of the relative stability of a discourse in relation to its outside; hence, as complete stability in the form of closed identity is impossible, complete objectivity is impossible. Antagonism discursively presents itself in the form of the experience of the impossibility of a discursive form's complete self-constitution in relation to this outside—that is, “of the limit of all objectivity” (122). Antagonism also stands as the external limit of any construction of society, and constitutes the impossibility of any final suture or totalization of the social. However, while antagonism is not part of the content of the social, it penetrates the social through and through insofar as no discourse is ever able to fully constitute an identity for itself. Laclau and Mouffe distinguish antagonism from Kant's ‘real opposition’ as well as from dialectical contradiction: “...[I]n the case of antagonism, we are confronted with a different situation: the presence of the ‘Other’ prevents me from being totally myself. The relation arises not from full totalities, but from the impossibility of their constitution” (125). Objectivity thus presents itself in antagonism as an always incomplete and unstable construction of *objectification*. Antagonism subverts every totality, every identity, every attempt to fix meaning; indeed, it is itself the hidden impossibility of each of these. Laclau and Mouffe invoke Wittgenstein's distinction between ‘showing’ and ‘saying’ in order to

characterize antagonism as the limit of objectivity. Carrying the reference to the *Tractatus* further than Laclau and Mouffe explicitly do, and conceiving objectivity here as the thinkable, then we must arrive at antagonism as the limit of the thinkable by ‘working outward’ through objectivity, as drawing the boundary between thinkable and unthinkable in any other way would presuppose a contradictory ability to think the unthinkable, as Wittgenstein points out in the introduction to the *Tractatus*. Moreover, the notion of antagonism as the limit of objectivity ties antagonism to the Tractarian conception of the subject as limit of the world. Wittgenstein claims that, while my body and its actions are in the world, *I*, as subject, am not in the world, but rather constitute the limit of the world insofar as it is a world *for me*. Similarly, antagonism lies at the boundary of all objectivity, and all objectivity is actually objectification in relation to a limiting antagonism. The subject is thus replaced by antagonism, the discursive condition for the possibility of experience.

In keeping with this basic philosophical standpoint, Laclau and Mouffe distinguish their conception of the subject as constituted by an ensemble of subject positions within a discursive structure from the conception of the subject as transcendental, antecedent to and originary of social relations. The formal Kantian notion of the subject as the condition of the possibility of experience is rejected in favor of the transcendental effects of antagonistic frontiers. While their rejection of the essentialist notion of the subject as unitary involves a *dispersion* of subject positions, this does not entail their *fragmentation* or *separation*. Positions are overdetermined by other positions, such that they are not self-contained monads but are contingent and constituted relationally. Due to this fundamentally relational nature, then, subjects are bound up with and constituted by antagonism.

While the complete and final achievement of objectivity is impossible, this does not entail a postmodern vision of the endless and unlimited play of meaning; rather, the lack of fixity of meaning can only be conceived against a background of (always incomplete and partial) attempts to fix meaning. Discourses attempt to dominate the discursive field by articulating a claim to universality or fixing meaning at privileged sites called ‘nodal points.’ Laclau and Mouffe summarize these points and explicitly connect them to hegemonic articulatory practice as follows:

The practice of articulation, therefore, consists in the construction of nodal points which partially fix meaning; and the partial character of this fixation proceeds from the openness of the social, a result, in its turn, of the constant overflowing of every discourse by the infinitude of the field of discursivity. (113)

This model has important implications for democratic political struggle and the identity of political agents engaged in struggle. Antagonism prevents any of these identities from being fully positively constructed, from garnering complete objectivity. This does not, however, reduce the social to a set of purely negative differential relations. Rather, the dual logics of difference and equivalence exert a continuous subversive force on each other, maintaining a tension between the two of them and preventing either from being fully achieved: “if society is never transparent to itself because it is unable to constitute itself as an objective field, neither is antagonism entirely transparent, as it does not manage totally to dissolve the objectivity of the social” (129).

The logic of equivalence, or the establishment of chains of equivalence (which can never be fully constituted or stabilized), plays a crucial role in political struggle in light of both the fundamental role of antagonism and the increasing complexity of industrialized societies, as “the logic of equivalence is a logic of the simplification of political space, while the logic of difference is a logic of its expansion and increasing complexity” (130). Antagonism can emerge at any point in the system of differences characterizing a social formation; increasingly complex

and unstable social relations thus allow for the proliferation of points of antagonism and render the establishment of chains of equivalence between political agents and their demands increasingly difficult. In complex societies, sites of antagonism and hence particular democratic struggles are allowed to proliferate, but ‘popular struggle,’ which requires the unification of multifarious demands to such a degree that the political space is divided between two antagonistic parties, becomes increasingly unlikely. It is important to point out that the configuration of antagonism(s) that presents itself is not the result of any structural necessity or economic determination; rather, it is the contingent product of discursive practices on the part of contingently and unstably constituted political agents. The identity of these agents, moreover, is itself a result of their self-definition in opposition to some ‘other’ (i.e. the result of antagonism) rather than the product of some intrinsic or essential properties on the part of the groups. Laclau and Mouffe conclude that the central political problem thus becomes that of the discursive constitution of the identities that will confront each other antagonistically, and how this construction can contribute to a deepening of ‘radical and plural democracy.’

Laclau and Mouffe then move on to address the question of who is to play the role of articulating or hegemonizing subject in light of the rejection of the Marxist belief that the working class is destined to play this role. On the one hand, this subject must be to some degree exterior to the elements it is articulating; on the other hand, it cannot be radically exterior to them—in either case articulation would be impossible. In order to address this problem, Laclau and Mouffe emphasize the distinction between the general field of discursivity, on the one hand, and particular discourses or discursive formations, on the other:

[I]n that case, both the hegemonic force and the ensemble of hegemonized elements would constitute themselves on the same plane—the general field of discursivity—while the exteriority would be that corresponding to different discursive formations. (135)

Of course, articulation would also be impossible if the discursive formations were fully constituted, such that an exterior element could have no conditioning effect. Hence the relation must be between subject positions in a discourse and elements with “no precise discursive formation” (135)—what Laclau will later refer to as ‘floating signifiers.’ Hegemony thus consists in a partial fixation of the meaning of the articulated elements in an attempt to dominate the discursive (and hence the social) sphere.

The portrait one finds in *Hegemony* of the discursive field of the social as constituted by fundamental relations of antagonism develops toward an increasing emphasis on the concept of ‘the political’ in Mouffe’s later work. Mouffe, in her engagements with the political theory of Schmitt, elaborates this concept as being predicated upon the drawing of a frontier between ‘friend’ and ‘enemy,’ ‘us’ and ‘them.’ For Schmitt, the specificity of the political lies not in its having a particular content, but in its intensity as a unity, which can penetrate the social in all spheres insofar as a social relation gives rise to the drawing of a frontier between friend and enemy—that is, insofar as a relation becomes a site of antagonism. The political, then, on this view, is an irreducible aspect of any social order that penetrates into all social spheres insofar as these spheres become sites of the decision of social conflict; such sites are where what we might call ‘politics’ occurs.⁹

This formulation, in which the political is construed as inherently conflictual or agonistic, takes on increasing centrality in Mouffe’s later work. Many sections of her *The Return of the Political*, *The Democratic Paradox*, and *On the Political* (hereafter abbreviated, respectively, as *RP*, *DP*, and *OP*) are devoted to the employment of Schmitt’s definition of the political to inform philosophical views of liberal-democratic institutions in such a way as to admonish them not to ignore such basic ‘facts’ as “the existence of an element of hostility among human beings” (*RP*

⁹ See esp. Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*.

2), and “the conflictual nature of politics and the ineradicability of antagonism” (*DP* xii).¹⁰ Mouffe’s notion of ‘agonism’ is an attempt to domesticate the authoritarian implications of Schmitt’s view of the friend/enemy relation. She argues that, in spite of Schmitt’s use of his notion of the political to attack the institutions of democracy (particularly parliamentary democracy)¹¹, it is precisely *liberal democracy* that tames the plurality of elements by transforming what might be called “antagonism proper—which takes place between enemies, that is, persons who have no common symbolic space”—into ‘agonism,’

which is a different mode of manifestation of antagonism because it involves a relation not between enemies but between ‘adversaries’, adversaries being defined in a paradoxical way as ‘friendly enemies’, that is, persons who are friends because they share a common symbolic space but also enemies because they want to organize this common symbolic space in a different way. (*DP* 13)

From this perspective, views that make appeals to a rational consensus or regulative ideal ignore the irreducible specificity of the political. This is a particularly insidious development from Mouffe’s point of view. Such a ‘rationalist’ depoliticization of the political opens the door to the legitimation of any degree of violence against the other, who has gone from being one political adversary among others to a non-human or criminal other that falls outside of the sphere of universality demarcated by those claiming to speak for all of humanity. The fundamental nature of the political thus clearly plays a central role in Mouffe’s agonistic version of radical democracy; we now turn more explicitly to the implications that this account of the social as political has for political practice.

¹⁰ Indeed, the appearance of the phrase ‘the political’ in two of the titles of her three books serves to indicate her repeated insistence on the centrality of this particular, Schmittian, notion of the political. Incidentally, one might be struck by how her claims about the ineradicability of hostility and conflict look like claims about human nature; this charge, however, misses the mark. It is the antagonism that is the source of the social agent rather than vice versa. However, in dodging this charge, Mouffe falls into an opposing form of essentialism: as I will argue, she essentializes a particular mode of social relatedness by making antagonism the fundamental category of the social.

¹¹ See Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*. For further discussion of some problematic aspects of Mouffe’s attempt to domesticate Schmitt, see Wiley, “The Impasse of Radical Democracy,” as well as the spirited critique of leftist employments of a Schmittian conceptual framework in Dyrberg, “The Leftist Fascination with Schmitt and the Esoteric Quality of ‘the Political.’”

2. Political Practice

We have the outlines of the account of the social as political that Laclau and Mouffe offer in *Hegemony*, and that finds its way into Mouffe's later work in the form of a continuous emphasis on 'the political.' However, from its inception this project was purportedly being carried out in the service of a 'radical democratic politics.' What does all of this mean, then, for such a mode of political practice? According to Laclau and Mouffe, abandoning the view that a particular class agent is necessarily assigned a particular political task and embracing the radically contingent nature of the logic of hegemony has important consequences for the possibility of deepening radical democratic movements. Laclau and Mouffe assert that the view they put forth requires a rethinking of the objectives and strategies of the left, particularly in the form of a radical break with the "Jacobin imaginary" of "privileged points of rupture" (152). The result is a picture of a new left that is "radically libertarian and infinitely more ambitious in its objectives" (152). An examination of the political philosophy put forth in the last portion of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* will help us to explore whether or not Laclau and Mouffe are justified in such a bold claim. Ultimately, I will argue, they are not; the ensuing discussion will begin to indicate the insufficiency of normativity and radicality that will be discussed in the next section.

The movements that Laclau and Mouffe focus on in the fourth and final chapter of *Hegemony* are the multifarious struggles against subordination in its various modes, each of which is a *political* struggle—that is, one predicated upon antagonism—insofar as its "objective is the transformation of a social relation which constructs a subject in a relationship of subordination" (153). In each case, neither the subordination nor struggle is natural or necessary, but each is itself the product of contingently emerging historical circumstances. Moreover, a

relation of *subordination* (“in which an agent is subjected to the decisions of another”) is not *ipso facto* a relation of *oppression*; the latter is a subordination relation that has contingently become a site of antagonism due to the influence of an external discourse (153). For a relation of oppression to emerge, the relation of subordination must be subject to subversion by an external discursive construct, such that the subordinated subject position can be called into question in a way that allows for the emergence of antagonism. For instance, in the case of slavery, the emergence of antagonism may come about due to the entry of some discourse of *equality* or *human rights*, such that those occupying the ‘slave’ subject position call the legitimacy of this position into question; this leads to the emergence of antagonism insofar as the slaves, in questioning the relation, also threaten the identity of the ‘slave-owner’ or ‘master’ subject position. At first blush this distinction between subordination and oppression is unobjectionable—of course, not every subordination relation is oppressive; children are subject to the decisions of their parents, for instance, and rightly so. However, problematic consequences would seem to follow from the rather specialized way in which Laclau and Mouffe set relations of oppression apart from ordinary and unobjectionable relations of subordination.

To fully understand this, we must distinguish between *actual* access and *in-principle* access to external discourses, a distinction that Laclau and Mouffe do not make. If they mean to say that the transformation of a relation of subordination into one of oppression requires *actual* access to, and uptake of, an external discourse, it would seem to follow that slavery is not actually oppressive unless the slaves constitute themselves as a political agent divided from those who enslave them by a frontier of antagonism. Even a felt dissatisfaction with their social standing, or, put more bluntly, the brutal way in which they are treated, is not enough; the slaves require actual access to a discourse, such as that of human rights, that allows them to constitute

themselves as occupants of a subject position that threatens to negate the identity of the slave owner by calling into question the legitimacy of the institution of slavery itself. In his review of *Hegemony*, Norman Geras criticizes this formulation in a particularly stark fashion: “one may note how this completely relativizes what counts as oppression, so that a young child, for instance, cut off from all social contact, beaten and tormented, bewildered and without the concepts of any other ‘legitimacy’ than that of her tormentors, could not be said to be oppressed” (77). Geras takes such a relativism to be a *reductio ad absurdum* of Laclau and Mouffe’s position here; however, Laclau and Mouffe could easily bite this bullet and point out that it is for this reason that they introduce the concept of relations of *domination*: “the set of those relations of subordination which are considered as illegitimate from the perspective, or in the judgement, of a social agent external to them” (154). Thus, the child in Geras’s example could be said to be dominated, while it is true that, given their stipulative definition of oppression, the child could not be said to be oppressed.

The introduction of relations of domination, as distinguished from those of oppression, suggests that Laclau and Mouffe recognize the distinction between actual and in-principle access to external discourses. Hence they may be arguing that the presence or potential availability of (divorced from actual access to or uptake of) some external discourse that could call the legitimacy of a relation of subordination into question qualifies that relation as one of domination, which retains the normative force that Geras bemoans the loss of with regard to oppression. On one level, this seems correct—if no external discourse were at all available, we would not be able to make any defensible claims about the illegitimacy of a particular relation of subordination. We must note, however, that, without criteria for evaluating discourses from a context-transcending perspective, this position relativizes domination to the opposite extreme

from the previous relativization of oppression; for even in the case of the most unobjectionable relation of subordination the possibility remains in principle that some discourse could be articulated from the perspective of which the relation could be deemed illegitimate. The central question, then, is how we then evaluate such judgments of illegitimacy. We must, of course, be able to draw a distinction between mere subordination, on the one hand, and oppression or domination, on the other; however, the notions of domination and oppression lose all normative force unless we maintain some ethical or epistemic perspective or standard from which we can evaluate and criticize competing discourses. Without some such critical perspective or standard (such as the notion of rational consensus or the Marxist notions of ideology and objective interests, which are all explicitly rejected by Laclau and Mouffe) does this view not simply devolve into a relativism or a provincialism insofar as each discourse simply finds its legitimacy and criteria for evaluation only within itself? This is not to demand some absolute or ahistorical perspective, a God's-eye-view from which to hand down judgment. Rather, I simply mean to point out that Laclau and Mouffe lack an account of any (historical, situated) perspective from which participants in struggle can make intersubjectively redeemable claims about *better* and *worse* discursive constructs. They do not offer us any resources for privileging certain discursive constructs over others. Without such resources, judgments about the illegitimacy of particular relations of subordination risk becoming expressions of the 'subjective' preferences of solipsistic discourses. One might respond that this objection is wrongheaded insofar as it depicts these discursive constructs as somehow independent of each other, self-enclosed, monadic. In that case, if these discourses are essentially porous and overdetermined by one another rather than self-constituted and enclosed, *what can we say about the normativity of the continuous interplay*

amongst them, if anything? This is one of the questions that, in the next section, I will argue that Laclau and Mouffe cannot answer due to their reduction of all of sociality to the political.

In the closing section of *Hegemony* Laclau and Mouffe attempt to outline the strategy for a new left that they discuss under the rubric of ‘radical democracy.’ Here already we see the claim, characteristic of Mouffe’s later work, that it is necessary to articulate radical democracy with the liberal discourse of rights. The left must not renounce the ideology of liberal democracy but transform it in the direction of deepening the democratic revolution and establishing chains of equivalence between struggles against subordination; this also requires a deepening of the liberal tradition of rights, in which rights are reconceived and their application is extended to new spheres of the social realm. The abandonment of economism and the base-superstructure model reveals the need for democratic struggle to extend its reach “to the whole of civil society and the state” (176).¹² Their conception of democratic struggle also implies, as mentioned earlier, a break with the Jacobin conception of revolution as privileged point of rupture providing the basis for the rational reorganization of society. In its place they offer the Gramscian notion of ‘war of position,’ which “implies precisely the *process* character of every radical transformation” (178). For instance, the elimination of private property does not constitute the essential moment from which the elimination of all relations of subordination will unfold. Relations of subordination are not linked necessarily; rather, chains of equivalence are hegemonically constructed between them.

Laclau and Mouffe reject conceptions of radical struggle that privilege certain specified sites within the heterogeneous topography of the social, such as the state, as the location upon

¹² On the one hand, Laclau and Mouffe indicate that this is the result of their break with Marxism; on the other hand, their Gramscianism (albeit a post-Marxist one) reveals itself in considerations precisely like this one. It is, then, not entirely clear why we have to make a radical break with Marxist categories to achieve this insight, since it can be found in Gramsci.

which antagonistic confrontation must occur. This stance is directly in line with their rejection of any totalizing ontology of the social. Their anti-essentialism extends to the state/civil society distinction, and also has the implication that particular institutional or organizational forms, such as parties, are not inherently progressive or insidious, but, depending on their mode of articulation, can serve alternately as obstacles to or as tools of democratic struggle: “The important point is that inasmuch as the field of ‘society in general’ has disappeared as a valid framework of political analysis, there has also disappeared the possibility of establishing a *general* theory of politics on the basis of topographic categories” (180). With the increasing complexity of society, the space of antagonism, and hence of the political, penetrates into more and more sectors of the social world, generating new political subjects and new possibilities for the deepening of democracy. The construction of chains of equivalence among these disparate struggles requires “the construction of a new ‘common sense’ which changes the identity of the different groups, in such a way that the demands of each group are articulated equivalentially with those of the others” (183).

At this point Laclau and Mouffe claim that, on the basis of the hegemonic articulation of such chains of equivalence, these struggles become “truly democratic” (184). The function of this ‘truly’ is unclear. It appears that Laclau and Mouffe are here attempting to give content to ‘the democratic’ in order to provide their conception of political practice with some normative force. However, it cannot be that Laclau and Mouffe are positing an *essence* of democracy, such that there are necessary conditions that must be fulfilled for ‘real’ democracy to exist. Their basic philosophical standpoint, which entails anti-essentialism, prevents this; indeed, in later work they both treat democracy as a prime example of a ‘floating signifier’—it has no precise content, such that its meaning is always the subject of political contestation. Of course, if they are here

engaging in such contestation by simply *strategically defining* ‘democratic’ as ‘based on the hegemonic articulation of chains of equivalence between the demands of different groups,’ then their claim is true: indeed, it is a tautology. Hence in this case the claim that such struggles are ‘truly’ democratic adds no normative content apart from that already provided by their account of the political (which, as I argue, is insufficient—hence the need for a more robust conception of democracy). Again, given this account, they have cut themselves off from the possibility of appealing to the potential normative force of a robust notion of the ‘truly democratic.’

Finally, Laclau and Mouffe emphasize that the democratic logic of equivalence must be tempered by the liberal logic of autonomy. The radical and plural natures of their project of ‘radical and plural democracy’ must be balanced against one another—hence the centrality, in this and later works, of the dual ethical principles of equality and liberty. Mouffe discusses the inherent tension between these principles, a tension she describes as the ‘democratic paradox,’ as constitutive of the possibility of democratic politics. She admonishes us not to allow ourselves to lapse into either extreme of these dichotomous principles; this error takes the form of a totalitarian holism on the one hand and bourgeois individualism on the other. Rather, democratic political practice must performatively negotiate between these poles.

Throughout *Hegemony*, as well as in her other work, Mouffe rejects all views that posit a regulative ideal in the form of emancipation, rational consensus, or transparent communication as ignoring the irreducibility of the political in such a way that they in fact undermine the possibility of democratic politics. Indeed, she insists that the final achievement of radical democracy would also be its demise, as democratic politics is predicated upon the forms of antagonism and subordination that it purportedly seeks to overcome. This paradox is central to Mouffe’s purely political account of radical democracy, and also marks the normative

insufficiency of her overall project, as we shall see. However, in the last pages of *Hegemony* Laclau and Mouffe make a handful of vague gestures toward a view that does not sit well with this agonistic insistence on the insidiousness of regulative ideals. While the aspiration for a totalizing chain of equivalence purportedly inaugurates the logic of totalitarianism, Laclau and Mouffe also warn against the “opposite danger of a lack of all reference to this unity” (188). They rightly point out here that, in spite of the impossibility of any final unity, such a unity “remains a horizon which...is necessary in order to prevent an implosion of the social and an absence of any point of reference” (188). Indeed, they go so far as to resist the very “expulsion of utopia from the field of the political” that they have elsewhere endorsed in the name of the political’s irreducibility: “Now, without ‘utopia’, without the possibility of negating an order beyond the point that we are able to threaten it, there is no possibility at all of the constitution of a radical imaginary—whether democratic or of any other type (190).” It is not clear what we are to make of this baffling formulation,¹³ though it is helpful when they warn us against “the two extremes represented by the totalitarian myth of the Ideal City, and the positivist pragmatism of reformists without a project” (190). The question, then, is what is to lie between these two extremes.

For Laclau and Mouffe, the middle road lies in the affirmation of the fundamental status of the political. Given the insufficiencies I explore in the next section, however, it is not clear

¹³ These assertions again appear to be Laclau’s contribution rather than Mouffe’s. It is precisely here that the divergence between Laclau and Mouffe manifests itself, though I am nevertheless puzzled as to how remarks such as these can be squared with the rest of *Hegemony* at all. Laclau’s elaboration of the idea of hegemonic universality in his later work (see esp. “Universalism, Particularism, and the Question of Identity” in *Emancipation(s)* pp. 20-35, as well as his contributions to Butler, Laclau, and Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*) sheds some light on the direction in which they might be pointing here; but in this later work, he outlines a theory of hegemonic universality that begins to look suspiciously like the struggle against antagonism itself and hence against the political as such—while of course, affirming the impossibility in principle of the success of such a struggle. While I am deeply sympathetic to this move as I understand it, it is strictly speaking incompatible with most of the rest of *Hegemony*, where Laclau and Mouffe insist that “there is no radical and plural democracy without renouncing the discourse of the universal and its implicit assumption of a privileged point of access to ‘the truth’” (191-92). It is also completely absent from, and incompatible with, the theory of radical democracy that Mouffe later develops.

how this formulation avoids the latter extreme of a “positivist pragmatism,” which seems to be the inevitable result of the abandonment of the possibility of normative roots or critical perspective. The other road, which I shall pursue, is a view of sociality that emphasizes its communicative aspect; on such a view, which I call ‘universalist perspectivalism,’ we can appeal to a type of normativity or critical perspective that goes beyond the political, while still emerging from the interaction of contextually situated perspectives. Given the conception of the political at play in her work, Mouffe cannot countenance such a possibility; any appeal to an idealization or abstraction must be a rationalistic appeal to an absolute or ahistorical God’s eye-view, and hence to the “totalitarian myth of the Ideal City.” In the next section I show that Mouffe’s account is insufficient for the project of radical democracy, thus indicating the need for a view to take its place; moreover, jettisoning the assumptions that form the basis of her account of the social as political allows for the articulation of such a view of sociality that is not dangerously rationalistic or totalitarian. I thus clear the way for the project, taken up in later chapters, of elaborating and defending my own account of sociality and its implications for radical democracy.

3. Normativity and Radicality

In this section I examine two insufficiencies in Mouffe’s project—insufficient normativity and insufficient radicality—and argue that both of these stem from the normative rootlessness of her account of the social as political, which mistakenly uncouples the radical and the normative. I first address the issue of normativity itself, beginning with an examination of an aspect of Mouffe’s inheritance from Schmitt; namely, his decisionism. Such a view consists in the isolation of political decision from rational evaluation or legitimation, and an opposition to purportedly rationalist views that attempt to subject the political sphere to external normative

considerations. I here mobilize Habermas' critique of decisionism to highlight the normative vacuity of such an account, which I argue stems from an essentializing of antagonism as the basic social relation. Mouffe's responses to this Habermasian line of argument rely upon the assumptions characterizing her view of the political, and are thus question-begging. While this does not by itself vindicate the opposing Habermasian position, challenging Mouffe's account of the social as fundamentally political at least clears the ground for the elaboration and defense of the view of sociality that I pursue in later chapters. For the moment, I establish the need for such a response to Mouffe by drawing on the work of deliberative democrats, whose emphasis on rational consensus constitutes one of the main targets of an extended polemic by Mouffe in *The Democratic Paradox*; in responding from a broadly deliberativist point of view, I offer a perspective from which to identify difficulties and inconsistencies in her project that reveal her relinquishing of normative critical force, hence illustrating her work's insufficient normativity.

Turning then to radicality, I look to the work of Laclau and Mouffe's Marxist critics, who have reacted, with varying degrees of hostility, by pointing out that jettisoning certain core Marxist concepts has eroded the truly radical political potential of her project *and* has led to a normative void at the heart of her work. On the one hand, then, the Marxist critique ties together the two insufficiencies under discussion; on the other hand, it illustrates Mouffe's insufficient radicality on two levels, based on the dual sense of radicality as transformative potential and as a rootedness in sociality that allows for the possibility of a critical normative perspective. While deliberativists and Marxists may seem a strange pairing, they in fact offer us complementary ways of perceiving what is insufficient about Mouffe's account; together they show that the uncoupling of the radical and the normative that results from her account is a mistake. An adequate theory of radical democracy requires a more normatively and critically robust view.

As we have seen, Mouffe endorses a conception of the political according to which it is a site of irreconcilable conflict. Above all (or perhaps, rather, underlying all), Mouffe insists that this notion of the political “must be conceived as a dimension that is *inherent* to every human society and that *determines* our very ontological condition” (*RP* 3, emphasis added). For Schmitt, from whom this conception of the political is adopted, this entails that political order requires a moment of sovereign decision, the legitimacy of which lies simply in its establishment of order. Such a view presents problems for a theory of radical democracy. First, the ‘inherence’ of antagonism to every society, and its ‘determination’ of our ‘ontological condition,’ suggests both an essentialism and a necessity that give the lie to Mouffe’s claims of radical anti-essentialism and radical contingency. In particular, in privileging the political moment and making antagonism ontologically foundational, Mouffe avoids an essentialism of social *entities*, such as classes or individuals as autonomous political subjects, only to fall into an essentialism of social *relations*, in which antagonism is ontologically privileged and other modes of social relation are subordinated to it. We can maintain, with Mouffe, the relational constitution of the subject here without positing antagonism as *the* constitutive relation—there remains room for an account of other social relations that go beyond the political. Mouffe’s version of radicalism, however, cannot accommodate this stance—there must be no room for the social in any form that lies beyond the grasp of the political.

This Schmittian idea, however, leads to a number of problems from the perspective of normativity, for this conception of the political leads Schmitt to put forth a decisionism in which the political consists in a sovereign act of political will that has its legitimation in a ground that lies no deeper than itself. For Schmitt, as Jorge E. Dotti explains, the political is “a mere ‘form of ordering’ in a desubstantialized, hypersecularized and relativistic world” (110). In such a world,

the antagonism that is fundamental to human sociality cannot be submitted to technical/rational administration or control, but must be subjected to a moment of political decision whose purpose and legitimation are found solely in the establishment of order; no order of rationality remains to serve as a critical perspective on political decision. Mouffe adopts this decisionistic model insofar as she defines *politics* as “the attempt to domesticate the political, to keep at bay the forces of destruction and establish order,” and hence “always has to do with conflicts and antagonisms” (*RP* 141). This maintenance of order exhausts the content of politics for Mouffe; hence the Schmittian legacy of decisionism. This legacy, however, is questionable for reasons that go beyond its clear authoritarian implications, which Mouffe of course disavows; it is deeply connected to what I am calling the normative insufficiency of Mouffe’s view of the centrality of the political, insofar as the moment of political decision becomes isolated from any normative considerations. To explain this point I draw on the critique of decisionism offered by Habermas, which, insofar as it indicates a lack of normative rootedness in decisionism as such, points to the normative insufficiency of Mouffe’s project, as well as providing a link to the discussion of the deliberativist response to this project.

Habermas argues that decisionism rests on a set of questionable philosophical assumptions that are largely the legacy of positivism, a legacy that he hopes to undermine by enacting a turn from the subject-centered philosophy of consciousness to an account of communicative rationality. One of the assumptions that Habermas calls into question is the dichotomization of (objective) fact and (subjective) value. The former, the realm of technical-rational action and scientific knowledge, is isolated from the latter, the realm of norm-guided practice and dogma:

Any theory that relates to praxis in any way other than by strengthening and perfecting the possibilities for purposive-rational action must now appear dogmatic. The methodology of the empirical sciences is tacitly but effectively rooted in a technical cognitive interest that excludes all

other interests; consequently all other relations to life-praxis can be blocked out under the slogan of ethical neutrality or value-freedom. (*Theory and Practice* 264)

As a result, practical or normative questions that go beyond the sphere of technical interest are simply not susceptible to rational theoretical address, and any attempt to so address them is liable to charges of dogmatism and ideology. The only answer in such cases is the sovereign act of a subjective will: *decision*, which “has been painfully isolated from reason: practical questions are not ‘capable of truth’” (265). Normative practice, the realm of decision, thus becomes marked by a basic irrationality: neither values nor their prescriptive force are susceptible to rational evaluation. It is only on the basis of such assumptions that we are faced with the ‘fact’ of a relativistic world as found in Schmitt.¹⁴ A Schmittian pluralism posits that, while we must commit ourselves to some set of values, we must realize that there is no justifying these values over the plurality of other choices we may have made, nor is there any possibility of consensus on values. Mouffe likewise adopts this stance in terms of defending a ‘radical pluralism.’

Given, such a stance, however, it is not clear how Mouffe can justify her own, radical-democratic, approach to the conflict of interests and values in the political sphere. As Habermas points out in the case of positivism, the motivation of critique must either be itself dogmatic or be open to rational evaluation, thus giving the lie to decisionism. In other words, Mouffe cannot, by her own lights, offer a justification of the normative or critical perspective from which she approaches political theory and advocates her own model of radical democracy. This is not to say that she cannot make claims with normative or critical force; she can and does. However, in

¹⁴ In *Between the Norm and the Exception*, William Scheuerman connects Schmitt’s decisionism to the claim that the political is fundamental: “Schmitt’s anti-universalistic decisionism reifies a number of troubling empirical trends by seeing them as constituting the core of political and legal experience” (10).

adopting a decisionistic stance, she has robbed herself of the capacity to subject these claims to rational evaluation, and hence to legitimation or justification.¹⁵

Mouffe thus isolates reason from decision in a way that Habermas combats, partially by contesting the equation of reason with instrumental reason, which underlies Mouffe's position as well as Schmitt's; hence his elaboration of a theory of communicative rationality is a way of moving beyond the reason/decision dichotomy. With the introduction of communicative rationality, Habermas injects the notion of *intersubjectivity* into the discussion of reason and objectivity, a notion which is conspicuously absent in Mouffe's work; while rethinking subjectivity and objectivity, she (along with Laclau) still treats the two as ontologically opposed—the subject emerges as the limit concept that we encounter in the discursive sphere in the form of the failure of a discourse to constitute itself as an objective totality. An account that begins with sociality and emphasizes its communicative dimension, such as that offered in later chapters, allows for the injection of a conception of intersubjectivity that has normative implications, and that generates a dialectical relation between subjectivity and objectivity, rather than an isolation of one from the other.

Yet, Mouffe targets in her work just the type of Habermasian picture that I have been discussing. On the one hand, her criticisms evince a healthy skepticism regarding excessively formalistic or rationalistic political views; on the other hand, she does not succeed in ruling out all versions of universalism, ignoring the possibility of articulating a *perspectival* universalism compatible with radical democracy. In her wholesale opposition to all forms of rationalism, Mouffe disregards the specificity of Habermas' conception of rationality; this disregard is typically accompanied by the dichotomization of reason, on the one hand, and decision or power,

¹⁵ In the Habermasian discourse-ethical terms that will be discussed in later chapters, Mouffe makes validity claims while simultaneously denying the possibility of the discursive redemption of these claims, hence falling into a type of performative contradiction.

on the other. She thereby fails to discern the possibility of a conception of rationality, such as communicative rationality, that occupies a position between the poles of an absolute rationalism or an anti-rationalist decisionism, and that is context-transcendent in a way that nevertheless does not put it outside history as a supernatural force. Only at one point in *The Democratic Paradox* does Mouffe acknowledge that Habermas, along with other deliberativists, purports to be offering an alternate conception of rationality, “the rationality at work in communicative action and free public reason,” which is the ground of citizens’ allegiance to democratic institutions (94). However, she brings up this view only to promptly reject it: “[S]imply replacing one type of rationality by another is not going to help us address the real problem that the issue of allegiance poses” (95). She does not specify why this is the case, beyond invoking her emphasis on the *political* nature of any unity or consensus.

Ultimately, then, such objections on her part employ the nature and the irreducibility of her notion of the political in order to emphasize the necessity of political decision and the impossibility of rational consensus in the political sphere. Rather than offering an independent argument for her decisionist conception of the political, Mouffe takes decisionist assumptions, and the irreducibility of the political that falls out of these assumptions, as axiomatic and employs them to mount challenges against other theories of the political that she labels ‘rationalist’ and condemns for ignoring the irreducibility of the political. However, if the ontological primacy and irreducibility of the political is precisely what is in question, as it is for my project, then Mouffe’s objection to the notion of communicative rationality begs the question—the advocate of communicative rationality challenges precisely the decisionism upon which Mouffe relies to mount her objection. She does not, in turn, offer an argument against a view that might challenge her decisionist assumptions at their root and offer an alternative based

on radically different assumptions. She has not, therefore, ruled such a view, like the one on offer in later chapters, off the table as a valuable framework for articulating a radical democratic politics.

Mouffe's polemic against deliberative democracy in *DP* employs precisely the type of assumptions that I argue ought to be challenged. Mouffe continually objects to the deliberativists that final consensus or communication situations that do not involve exclusion and power are *ontological or conceptual*, not merely *empirical*, impossibilities (*DP* 48). Exclusion and antagonism are conditions for the possibility of democratic politics; hence the ideals of an emancipated society, transparent communication, or an all-inclusive 'we' represent not the ultimate achievement, but rather the ultimate demise, of democracy. Given that Mouffe's insistence on the primacy of the political, and the decisionism that comes with this insistence, serve as the motivation for her rejection of the consensus-oriented views of the deliberative democrats, calling such insistence into question allows for a response on behalf of the deliberativists that will further highlight the normative insufficiency of her project. In "Toward a Deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy," Seyla Benhabib outlines a deliberativist account that relies heavily on Habermas' discourse ethics in order to ground democratic norms. In doing so, she takes issue with democratic theories that draw too strong a line between the normative and the political, thus closing themselves off from articulating the normative foundations of democracy. In particular, 'antifoundationalist' theories, such as Mouffe's, "are circular in that they either posit or simply take for granted precisely those moral and political norms...for the justification of which what are dubbed 'foundationalist' models were developed in the first place" (71). Benhabib here points to the mistake in uncoupling a political view, such as radical democracy, from normative considerations. Rather than drawing too strong a line between the

normative and the political, however, Mouffe has in fact eradicated the line, such that normativity is collapsed into the political, such that independent normative considerations that might serve as constraints on the political are done away with altogether.

Andrew Knops, also clearly influenced by Habermas, makes an even stronger claim than Benhabib, arguing that, insofar as Mouffe makes universalizable claims and marshals reasons to support them, “her model is compatible with and indeed presupposes a deliberative framework” and “is reliant for its coherence on the notion of rational consensus” (115). Without the latter notion, Knops claims, Mouffe’s project “is neither a theory of democracy (as opposed to a mere description of the domain of politics) nor a critical theory allowing for collective action against oppression and subordination” (118). Moreover, Knops also shows that, while rational consensus may be exceedingly difficult, Mouffe fails to demonstrate that it is a conceptual impossibility, indeed using the later Wittgenstein, whom Mouffe takes to show the impossibility of communicative rationality and consensus, to defend these notions. A brief treatment of Mouffe’s reading of Wittgenstein offers insight into the unsatisfactory character of her treatment of the notion of consensus.

Mouffe of course acknowledges that there is a conception of consensus in Wittgenstein in terms of prior agreements in forms of life that make agreements in language use possible. While communication would indeed be impossible without at least some type of prior agreement in form of life, there is no reason that this conception of consensus should entail that conflicts of interest within the context of a form of life cannot be adjudicated with an eye toward a further, rationally motivated consensus. However, Mouffe takes Wittgenstein to have demonstrated this latter, stronger point. In *The Democratic Paradox*, she claims that, “Against the current search—in my view profoundly mistaken—for a legitimacy that would be grounded on rationality,

Wittgenstein's view that agreement is reached through participation in common forms of life...represents a path-breaking perspective" (12). She implies that these two views are mutually exclusive;¹⁶ however, she never establishes this exclusivity, and the only reason she gives for rejecting the former view is that it is 'profoundly mistaken' insofar as it fails to grasp the specificity and irreducibility of the political. Thus, Mouffe again begs the question—the fundamental nature of the political is precisely what is being challenged. Mouffe also falsely dichotomizes views of consensus: *either* one accepts that prior agreement in practice or form of life is all that is possible, and that this is inaccessible to rational argumentation, *or* one is positing the desirability of a final, closed consensus that would preclude all contestation. This dichotomy exactly parallels the earlier one between provincialism or relativism on the one hand, and the desire for an absolutist perspective on the other. Again, I will offer an alternative to this dichotomy in later chapters by presenting a perspectival account that involves a regulative ideal of rational consensus, but yet does not undermine the provisional and open-ended nature of all actually occurring consensus.

How is it, though, that the political normativity of Mouffe's view is insufficient? While I have shown that Mouffe's criticisms of deliberative democrats beg the question by resting on the assumptions that these thinkers challenge, I have not yet fully shown why her insistence on the primacy of the political leads to a normative insufficiency. What normative (or normatively deficient) consequences follow from Mouffe's refusal to posit normative roots or foundations for the political and her denial, on the basis of her conception of the political, of the possibility of rational consensus? First, as we saw in the previous section and as Knops argues, this leads to a

¹⁶ Knops, on the other hand, attempts to show, via a Habermasian reading of Wittgenstein, that these two views can be made to mesh quite well. While I largely agree with Knops here, a demonstration of this point is beyond the scope of this chapter (though the view put forth in later chapters will resonate with Knops' account), as is a detailed examination of the disparate readings of Wittgenstein himself offered by Mouffe and Knops.

relinquishing of a critical standpoint from which certain relations of subordination can be condemned as in themselves unjust and hence illegitimate. To broaden this point, we are unable to say anything about the normativity of the constant interplay of discourses themselves, such that, as I suggested earlier, Mouffe's view risks merely lapsing into a relativism or a provincialism. Mouffe has never adequately responded to this criticism. In their response to Norman Geras, "Post-Marxism Without Apologies," Laclau and Mouffe address this type of criticism, but only in a way that entirely misses its force. Their strategy is to show that the problem of relativism is actually a false problem, for two reasons: first, because "'relativism' is, to a great extent, an invention of the fundamentalists," and second, because relativism is such an absurd position that no one could possibly hold it (104). It is not clear what the first claim means, let alone what it shows, so I will focus on the second. Laclau and Mouffe maintain that "A 'relativist' position would be one which affirmed that it is the same to think 'A is B' or 'A is not B'" (104). Obviously, Laclau and Mouffe do not hold such a ridiculous position; hence, they claim that they are absolved of the charge of relativism. This response clearly misses the force of the criticism; one does not adequately respond to an objection by stipulating new meanings for the terms of that objection. The claim that the position that Laclau and Mouffe defend lapses into a relativism is based on the impossibility, within their framework, of evaluating various discursive constructs as better or worse from some discourse-transcendent evaluative perspective. Again, this charge is not rooted in a craving for an absolutist perspective or criterion, nor do the evaluations at which such a critical perspective allows us to arrive have to be construed as incorrigible or final; one can embrace perspectivalism without entirely relinquishing the possibility of a critical perspective that can make universalizable claims that transcend a given particular context and are open to rational evaluation and contestation. However, given the

decisionist isolation of political decision from rational consideration, even critical evaluation of discourses from a situated, context-emergent perspective has been rendered impossible on Mouffe's view. It is for this reason—the relinquishing of critical perspective—that Mouffe's position goes beyond being simply a perspectivalism and lapses into relativism.

The deliberativist charge of insufficient normative resources is typically directed toward Mouffe's most recent work, though, as I have shown, the problem finds its roots in the account given by Laclau and Mouffe in *Hegemony*. Marxist critics, on the other hand most notably take aim directly at the earlier post-Marxist project, criticizing it from the point of view of aspects of Marxist theory that it jettisons.¹⁷ Attention to these critiques reveals that, in addition to being insufficiently normative, Laclau and Mouffe's work is likewise insufficiently radical, which I use here in the dual sense of deeply transformative and rooted. In particular, Mouffe's purported radicalism sits in an uneasy relation to many modes of political practice that take themselves to be radical, including, most obviously, the struggle against capitalism to which her Marxist critics are still committed. She never explicitly discounts this struggle, though its importance is largely superseded and its force largely attenuated in her work; moreover, the absence of resources for building such a struggle is a constant theme in Marxist critiques. In one of the more sympathetic reviews of *Hegemony*, David Forgacs succinctly encapsulates several facets of this critical perspective as follows:

¹⁷ Laclau and Mouffe's lack of a theoretical apparatus for investigating and explaining long-term social transformations and enduring institutions is a prevalent theme of Marxist critiques; as is their 'abandonment' of materialism for discourse theory, often cast as a type of linguistic idealism. Geras prominently makes this charge also. This latter charge seems based on a basic misunderstanding of what they mean by discourse; even Mouzelis, otherwise sympathetic to Geras, points out against Geras that Laclau and Mouffe do not "identify discourse with language" (113). To go into more depth into these two charges would take us too far afield. On the first, see esp. Mouzelis for a sensitive and powerful critique from this perspective; at the more hostile extreme, Geras charges them with "obscurantism, capable of disparaging every explanatory project, because an 'essence' will always be discoverable in whatever principle or principles of explanation it may put forward" (47). On the second, see Geras again, as well as Laclau and Mouffe's response to Geras, "Post-Marxism Without Apologies."

In dethroning the working class as privileged agent of socialist change and admitting instead a 'polyphony of voices' of equal intensity the book leaves a big question mark over how *socialism*, as opposed to some form of mixed economy, will actually be achieved. In crude terms, what is one actually going to *do* about the private property of one's middle-class partners in a hegemonic alliance? Moreover, by taking the element of class leadership out of the Gramscian notion of hegemony and turning it into a purely consensual relationship among equals, Laclau and Mouffe are hard pressed to explain how all these struggles can be held together in one hegemonic articulation without either pulling apart or without one of them becoming dominant over the others. (43)

Here, then, we see the dominant Marxist concern with the lack of potential for socialist struggle in the absence of a focus on class. Indeed, the labor struggle itself seems to lack any radical potential for Laclau and Mouffe, as they claim that by the time of the emergence of a labor movement that is rightly considered a product of capitalism, the movement cannot be construed as ultimately working *against* capitalism: "this labour movement tends to call less and less into question capitalist relations of production as such—these having by then solidly implanted—and concentrates on the struggle for the transformation of relations *in* production" (157). While Laclau and Mouffe reject the Marxist tendency to refer to such a picture as 'reformist,' preferring Tocqueville's language of an ongoing 'democratic revolution' of which the labor movement is simply one part, this account can be construed as resulting in a de facto legitimation of capitalist relations of production as "a unified discursive space" (157). In spite of this, Laclau and Mouffe reject the view that we live in a post-historical era in which we should give up on the real possibility of radical struggle. Rather, the increasing complexity of the social world and the increasing number of demands that are pressed within the political realm can be seen as laying bare the contingency and arbitrariness of certain social relations, particularly those of subordination, such that their legitimacy can be called into question and they can give rise to antagonism. This allows for proliferation of chains of equivalence and the ensuing expansion and deepening of the democratic revolution—thus do Laclau and Mouffe account for the emergence of the new social movements, the new sites of antagonism and radical struggle that displace the

Marxist framework of economic reductionism and class struggle. It is hard to see, however, how any of this adds up to socialist strategy; as Forgacs suggests, the pluralizing of radical struggles seems to render a unified struggle against a dominant ordering principle such as capitalism impossible.

Granted, Laclau and Mouffe do attempt to respond to some of these types of criticism in “Post-Marxism Without Apologies,” clarifying their position with regard to anti-capitalist struggle and offering a potentially fruitful new view of this political project. Nevertheless, these criticisms apply *a fortiori* to Mouffe’s later work, where the economic aspects of radical politics are almost entirely absent. Rather, ‘radical’ democracy comes to mean the deepening of liberal freedoms while maintaining an agonistic pluralism in the political sphere. However, given the rejection of the centrality of the anti-capitalist struggle, alongside the repeated insistence on the reconciliation of leftist aims with liberal democracy, it remains unclear what makes the political practice with which Mouffe is concerned really ‘radical.’ Granted, she offers a powerful critique of the inadequacy of ‘Third Way’ models of democracy, criticizing Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens in particular for their inability to adequately address “the profound inequalities which exist in the world today” and “power relations and the way they structure our society” (*OP* 50). A critical account of these factors, she insists, is the only way that the “Third Way’ model of radical dialogic democracy can get off the ground. While this is a potentially powerful critical insight, her own account fares no better. She implies that the key to building a coalition of new left forces and addressing structural inequality lies in attending to the inherently conflictual nature of the political. Her own account, however, offers no such resources for radical struggle, either on a strategic or on a normative level. Wiley captures this charge as follows:

In any event [Mouffe’s] attack on liberal essentialism does nothing to challenge conservative hegemony or to revitalize the left. At best Mouffe might succeed in transforming rationalist liberals and Third-Wayers into ‘agonistic’ liberals and Third-Wayers who will no longer be able to

pretend to be 'neutral' or capable of finally reconciling conflicting principles. But at the end of the day they will still be liberals or centrists, and not socialists or radical democrats. (484)

The force of such criticisms of Mouffe's work lies in the indication that Mouffe's model of democracy cannot actually lay claim to radically transformative potential. Mouffe insists that a deepening of 'radical and plural democracy' requires the articulation of democracy and political liberalism; struggle against capitalism, if at all possible, is only possible as an offshoot of a larger process. The fact that Mouffe offers no resources for such struggle attenuates the radicality (in the sense of transformative potential) of her project; moreover, this neglect of such resources stems from the insufficient radicality, in the sense of rootedness, of her project. That is, her intention to politicize all aspects of the social via the theoretical route of proclaiming sociality as such to be inherently political prevents her from differentiating any of these aspects; as a result, just as she cannot give an account of the normative roots of radical politics, she can neither depict radical politics as rooted in any specific dimensions of social life nor offer resources for their politicization in practice. Socialist struggle at the level of economic conditions does not differ in principle from the 'identity politics' with which Laclau and Mouffe are often associated, and the truly radical potential of the former is explicitly denied. Mouffe's claim to offer a conception of radical democracy that is more ambitious than that of her classical Marxist predecessors appear to be defeated by her own post-Marxist framework; capitalism, as a constitutive force of the discursive space within which struggle is to take place, cannot itself be challenged.

The radical nature of democracy in Mouffe's account also faces difficulties, insofar as she never actually explains what makes democracy as she conceives it radical. As early as *Hegemony*, she and Laclau maintain that they are presenting a notion of 'radical and plural democracy,' implying that 'radical' is a predicate they are attaching to their account of

democracy. Yet the passage in which they most explicitly invoke the dual ideas of radicalism and democracy does not bear this out. Laclau and Mouffe posit their critique of the unified subject and the concept of sutured social totality to be the necessary condition for the development of a politics that is both ‘plural’ and ‘democratic.’ Only on the basis of such a critique, they claim, “can pluralism be considered radical” (167). From here they proceed to outline a view that could be described as *a radical and democratic pluralism*:

Pluralism is *radical* only to the extent that each term of this plurality of identities finds within itself the principle of its own validity, without this having to be sought in a transcendent or underlying positive ground for the hierarchy of meaning of them all and the source and guarantee of their legitimacy. And this radical pluralism is *democratic* to the extent that the autoconstitutivity of each one of its terms is the result of displacement of the egalitarian imaginary. (167)

Despite the opacity of this passage, one thing is clear: it is not that *democracy is radical and plural*; rather, *pluralism is radical and democratic*. Yet Laclau and Mouffe immediately follow with “Hence, the project for a radical and plural democracy, *in a primary sense*, is nothing other than the struggle for a maximum autonomization of spheres on the basis of the generalization of the equivalential-egalitarian logic” (167). They have failed to show, however, that this project is one of *radical democracy* at all; it remains unclear throughout what it is that makes their vision of democracy, rather than pluralism, in any way radical. Granted, they correctly assert that there is no teleology governing the social, such that their account of the discursive field and the democratic revolution can be taken up by the far right as easily as by the far left, and social movements cannot be seen as inherently progressive in character. As a result, a radical democratic political theory has an important role to play. However, it is not at all clear what makes Mouffe a radical democrat. Indeed, I argue that her view ultimately can be seen neither as politically radical nor as offering adequate resources for radical political practice. Indeed, this claim is borne out in her later work, where the task of ‘radical’ democratic theory becomes that

of articulating democracy and political liberalism; any view which would constitute a challenge to the latter on what might be considered radical grounds falls prey to the error of ignoring the specificity of the political and positing a dangerously utopian picture of a fully democratic, transparent, or emancipated society. If anything, Mouffe's constant insistence on the failure of any such views due to on the inherently conflictual nature of politics appears as a warning against allowing democracy to become *too radical*.

At this point, again, this second insufficiency merges with the first, insofar as it is Mouffe's reduction of the social to the political, and hence her inability to conceive of democracy in anything but its political (rather than, for instance, epistemic or ethical) aspect, that leads her to misguidedly disarticulate the deepening of radical democracy from the transformation of social conditions that is in fact the precondition for radical democracy. As I argue in later chapters, a picture of radical political struggle that merely remains on the level of the political rather than bringing the communicative resources of sociality in a broader sense to bear on the political cannot truly be cast as radical. Ultimately, I will argue, the political manifestation of democratic theory and practice must ultimately be radical, both insofar as it finds its normative roots in communication and insofar as it transformatively reacts upon the basic conditions of human sociality. The notion of the radical in this sense serves as the bridge between the communicative dimension of sociality and a politics informed by a democratic normativity.

4. Conclusion

The effects of Mouffe's account of the social as political oppose her intentions in mobilizing it. Her aim is to make possible the politicization of ever more aspects of social life,

the opening up of ever more relations of subordination to contestation, by depicting the social as fundamentally political through and through. However, the eradication of the boundary between the social and the political has left her account with no resources for the rational evaluation and negotiation of social relations; she has no recourse to a critical perspective. For the purposes of radical democracy, I argue that what is required is another radicalism: one which reinstates the boundary between the political and the social such that radicalism and normativity can be rejoined.

The counterpart to Mouffe's insistence on the liberatory potential of her account of the political is the concomitant resistance to efforts to reinstate the social and thus deny the fundamental character of the political, efforts which are characterized as rationalist or even totalitarian. However, her opposition to such views relies upon a false opposition between two extremes; *contra* Mouffe, it is possible to root the political in an account of sociality without that account being essentializing or totalizing. While the communicative dimension of sociality, I will argue, constitutes an overarching normative framework that constrains the political, there is no relation of necessity between sociality and any particular social, political, or cultural formation. My account has the same potential that Laclau and Mouffe see in the logic of overdetermination to offer a "critique of every type of fixity, through an affirmation of the incomplete, open and politically negotiable character of every identity" (104). Mouffe's attempt at this, however, relinquishes its normative force; while recognizing the complex interplay of discourses in the political sphere, she cannot provide the resources for making critical evaluations of this interplay or its outcomes. To give an adequate account of radical politics, I argue, we need to rethink the concept of the political in a way that takes account of the normative implications of the sociality in which the political is rooted. While an account of the interplay of competing discourses will of

course be central to the theory and practice of radical democratic politics, we must also retain some version of a regulative democratic ideal. Without such an ideal, it is impossible to know what Laclau and Mouffe proclaim the Left needs to know for democratic struggle to be effective, which is “for what one is fighting, what kind of society one wants to establish.” (xix).

CHAPTER II

THE SOCIAL AND PERSPECTIVAL ROOTS OF THE UNIVERSAL

In the previous chapter I argued that Mouffe offers an account of the social that is ultimately inadequate to meet the demands of a radical democratic political theory; as a result, her own model of radical democracy can be seen as insufficiently normative and insufficiently radical. According to the robust account of democracy that I plan to outline here, the outcome of these two insufficiencies is that Mouffe's account of radical democracy reveals itself to be in fact *insufficiently democratic*. I have traced the insufficiencies of Mouffe's account back to an account of the social as purely political that renders discussion of the social roots of the political impossible. On Mouffe's view, the discursive field of the social is always already shot through with antagonisms, and is hence a political terrain; an account of a normative framework from which we can evaluate the interplay amongst antagonistic discourses is ruled out of bounds. In the end, this political account of the social cannot offer an adequate theory of radical democracy.

In distinguishing between politically divided discursive constructs and the 'general field of discursivity' upon which these operate, however, Laclau and Mouffe have inadvertently pointed us in the direction of a solution. Given the insistence on the irreducibility of the political, the 'general field of discursivity' is closed off as an object of discussion. I recommend, on the other hand, that we focus precisely on this broader field, which I shall discuss here under the rubric of 'the social,' as a terrain with normative implications, or more specifically as generating a normatively constraining communicative framework within which discourses emerge and engage one another. This shift in focus does not require us to ignore the political as a unique and

even central dimension of the social terrain. However, it *does* allow us to articulate a broader normative structure that places constraints on this political dimension.

In sum, I maintain that we need an account of sociality that highlights its communicative rather than its conflictual dimension and that will allow us to critically and ethically evaluate political theory and practice. From this point of view, we can acknowledge that Mouffe's depiction of the political is a descriptively accurate portrayal of a significant aspect of our social world without reducing all of sociality to the political such that we give up the possibility of critical perspective, ethical political action, or radical transformation of the social realm. The conception of democracy that I defend allows for these possibilities insofar as it presents a democratic ideal that emerges from the communicative dimension of the social and makes normative demands upon the discourses that operate on the political terrain. Ultimately I will root this conception of democracy in a view of the normative ramifications of human communication that I call 'universalist perspectivalism.'

My task in this chapter is to lay out the basic components of the account of the social that informs my positive project, which draws out the democratic normative ramifications of the social's communicative dimension. To do this I draw on the social philosophy of George Herbert Mead. For Mead, 'sociality' refers to a basic philosophical principle that applies beyond the human social world under consideration here. Nevertheless, it motivates a social psychology that in turn provides the basis for an account of the communicative aspect of human sociality. My project overall is to delineate the normative implications of this broad notion of sociality *as it is applied to human sociality*, and to articulate a theory of radical democracy on this basis.¹

¹ The principle of sociality one finds in Mead's work can be extended to apply to the universe as a whole, i.e. to the realm of *nature* as well as to the human social realm. While I will discuss this more general account in my exposition of Mead's views, as it is useful for understanding his evolutionary social psychology, I only want to

Integral to the development of the normative aspects of my account of communication is the Meadian concept of *perspective*. Mead's social psychology begins from what he calls the social situation, which he construes as a primordial relatedness that gives rise to the emergence of meaning, mind, and self via the development in an organism of the ability to take on perspectives other than its own. Perspective exchange functions as the basis of intersubjective communication, the normative aspects of which will be the subject of later chapters. The individual's inherent capacity to transcend her perspective in communication in turn gives rise to the Meadian concept of universality, which will also be central to the democratic normativity discussed in the following chapters. Given the dual centrality of the Meadian concepts of perspective and universality, then, I describe the normative theory of democracy developed in this project as rooted in a *universalist perspectivalism*. After outlining some basic aspects of Mead's theory of sociality, including the role of the notion of perspective, in the first section below, I turn in the second section to an account of the functioning of perspective exchange in the emergence of human individuals as selves via communication; finally, I turn in section three to an account of the Meadian concept of universality and its relationship to the human individual. These elements of sociality, perspective, and universality form the basic components of the universalist perspectivalism to be developed in the rest of the project.

1. The Basics of a Meadian Account of the Social

Mead's account of the emergence of the human social realm from a more basic sociality is most clearly and rigorously presented in his *Mind, Self, and Society*. In this text, Mead approaches issues in social psychology from a methodological standpoint that he calls 'social

defend the application of the principle of sociality to the human social realm, from which the normative view that I wish to develop can be derived.

behaviorism.’ Mead uses the label ‘behaviorism’ in a loose, idiosyncratic sense. While his account is derived from the observable responses of organisms to environmental stimuli, he resists the eliminative reduction of the psychological to observable behavior that occurs in Watsonian behaviorism. Instead, he adopts a type of functionalism with regard to the relation between the psychological (including such introspective phenomena as thinking) and the (overtly) behavioral. In this way, *contra* strict behaviorism, he allows a place for both overt and covert behaviors as proper objects of psychological inquiry. He articulates this view on the basis of what he calls ‘the act.’ The concept of the act progresses from playing the role of the basic unit of conduct or behavior in Mead’s early social psychology to being the fundamental temporal unit of existence in his later speculative work; throughout it is the fundamental datum from which all other data emerge.² Mead’s emphasis on the act, or on conduct, as the basic constituent of the reality described in his metaphysics shows that, even in his more speculative modes, he maintains the methodological standpoint of a type of behaviorism, loosely construed (Reck 21).

The act involves both the organism and its environment (including other organisms), the isolation of which as objects or collections of objects can be seen as derivative from the act, which retains primacy. Influenced by William James’ ‘radical’ empiricism and John Dewey’s ‘immediate’ empiricism as well as (at least in the last few years of his life) by the organic and process-oriented philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead, Mead views experience as an organic totality prior to the functional separation of subject and object as well as to the isolation of particular contents. In *The Philosophy of the Act*, for instance, he states, “The distinction between mind and matter and that between consciousness and the physiological organism is a distinction which is drawn between contents which may appear on either side of the line, if we draw the line

² The conceptual roots of Mead’s concept of the act can be found in John Dewey’s early essay, “The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology.”

within the field of immediate experience” (271). He also stipulates a technical definition of ‘experience’ in the same text that highlights the centrality of the notion of perspective to which I will be appealing:

“Experience,” in the sense in which it is used in this paper, refers to that portion of the life-process of any form which includes the actions of the form as a whole with reference to the environment...The term carries another implication: the conduct is regarded *from the standpoint of the form* rather than from the standpoint of the environment. Thus “experience” implies that one is giving a life-history of the form in question, that the statement of the environment would be in terms of objects such as would exist for the form in question. (405, emphasis added).

Mead thus renders experience perspectival, yet without rendering it subjective; for it need not be construed as conscious experience and is thus prior to the abstraction of a subject separate from the objective world:

[T]he perspective is not subjective. In other words, there is always a perceptual world, that is itself a perspective, within which the subjective arises. The logical distinction between the subjective and objective lies within the perspective...The perspective is the world in its relationship to the individual and the individual in his relationship to the world. The most unambiguous instance of the perspective is the biological form and its environment or habitat. (114-15)

Perspective *is*, then, simply the organism-environment relation—in short, the world; however, this seems to render the notion of perspective vacuous. What are we to make of this vague, if not empty, formulation of the concept of perspective?

The emphasis in the passage above on the relationship between the world and the individual form helps to obviate this difficulty: perspective can be seen as ‘the world’ only as relativized to the unique location of the form within the total environment.³ Perspective can thus be seen as basic to experience as a whole—experience is irreducibly perspectival. Indeed, perspectives are a presupposition of, or a necessary condition for, *experience itself* as conceived

³ Indeed, in *The Mediating Self* Aboulaafia points out that “Mead often uses the terms *system* and *perspective* interchangeably, because a system is a perspective, a way of marking off a set of relationships” (63). Mead’s use of the term ‘system’ will be discussed below, where it is employed to refer to the organic totality of experience in its passage from the present to the future, and hence as characterized by sociality. To clarify, I take the organic totality of experience as our basic starting point, from which we can derive ‘system’ and ‘environment’ as *abstractions*. ‘Perspective,’ on the other hand, is (along with ‘sociality’) a fundamental and irreducible *aspect* of experience. My primary concern here is with the nature of these *aspects* of experience.

by the radical empiricist tradition. Again, these perspectives are not (necessarily) *subjective*; they only become so when the differentiation between organism and environment becomes part of that organism's experience. This requires a *reflexive* mechanism by which the organism can come to experience itself as a singular object within its environment, i.e. can come to self-consciousness.⁴ Insofar as the organism becomes an object to itself, it must likewise be a subject that can be conscious of this object. At the point in the development of perspectives at which uniquely human, self-conscious, reflexive perspectives emerge, the perspectival nature of sociality begins to have the types of normative consequences that we typically associate with the concept of perspective, such as the demand to approach a problematic situation from a 'new' or 'different' perspective, to 'enlarge' one's perspective, or to attend more carefully to the perspectives of others, even to try to *see things* from *their* perspective. It is my contention that these important epistemic and ethical considerations are at root linked to the more basic notion of perspective offered here.

We are getting ahead of ourselves, however. Here I only wish to clarify the respect in which a *perspective* is at bottom a *location* or *standpoint* (conscious or not) from which an organism interacts with its environment; experience as such is always *located* in this respect, and is thus irreducibly *perspectival* (though, to emphasize again, *not* subjective). The statement of objective reality is always in terms of the reality of the environment given in such experience, for a reality that is not perspectival is a reality without organisms and without environments; such a world indeed has no objects other than perhaps physical particles, "for every other object involves abstraction from relations which are as real as those in the object and in the environment, and the only ground for such abstraction can be found in the attitude of some organism or structure" (PA 165). From the metaphysical perspective that Mead derives from his

⁴ The nature of such a mechanism, and its implications, are the subject of later portions of this chapter.

conception of experience, then, reality can be seen as an ‘organization of perspectives.’⁵

Throughout his work, from his early social psychology to his later metaphysical speculations, Mead remains committed to the primacy of experience and the reality of the world that is given in experience and from which meaning and the consciousness thereof arise.⁶

According to Andrew J. Reck, Mead, in response to the philosophical problems to which the theory of relativity had given rise, attempted to construct (though never completed) “a perspectival theory of reality grounded upon the principle of sociality and upon the theory of the act as an emergent event in the present” (48). This serves as an apt description of his later metaphysical work, much of which was in response to the work of Whitehead. For Whitehead, what can be described as the basic components of ultimate reality are referred to as occasions or events, and “[a]n event has to do with all that there is, and in particular with all other events” (*Science and the Modern World* 103). In saying this, he is emphasizing that every event is essentially relational; relation with all other events is part of its concept, and it can therefore not be *concretely* understood in isolation from its context, insofar as such isolation is *abstraction*. The concrete is thus to be understood as fundamentally *organic*: concrete entities can be construed as *organisms*. What was a philosophy of organism in Whitehead, however, becomes a philosophy of *sociality* in Mead. Mead treats sociality as one of the central categories of experience; and this category, which finds expression in various formulations and contexts throughout his work, can be seen as the conceptual parallel to Whitehead’s organism; likewise, the act can be seen as parallel to the event in relational nature and temporal structure, the act

⁵ This important concept is discussed throughout Mead’s later work, but see esp. “The Objective Reality of Perspectives,” as well as *The Philosophy of the Act* pp. 606-13.

⁶ The most insightful account of this and many other (particularly metaphysical) aspects of Mead’s work is David L. Miller’s *George Herbert Mead: Self, Language and the World*; although see also the critical comments on Miller’s explication of Mead’s work in Joas, *G. H. Mead: A Contemporary Re-examination of his Thought*. Another useful, and more concise, account of Mead’s work from the metaphysical perspective is given in Reck, “The Philosophy of George Herbert Mead.”

being a social behaviorist version of Whitehead's fundamental metaphysical unit. Before we can turn to the account given in *Mind, Self, and Society*, then, we must understand what Mead means by 'sociality'—this concept (paired with the concept of perspective with which it is intimately bound up) will ultimately form the basis for the alternative picture of radical democracy that I intend to offer.

While the concept of sociality appears in multifarious modes throughout Mead's work, one of its fundamental employments relates to his philosophy of time as presented in *The Philosophy of the Present*. In this work Mead contends that the reality of both past and future are condensed into the present, which in turn is in continuous passage, emergent from the past and oriented toward the future, and always containing an element of novelty. Hence the aforementioned totality of experience continually becomes a new totality (or, in Mead's terms, system); and all persistent objects exist simultaneously as elements of the old (passing) and the new (emergent) systems. Mead labels this simultaneous existence 'sociality': "The social character of the universe we find in the situation in which the novel event is in both the old order and the new which its advent heralds. Sociality is the capacity of being several things at once" (*PP* 49). Likewise, in the posthumously published essay simply titled "Metaphysics," Mead explains, "The principle of sociality finds its expression in the simultaneous occupation by things of two or more systems" (552).⁷ In this essay Mead defines 'emergence' as "the passage from one system into another, during which the entity is in both" (554). The emergence and novelty that characterize the present in relation to the past thus presuppose sociality. Following Mitchell Aboulafia, we can understand sociality by appealing to the case of the introduction of a new organism into an ecosystem that was previously functioning quite well and is able to readjust its

⁷ These formulations also relate to Mead's explorations of the theory of relativity; an exploration of this topic, however, would take us too far afield.

functioning to accommodate the newcomer; in this case, we have an old system that is transformed into a new one, as well as a period in between the two systems, which is fundamentally marked by what Mead calls the ‘betwixt and between’ of sociality (*The Cosmopolitan Self* 17). Sociality in this sense is a constitutive element of reality, insofar as, in passage and emergence, reality requires readjustment to novelty: sociality, Mead says, is “the stage betwixt and between the old system and the new...If emergence is a feature of reality this phase of adjustment, which comes between the ordered universe before the emergent has arisen and that after it has come to terms with the newcomer [i.e., the novel element introduced into the environment], must be a feature also of reality” (47).

The object is also, however, *social* insofar as its own being is constituted by its locatedness in a system, by its relation to all the other objects in its environment—in short, *its perspective is constitutive of it*. Sociality thus occurs in both diachronic and synchronic modes: objects are not only emergent from temporal processes, but are also constituted by and constitutive of their immediate environment. Each of these modes, moreover, is bound up with the concept of perspective—in its diachronic mode, sociality means the multiple locatedness of an object in different systems, i.e. its encompassing more than one perspective; while in the synchronic mode, as mentioned, the object’s perspective, its location within a system, is constitutive of it as the object that it is. The object does not exist as an independent substance, then, but crystallizes out of the total social situation. Reck suggests that Dewey’s concept of ‘transaction’ can capture this aspect of sociality insofar as, for Dewey, “A transaction is a situational process in which each element possesses a nature and performs a role, not intrinsically, but by virtue of its context, its relatedness to other elements with natures and roles similarly affected” (15). Again, then, an individual object cannot be understood apart from the

whole or totality in which it is situated: its *social situation*.⁸ This applies to all objects for Mead; we are interested here in particular in entities to which this principle applies *a fortiori*: human individuals. We therefore do not need to go into too many of the details of Mead's metaphysics or cosmology. The task of arguing for the fundamental character of sociality as a category applied to the universe as a whole is beyond the scope of this project. I simply wish to argue for its usefulness for an account of the communicative dimension of human sociality, and draw the normative consequences of such an account. In the case of human individuals, or persons, their basic character as *social, perspectival* entities in the sense just described is more straightforwardly grasped than in the case of, say, the objects of natural science; moreover, such an account of individuals can likewise provide the basis for an account of the human social environment and its communicative and normative aspects. At this point, then, we shift gears from metaphysical to social-psychological considerations, turning to Mead's account in *Mind, Self, and Society* of the emergence of the uniquely human social realm.

2. Sociality in Action: Mead's Social Psychology

In *Mind, Self, and Society* Mead begins from what he describes as a social behaviorist standpoint with a relation that he views as fundamental: the social situation. Taking this situation in which all organisms find themselves as his starting point, he traces from it the emergence of meaning, thought, the self, and such normative notions as universality and society. To understand this we must begin, along with Mead, at the basic social situation, construed on the

⁸ The picture is complicated by the impossibility of providing conclusive criteria of identity for social situations—depending upon the perspective one adopts, objects can be seen as embedded in several situations, at the same time; hence the diachronic and synchronic aspects of sociality can *both* be defined as involving 'being in two or more systems at once.' This metaphysical picture of systems of various types and of varying levels of complexity, some nested within others, and so forth, recalls Whitehead's full-blown process metaphysics; however, it operates just as well on the much more mundane level of the human social world. Indeed, as we shall see below, it lends itself to an account of the social world that resonates with our experience of that world, and as such has intuitive appeal.

model of a 'conversation' of gesture and response between organisms, from which the possibility of consciousness of meaning itself first arises. Mead explains that meaning arises in the primordial social interaction of gesture and response, be it between organisms or between an organism and its environment. In the earliest stages of his account, gestures have meaning insofar as they represent certain attitudes to an outside observer: "Anger expresses itself in attack; fear expresses itself in flight. We can see, then, that the gestures mean these attitudes on the part of the form, that is, they have that meaning for us" (45). Further on he claims that meaning arises as the relation between gesture and response, the social act thus constituting "the field within which meaning originates and exists" (76). In a 'conversation of gestures' between two organisms, a gesture on the part of one organism serves as a stimulus which invokes an instinctive response in another; the first organism in turn adjusts itself to the response of the second, and so forth. The individual organisms thus react reciprocally upon one another and simultaneously alter the social situation itself. The emergent relation between stimulus and response here constitutes the meaning of a gesture, which is part of the situation even in the many cases where the organisms involved are not *conscious* of the meaning. The ongoing process by which a response is given to a stimulus, this response itself becomes a stimulus to another response on the part of another organism, and so on, is the basic form of social interaction. Such interaction serves to further the continuance of the process and completion of an overarching act; when this interaction between organisms is a cooperative endeavor to accomplish a task (consummate an act), we describe the situation as one in which *communication* is involved.

The notion of meaning as an aspect of the primordial social relation allows Mead to claim that meaning objectively exists in the social world, rather than being a mere psychical

phenomenon. That is, meaning arises as an objective result of the interaction between organisms, or between an organism and its environment, rather than existing in a mind separate from the physical world. The notion of communication that arises from this picture is one of a cooperative social activity in which organisms instinctively respond to the gestures of others for the purpose of accomplishing tasks necessary for survival and the continuation of activity. Mead thus offers us here a notion of meaning as arising before mind, and an account of prelinguistic communication that cannot be made sense of outside of a fundamentally social context.

Mead takes his account a step further with his discussion of the vocal gesture. The importance of the vocal gesture lies in the fact that it affects the individual making it in the same way that it affects the other individual (or individuals) in the social situation; as a result, it elicits a tendency to the same response in both: “That is, we can hear ourselves talking, and the import of what we say is the same to ourselves as it is to others” (*MSS 62*).⁹ In performing the vocal gesture, the gesturing individual/organism takes the position of the other toward its own gesture. The vocal gesture is thus *reflexive*. Moreover, insofar as the gesturing organism is able to respond to its own gesture as the other would, this reflexive mechanism inherent in the vocal gesture allows the gesture to have the *same meaning* for each individual involved in the social interaction. At this point, for Mead, the vocal gesture becomes a significant symbol: “Where the gesture reaches that situation it has become what we call ‘language.’ It is now a significant symbol and it signifies a certain meaning” (*MSS 46*). This quality of reflexivity, which inheres in

⁹ Anselm Strauss points out that the specifically *vocal* gesture itself is not essential to Mead’s argument here: “The important point is that typically human meaning arises during co-operative group action” (xxii). Strauss is partly correct here. For instance, in the 1914 lectures on social psychology, Mead also emphasizes the importance of the fact that we can see (and hence becomes an object to ourselves via) our own hand gestures—think of sign language. However, Strauss fails to emphasize that there must be *some* mechanism by which I stimulate myself via my own gesture in the same way I stimulate another—i.e. a *reflexive* mechanism— in order for consciousness of my own meaning, as well as *self*-consciousness, to arise. If this condition is not fulfilled, it is not clear how the meaning under discussion can be described as ‘typically human.’ Nevertheless, as long as the presence of some such mechanism can be accounted for, it need not necessarily be vocal.

the vocal gesture and is essential to the development of significant communication (i.e. language), not only emerges from a basic social situation but necessarily appeals to the fundamental concept of perspective, for *it is only through adopting the perspective of an other toward my vocal gesture that meaning arises for me as a speaker*. This adoption of the perspective of the other, given the notion of perspective we have drawn out of Mead, requires the speaker to, in a sense, project herself into the *social location* of the other, and in so doing *internalize* some aspect of that location or perspective; this in turn requires the reflexivity of the vocal gesture: the individual must be able to respond to herself *as the other would*.¹⁰ Mead makes this point explicit in “A Behavioristic Account of the Significant Symbol” (hereafter abbreviated “BASS”), saying, “Insofar then as the individual takes the attitude of another toward himself, and in some sense arouses in himself the tendency to the action, which his conduct calls out in the other individual, he will have indicated to himself the meaning of the gesture” (244). Reflexivity is, then, the condition for the possibility of communication involving *shared* or *common* meanings—that is, the symbolically mediated or communicative interaction that we find among human beings—as well as consciousness of and reflection on the meanings of our utterances. Furthermore, this reflexivity allows a speaker to become *self-conscious*, or conscious of himself or herself as speaker. Thus, not only consciousness of meaning, but also consciousness of self arises socially, from what Mead calls ‘symbolically mediated interaction.’

¹⁰ This point should not be read too strongly, as implying sameness of response in every respect among all potential actors. José Medina makes this point with regard to the aforementioned sameness of meaning required for significant communicative interaction: “Mead sometimes seems to overemphasize the identity of attitudes and contents...But when he goes on to explain the sameness of meanings in terms of the sharing of perspectives, it is clear that these perspectives do not have to be *the same in every respect*, but only sufficiently similar, where the sufficiency of the similarity is tested by the successful coordination of action” (63). Medina still thinks Mead’s thesis regarding the response-identity required for sharing meaning is too strong, however, insofar as there are certain communicative relationships, such as domination or abuse, where it seems highly unlikely that the speaker (master, abuser) is capable of taking on the role of the other (slave, victim of abuse) (63-64). I am sympathetic to Medina’s concern here, though my reaction to his examples is a bit different; on my view, such relations are not properly classified as communicative. In the terms put forth in later chapters, they are ethical failures insofar as they consist in failures of reciprocity.

The reflexive quality of the vocal gesture is hence a prerequisite for self-consciousness; indeed, it is the fundamental mechanism for the emergence of self-consciousness.

The notion of the self that Mead subsequently develops trades on the basic insight that self-consciousness manifests itself through the internalization of perspectives previously external to one's own. We become aware of ourselves through internalizing the standpoint of an other or others toward ourselves via the medium of language. As we have seen, the vocal gesture makes such reflexivity possible: "The critical importance of language in the development of human experience lies in this fact that the stimulus is one that can react upon the speaking individual as it reacts upon the other" (*MSS* 69). As this mechanism makes self-consciousness possible, it also gives rise to the possibility of that reflexive human activity that we know as thought, an internal, self-conscious conversation of gestures. Thought (or, perhaps better, thinking), the activity by which we adopt the perspective of another and control our response or our overall conduct in light of this, is the characteristic activity of what Mead calls 'mind.'¹¹ Mead thus reverses the relationship of mind and meaningful communication as conceived by prior psychologies: "Mind arises through communication by a conversation of gestures in a social process or context of experience—not communication through mind" (50).¹² It is here that the functional relation between the physical and the psychical comes to the fore, as mind is an emergent function of social activity, and hence of the relationship between the organism and its environment. Mead describes mind, or 'mentality,' as "that relationship of the organism to the situation which is mediated by sets of symbols" (125). We can thus describe behavior in which signs are employed as involving mind. Like meaning, then, mind exists objectively in reality, rather than only for a subject or somehow 'in the head.' Again, mind is elaborated here in purely functional terms, as a

¹¹ Indeed, Charles W. Morris asserts that "to have a mind and to take cognizance of objects by means of significant symbols are in Mead's terminology one and the same thing" (117).

¹² The 'prior psychology' to which Mead is responding in particular here is that of Wilhelm Wundt.

function of sign-using behavior.¹³ Moreover, as thought requires the internalization of external social interactions and can only occur by means of significant symbols, it presupposes a concept of meaning as shared or communal, and hence as rooted in reality as, in Mead's terms 'an organization of perspectives.' The metaphysical and social-psychological considerations thus converge at this point, with the emergence of language and thought. This convergence displays itself even more strongly in Mead's account of the self, in which the genetic account of mind merges with both the diachronic and synchronic dimensions of sociality.

As mentioned, the self, on Mead's view, arises from a social context in such a way that, upon its emergence, it is already constituted by the internalization of shared meanings and perspectives. This occurs via some reflexive mechanism (Mead emphasizes the vocal gesture) that allows one organism to adopt the perspectives of others, and hence to gain a broader perspective on the social process as a whole:

It is by means of reflexiveness...that the whole social process is thus brought into the experience of the individuals involved in it; it is by such means, which enable the individual to take the attitude of the other toward himself, that the individual is able consciously to adjust himself to that process, and to modify the resultant of that process in any given social act in terms of his adjustment to it. (MSS 134)

In other words, the reflexive mechanism gives rise to a self which is both structured by and responds to its social context, and which, moreover, can be construed as reflecting the entirety of that social context within its own structure. In this way, the self imports the normative practices of its community into its very structure. It is at this point, then, that normative considerations begin to come to the fore, in the form of the normative structure and constraints imposed on the individual by the community within which it emerges.

¹³ Indeed, Mead's conception of mind is largely parallel to the concept that Dewey develops in *Experience and Nature* of 'body-mind,' so called in order to emphasize its emergence from the interaction between the feeling creature and the environment and highlight the priority of this functional relationship between the psychological and the physical to the type of bifurcation assumed by various dualisms.

This is not the only sense in which a normative structure is operative in this situation, however; the previous discussion of sociality as a metaphysical principle can also be brought to bear on Mead's genetic social-psychological account of the self in order to elaborate a normative framework that transcends the particular community. Moreover, the normative 'structures' or 'frameworks' in question here must be seen in the light of the concept of *perspective*; just as the normative structure of the community is constituted by the perspectives of its members (or the unique organization of those perspectives that we will call the perspective of the generalized other), the normative framework that transcends the community likewise must be conceived of as itself another perspective or set of perspectives to which we can appeal. We can begin to explore these normative considerations by focusing further on the nature of the self that Mead describes.¹⁴

Mead delineates two stages in the development of the internalization of the social that are relevant to the issue of normativity: play and the game.¹⁵ He uses the word 'play' in the sense of a child's role-playing, pretending to assume a certain social role. This, for Mead, is the most basic mode of the child's internalization of the attitudes of others, involving the internalization of the perspectives of particular, concrete others: "He has a set of stimuli which call out in himself the sort of responses they call out in others. He takes this group of responses and organizes them into a certain whole. Such is the simplest form of being an other to one's self" (151). The game represents a more advanced organization of the internalization of roles and presents itself as a

¹⁴ The following discussion of the self owes a great deal to Mitchell Aboulafia's treatment of Mead in *The Mediating Self: Mead, Sartre, and Self-Determination*. As the title suggests, Aboulafia's focus in this text is the development of a notion of freedom, in terms of self-determination, that is compatible with the thoroughgoing social nature of the self. He does so via a skillful interweaving of Meadian themes with ideas drawn from the work of Jean-Paul Sartre. While I do not draw on Sartre or on existentialism here, I do not see Aboulafia's final account as incompatible with my own—indeed, I see rich connections between the two. The exploration of these connections, however, is beyond our scope, so here I will simply refer the reader to Aboulafia's text for a more rigorous treatment than is offered here of the issue of self-determination in relation to the Meadian conception of the self.

¹⁵ For a useful discussion of the relationships among the concepts of play, the game, perspective-internalization, and normativity in Mead, see Medina, esp. 65 ff.

crucial step in the development of the self's importation of normative social practices into its very structure, in that the player must internalize the standpoints of all other players involved in the game. Mead explains "that the child who plays in a game must be ready to take the attitude of everyone else involved in that game, and that these different roles must have a definite relationship to each other" (151). The game embodies a determinate set of social relations that each player must take into herself in order to be in conformity with the *rules* of the game. The other whose perspective is being internalized is now not some particular other, but a 'generalized other.' The game thus emerges as a primary normative practice that emerges from social interaction and requires a preexisting social group, the various perspectives of which are internalized (both individually, as in the type of play that developmentally precedes the game, and collectively, as the single perspective of the generalized other). Hence we have, in Mead, a notion of norm-governed practice as fundamentally social, as well as a notion of reflective human social practice as fundamentally normative, both involving the internalization of the perspective of a 'generalized other.' The normative structure provided by one's social environment is imported into the self via the mechanism of the internalization of this generalized perspective: "The organized community or social group which gives to the individual his unity of self may be called 'the generalized other.' The attitude of the generalized other is the attitude of the whole community" (154). The generalized other, moreover, is the seat of social control, in that the individual exercises control over her own conduct in light of the norms imported via the perspective of the generalized other.

The reader will notice that we have shifted from talk of 'organisms' to talk of selves as *human individuals*. This transition occurs alongside the emergence of the reflexivity of intersubjective communication and the concomitant emergence of consciousness of self. A

difficulty appears to arise here, however: if the self is constituted by the internalization of a constraining and controlling generalized perspective, does this view not lead to a form of social determinism in which the particular human self is only numerically an individual, rather than in the robust sense that involves positing some agency on the part of the individual? The quashing of individuality or its assimilation into the perspective of the generalized other could be seen as a danger of this view; however, Mead develops his view of the self as socially constituted in such a way as to steer clear of such an extreme form of determinism.¹⁶ The insight he offers here finds its roots in his philosophy of time, for which the notions of emergence and hence novelty play such an important role. Recalling the principle of sociality as applied to time, we shall see that the self as *socially constituted* includes an aspect that goes beyond the internalized perspective of the generalized other.

Working from the conception of the self as socially emergent coupled with the contention that the emergent present moment always contains an element of novelty, Mead argues that the self can be divided into two phases: the ‘me’ and the ‘I.’ He begins his development of this distinction by focusing on the way in which the self becomes an object to itself, which is an essential aspect of self-consciousness: “The individual experiences himself...only indirectly, from the particular standpoints of other individual members of the same social group, or from the generalized standpoint of the social group as a whole to which he belongs” (MSS 138). This contention follows from the claim that the adoption of the perspective of the other via the reflexive vocal gesture is a necessary condition for the emergence of self-consciousness. The

¹⁶ He does not go to the other extreme of voluntarism, however: the individual *is* constrained in her conduct by the normative structure of her community. An extreme voluntarism, from a Meadian point of view, would be senseless, insofar as the importation of the perspective of the generalized other, while constraining, also acts as the condition for the possibility of reflective social conduct, and hence for a meaningful conception of agency; without some degree of determinateness lent by a constraining normative backdrop, we would merely have random behavior rather than agency. For more on this, see Aboulafia, *The Mediating Self*.

aspect of the self that is the *object* of such consciousness constitutes the ‘me,’ which is “a conventional, habitual individual” (MSS 197). This aspect of the self, then, is the one that gives rise to the concern regarding social determinism. The response to this concern comes in the form of the ‘I,’ the subject that reacts to the ‘me.’ As subject, the ‘I’ is never present in experience as object. How, then, does Mead justify the postulation of such a subject over against the ‘me’?

Mead posits the ‘I’ as a presupposition of the type of self-conscious behavior of which he has been giving an account. Insofar as the self is an object for itself, it must also be a subject for which it can be an object—the self as ‘me’ hence requires the self as ‘I.’ The ‘I’ itself, then, while unavailable to experience,¹⁷ can yet be described behavioristically as operating in a functional relationship to the type of behavior that we observe on the part of the ‘me.’ Indeed, it is only by presupposing the ‘I’ (“the response of the organism to the attitudes of the others”) that we can account for the ‘me’ (“the organized set of attitudes of others which one himself assumes”) as having the capacity for meaningful reflective behavior at all (175). On the other hand, the ‘I’ is as inconceivable without the ‘me’ as the ‘me’ is without the ‘I.’ In the absence of a ‘me,’ a self that is an organized meaningful object to the ‘I,’ the ‘I’ itself would have no background from which to emerge and no reference point from which to act.¹⁸ The dynamic interrelation of the ‘I’ and the ‘me’ is the consequence of their actually being two aspects of single ongoing process, rather than being two distinct entities or parts of the self; they can only

¹⁷ Mead does at times suggest that the ‘I’ of moments contained in very recent memory can be accessed experientially via such memory, but this can only be a loose way of speaking, insofar as the ‘I’ as experienced at all is thereby an object, and hence already part of the ‘me.’ We do, however, seem to experience ourselves as being possessed of some kind of agency, of being able to make choices, and of being able to manifest behavior that is not entirely predictable; this lends some experiential support to the notion of the ‘I,’ then. See MSS 174. Moreover, as the ‘I’ is the principle of novelty within the self, it has empirical support insofar as novelty is an aspect of all experience. See also Aboulafia, *The Mediating Self* for an extended treatment of these issues.

¹⁸ This, then, is why Mead avoids an extreme voluntarism, or indeterminism, as well as determinism.

be conceived as independent entities in abstraction from the total situation in which they emerge and function.¹⁹

The ‘I,’ then, serves as the social behaviorist counterpart to the principles of emergence and novelty found in Mead’s philosophy of time. It is the ‘I’ that allows for the possibility of novelty in reflective human activity, i.e. *creativity*: “Now, the attitudes he [the individual] is taking toward them [others] are present in his own experience, but his response to them will contain a novel element. The ‘I’ gives the sense of freedom, of initiative” (*MSS 177*). As such, Mead’s conception of the temporality of reality itself requires the postulation of the ‘I’ in the sphere of human activity, which requires a mechanism for the production of novel and reflective responses to stimuli within experience—i.e. free action. Mitchell Aboulafia discusses this point at length in *The Mediating Self*:

There is freedom because, as reflective, role-taking creatures, we are able to view various aspects of problems that arise. When different responses to a certain stimulus are possible, and when those possible responses conflict with one another, we have a problem. Human beings are unique in their capacity to both have and solve problems, and this capacity is intimately connected with their ability to view things from alternate perspectives, which in turn is related to their capacity for taking the roles of others. (16-17)

Aboulafia here calls attention to the deep connection between the Meadian notion of perspective and the functioning of the ‘I,’ going on to connect this functioning to Mead’s philosophy of time by pointing out that the reaction of the ‘I’ to the ‘me’ is not predictable on the basis of what is given in the ‘me’ but rather contains an irreducible element of novelty. Following Aboulafia, then, we can understand the self as being diachronically social on the model, discussed earlier, of the changing ecosystem: the self exists through time as a succession of ‘me’s (parallel to the ‘systems’ discussed above) that incorporate constantly emerging elements of novelty; this is in

¹⁹ Maurice Natanson recommends the term ‘personality’ for the synthetic totality of ‘me’ and ‘I’ in order to obviate any confusions regarding the referent of the term ‘self,’ which Mead sometimes uses to refer to this totality, while at other times restricting it to reference to the ‘me’ only. As should be obvious by now, I have not followed him in this practice here.

addition to the self's synchronic sociality as perspectively constituted.²⁰ Self-consciousness, however, allows for the consciousness of the self's sociality, such that the ways in which the 'I' responds to novel stimuli can be seen as *reflective*;²¹ hence we have the possibility of behavior guided by intelligence, reflection, rationality, and even criticism.

In this manner Mead avoids a crude social determinism, maintaining that, while the self emerges from the social situation and the importation of its norms, it is also capable of resisting the standards of its immediate community insofar as it is in a constant process of development and reconstruction. This obviously has important political ramifications; for instance, it is the 'I' that makes social critique and reform possible, because the 'I' asserts itself, makes demands, and appeals to a community still larger than the one in which it finds itself: "...one appeals to others on the assumption that there is a group of organized others that answer to one's own appeal—even if the appeal be made to posterity. In that case there is the attitude of the 'I' as over against the 'me'" (MSS 199). Here we see that the 'I' makes possible the appeal to the normative perspective of a community that transcends the particular community; we shall soon conceptualize this perspective in terms of *universality*. This, then is the basis of the normative framework that extends beyond that of the community; indeed, the 'I' cannot be understood in isolation from some such appeal to that which transcends the preconstituted 'me.' This connection between the individual and the universal, the 'I' and the context-transcendent, must remain vague for the moment—we shall have occasion to further clarify this point in discussing Mead's conception of universality. As for our current understanding of individuality, however, we can see that the 'I' represents both Mead's attempt to articulate a theory of the self in keeping with his overall philosophical and psychological perspective, and his efforts to maintain a place

²⁰ See *The Mediating Self* 18-21.

²¹ In *The Mediating Self*, Aboulafia complicates this moment in the overall picture considerably; an exploration would take us too far afield.

for individual agency and independence in the face of its constitution by the normative structure of its community.

In order to further develop the concept of the individual with which I operate throughout my project, I momentarily take leave of Mead's social psychology and turn to the closely related work of John Dewey—though I focus here only on a single essay extracted from his massive body of writings. In "Time and Individuality" Dewey outlines a conception of individuality that is consonant with many aspects of Mead's work and offers a particularly clear example of a depiction of individuality that suits the preceding account. Dewey here characterizes the human individual, not primarily as a self or subject, but as an embodied historical or temporal career. On this view, then, the individual is not a static 'thing' but is fundamentally temporal, "a course of events each of which takes up into itself something of what went before and leads on to that which comes after" (229). We can see here the close analogy with Mead's philosophy of time, with its focus on emergence and novelty as well as on the diachronic aspect of sociality. Dewey justifies the ascription of *individuality* to such a temporal structure by appealing to the *uniqueness* inherent in every such career.

Moreover, just as an individual is constituted by its temporality, it is likewise constituted by its interactions with its circumstances—hence we have the *synchronic* aspect of sociality as well as the diachronic. Dewey emphasizes this latter aspect of the individual in reformulating the Aristotelian notion of potentiality. Rather than a potentiality being an inherent *telos* of an object, he insists, it "must be thought of in terms of consequences of interactions with other things" (238). Hence potentiality remains indeterminate until the individual comes into contact with the circumstances that will give rise to the actualization of the potentiality.²² The notion of

²² This conception of potentiality closely parallels the impulse-stimulus-response structure of the act that Mead outlines and that is in turn indebted to Dewey's concept of the reflex-arc.

interaction to which Dewey appeals here is crucial to understanding that the individual is not simply passively shaped by its circumstances: “There is no such thing as an interaction that is merely a one-way movement” (239). While being partially constituted by external circumstances impinging upon it, the individual in turn reacts against those circumstances, influencing and reshaping them as well as itself. This constant two-way movement of constitution and response thus characterizes the individual as embodied history; as a result, the diachronic and synchronic aspects of Mead’s notion of sociality are bound up with one another in Dewey’s description of individuality:

The career which is [one’s] unique individuality is the series of interactions in which he was created to be what he was by the ways in which he responded to the occasions with which he was presented. One cannot leave out either conditions as opportunities nor yet unique ways of responding to them...a response is not a necessary effect of a cause but is a way of using an occasion to render it a constituent of an ongoing unique history. (239)

Hence Dewey gives us a conception of the individual as a historical or temporal career that interacts with its circumstances by simultaneously being constituted by and reacting against them. All of these aspects of the individual are indeed what make it the unique, self-identical individual that it is.

This picture of the individual as presented by Dewey, when allied with Mead’s reflexive concept of the self with its constitution via social interaction and its dialectical ‘I’-‘me’ structure, provides the basis for a robust concept of the human individual that is adequate to the account of sociality that I have been outlining. However, in order to more fully understand the nature of this concept of the individual and its normative and political implications, we must examine another normatively loaded concept that is bound up with it: universality. Ultimately, we shall see that Mead’s social behaviorist account of the genesis of universality, running parallel with that of the self, also merges with his metaphysical considerations; as mentioned above, the functioning of the ‘I’ implicitly involves an appeal to a perspective that transcends that which is given in

experience in the form of the ‘me’ (i.e. the perspective of the generalized other). It is this transcendent perspective that we will discuss under the rubric of ‘universality,’ and that will provide critical and normative force to my conception of radical democracy.

3. A Broader Perspective: Universality and Individuality

Much like mind and self-consciousness, universality emerges for Mead from the reflexive mechanism inherent in the significant symbol. This character of universality arises in Mead’s treatment of the basic problem of how we come to *recognize* characters of objects we have never seen, or how we are able to apply concepts gained from prior experience to new experience. Such questions lie at the root of perennial debates in metaphysics regarding the nature of ‘universals,’ those characters or properties that allow us to discern the sameness (or that just *are* the sameness) in disparate contexts. How, Mead asks, is a behavioristic psychology able to account for this aspect of experience? He attempts to answer this question in terms of stimulus and response, namely by claiming that universality should be conceived as a character of a response or potential response to particular and distinct stimuli:

...[T]here is a universal character given in the experience itself which is at least capable of an indefinite number of repetitions. It is this which has been supposed to be beyond the behavioristic explanation or statement. What a behavioristic psychology does is to state that character of the experience in terms of the response. It may be said that there cannot be a universal response, but only a response to a particular object. On the contrary, in so far as the response is one that can take place with reference to the brick, a stone, a hammer, there is a universal in the form of a response that answers to a whole set of particulars, and the particulars may be indefinite in number, provided only they have certain characters in relation to the response. (*MSS 84*)

Two things are particularly important to note in this passage. First, the notion of universality is tied to that of openness, or open-endedness—the concept applies to situations in which the possibility of new inputs or experiences remains open, where the sphere of application of a term or concept is not closed. Second, the universal character occurs in the particular (stimulus) *only in relation to the response*—that is, the characters that objects have are always their characters

for us. This does not render them unreal, however; in accordance with the above discussion, perspective-dependence is not incompatible with objective reality, but is rather a condition for its possibility. The universal is the *meaning* that a particular object encountered in experience, or symbol in communication, has for us; obtaining consciousness of this meaning requires “the individual stimulating himself to take the attitude of the other in his reaction toward the object” (89). In communication, then, universality is a consequence of the reflexivity of the vocal gesture.

Moreover, because the vocal gesture allows the speaker to take the perspective of the other; and this, in turn, allows consciousness of meaning to arise; the vocal gesture as significant symbol must admit of various perspectives while retaining identity of meaning. On this basis, Mead claims that all significant symbols are inherently universal—all consciousness of meaning contains some element of universality. Any symbolic interaction presupposes universality of meaning, even if only two individuals are involved; such universality lies in the requirement that the significant symbol “would have the same meaning to any other who might find himself in the same position” (“BASS” 245). This formulation suits Mead’s casting of the issue of universality in terms of stimulus and response, insofar as the universality of a significant symbol resides in the sameness of meaning, and thus of response, from various perspectives. In *Mind, Self, and Society*, Mead explicates this development in his account thus:

Meaning is that which can be indicated to others while it is by the same process indicated to the indicating individual. In so far as the individual indicates it to himself in the role of the other, he is occupying his perspective, and as he is indicating it to the other from his own perspective, and as that which is so indicated is identical, it must be that which can be in different perspectives. It must therefore be a universal, at least in the identity which belongs to the different perspectives which are organized in the single perspective, and in so far as the principle of organization is one which admits of other perspectives than those actually present, the universality may be logically indefinitely extended. (89)

The universality of meaning thus transcends any given context, and can in fact be extended *indefinitely*. This potential extension can be seen as the ever-present *generalizability* of meaning.

José Medina explains that “For Mead, a meaning is a communicative structure that involves the unification of multiple perspectives; and this communicative structure is always open; that is, the unification of perspectives is never finished or complete but always open to new possible perspectives” (79). The concept of universality, then, implies openness to new inputs and new perspectives, although it arises from a specific communicative context (a particular conversation, for instance), as well as from a particular social setting—specifically, from a “universe of discourse,” which “is constituted by a group of individuals carrying on and participating in a common social process of experience and behavior, within which these gestures or symbols have the same or common meanings for all members of that group” (MSS 89). In *The Cosmopolitan Self* Aboulafia characterizes the type of universals theorized by Mead as ‘functional universals’ in that “they are shared and can potentially be shared by any one else ‘who might find himself in the same position’” (25). Upon its emergence the individual internalizes a transcendence of the particular communicative situation in the form of the generalized other, which gathers within itself the system of shared meanings that characterizes the larger universe of discourse within which the individual is situated. Again, however, individuality involves not only this internalization, but also a future-oriented movement beyond it—the ‘I.’ The transcendence of the particular, then, comprises not only the *generality* of what lies within the boundaries of the specific community or universe of discourse, but also the further *generalizability* or *universality* of an appeal beyond these boundaries to an indefinitely proliferating set of perspectives; just as the universal implies open-endedness, therefore, *the limits of the concrete universe of discourse are indefinitely expandable*.²³ Furthermore, the ‘I’ is the mechanism within the individual by

²³ Notice that I distinguish between generality, such as that of the generalized other, and generalizability, or universality; the former is given in the present, deposited in the ‘me,’ while the latter prevents the closure of this given perspective by disrupting the boundaries of the given, opening the perspective of the generalized other to indefinitely proliferating new perspectives. While this may seem an obvious distinction, Mead’s treatment at times

which she can enact the appeal to universality that extends the boundaries of her context or community.

Mead's view, on which the individual and the universal are intimately related and mutually supportive, thereby allows us to navigate between two dangerous extremes. On the one hand, Mead avoids any type of atomistic individualism, such as the liberal view of the 'unencumbered' self that Mouffe attacks according to which individuals come to the political arena with their identities and interests preconstituted; rather, the individual emerges from and is constituted by the social situation. On the other hand, Mead's conception of universality does not subordinate or threaten to subsume individuality. Drawing on Mead thus allows us to avoid both of the extremes with which Mouffe was concerned, without reducing all social relations to the terrain of the specifically political. Rather, by working out the implications of the basic concept of sociality, beginning with the basic social situation, Mead is able to maintain the individual as internally related to the universal in such a way that they are reciprocal, rather than in the problematic relation of subordination and domination. Indeed, given the structure of the self that Mead proposes, the development and enrichment of the individual directly corresponds to the increasing expansion of the universality to which it stands in relation. Such a controversial claim, however, requires further development and justification. In what follows I attempt to further clarify how the moment of universality involved in the emergence of the self stands in a symmetrical dialectical relation to that of individuality.

Because the self is constituted by the reflexive importation of the perspectives constituting its universe of discourse in the form of the generalized other, the structure of the individual, at least in its 'me' aspect, reflects that of the social situation that constitutes it. As the

lends itself to its collapsing; I call attention to it here to avoid confusion on what will be a central point for the account pursued in later chapters.

individual's social world is complex, so, then, is the individual. The individual contains, in a sense, multiple 'me's, multiple generalized others, insofar as it engages in multiple universes of discourse that operate at different levels of complexity. Just as the universes of discourse can be seen as part of social whole or totality (which, however, is never completed or closed), the development of the individual corresponds to the organization of this internalized social whole: "So the self reaches its full development by organizing these individual attitudes of others into the organized social or group attitudes, and by thus becoming an individual reflection of the general systematic pattern of social or group behavior in which it and the others are all involved" (158). The social structure thus constitutes the individual personality; the latter nevertheless remains open and alterable due to its 'I' aspect, as does the former due to the potential on the part of the 'I' for appealing to the *universal*. This dialectical connection between the 'I' and the universal, then, is precisely the mechanism that prevents not only the domination of the individual by the generalized other, but also the closure of social totality, and hence the foreclosure of the possibility of social change enacted by individuals. Thus, I argue, Mead's conception of universality as consisting in an openness to new perspectives allows him to avoid the problems of social closure and determinism and indeed give an account of the mechanism by which the individual can have reciprocal impact on the universal.

Moreover, Mead insists that the social constitution of individuals is entirely compatible with the notion of individual personalities as entirely unique and singular. Indeed, this singularity finds its roots in *the complexity of the social whole*, which comprises a *multiplicity of perspectives* that is absorbed into each individual in an entirely unique fashion:

In other words, the organized structure of every individual self within the human social process of experience and behavior reflects, and is constituted by, the organized relational pattern of that process as a whole; but each individual self-structure reflects, and is constituted by, a different aspect or perspective of this relational pattern, because each reflects this relational pattern from its own unique standpoint; so that the common social origin and constitution of individual selves and

their structures does not preclude wide individual differences and variations among them, or contradict the peculiar and more or less distinctive individuality which each of them in fact possesses. (201-02)

The unique and singular aspect of the individual, to which Mead refers as “the most precious part of the individual” (324), hence maintains and even enriches itself in its internalization of the perspective of the generalized other.

Above all, the individual is for Mead a locus of creativity and novelty. As such, it is able to react reciprocally upon the social whole of which it is a part. In doing so, the individual is able to alter the universe of discourse that constitutes it. Indeed, even the internalization of the normative structure of the community, the perspective of the generalized other, requires the creative activity of the ‘I,’ insofar as, according to Medina, “Internalization is more than a passive copying of whatever is out there; it is more than mechanical and uncritical reception of whatever community standards the subject is exposed to” (70). The individual thus is not subsumed into the universal, nor does it stand in a relation of subordination to the normative structure of the immediate community, but rather reciprocally interacts with both of these normative perspectives and preserves itself in this relation. As we can already begin to see, this conception of the individual and its relationship to the social whole as well as to universality has rich normative and political consequences, which will be the subject of the following chapters. .

In what way, however, does universality present itself as a *normative perspective* apart from that of the generalized other? The normative potential of Mead’s account of universality begins to come to the fore in *Mind, Self, and Society* in a discussion of what Mead calls the ‘voice of reason.’ For Mead, ‘reason’ consists in the transcendence of a particular context, which allows the adoption of a greater number of perspectives in addressing an issue or solving a problem. This transcendence not only allows one to take the attitude of others who are not spatially present, but also extends to those who are not temporally present:

A person may reach a point of going against the whole world about him; he may stand out by himself over against it. But to do that he has to speak with the voice of reason to himself. He has to comprehend the voices of the past and of the future. That is the only way in which the self can get a voice which is more than the voice of the community. (168)

Mead gives the label 'reason' to this adoption of a perspective that is wider or more inclusive of new perspectives than the given universe of discourse. In "Philanthropy from the Point of View of Ethics," Mead likewise describes reason in this manner as "a medium within which values may be brought into comparisons with each other, in abstraction from the situations within which they have come into conflict with each other" (406). For Mead, then, 'reason' is an aspect of the inquiry that follows upon the emergence of a problematic element in experience—in this case, the emergence of conflicting values in social experience; moreover, reason in this sense consists in the appeal to a perspective or set of perspectives that extends beyond the boundaries of the immediate community or universe of discourse. The perspective or perspectives appealed to can be those of concrete others or to a more inclusive generalized other (which, of course, will typically incorporate the perspectives of a wider range of concrete others), and the potential for appealing to them has normative consequences for the ways in which we address the emergent problems of social reality. This, then, is why I speak of the *universal*, as a perspective that goes beyond that of the given community or universe of discourse, as a *normative perspective*. The structure of communication thus provides the basis for the adoption of a perspective that carries the normative force of the universal; indeed, says Mead, "Language provides a universal community...It is there in so far as there are common symbols that can be utilized" (MSS 283).

The universal community Mead refers to here is the limit-concept of the expansive appeal to a perspective that transcends the immediate community, that, via abstraction, broadens the boundaries of the universe of discourse within which one is operating. This limit-concept follows from Mead's account insofar as these boundaries are *indefinitely expandable*, in principle

capable finally of encompassing all language-users (and hence all creatures capable of thought, or of reason in Mead's sense). Every being that is capable of symbolically mediated interaction is thereby capable of adopting such an 'enlarged' perspective, and is hence a part of this widest conceivable community, which constitutes "the thought world as such" (*MSS* 201).²⁴ Rather than providing a picture of a fixed or final state with a determinate content, however, this limit-concept serves as a regulative ideal from which comes the demand for the indefinite expansion of particular universes of discourse and the appeal to a proliferating array of concrete perspectives. The future-oriented activity of the 'I,' its sociality, allows for the appeal to this abstract community, and hence for the possibility of novel and critical reactions to, and reconstructions of, the individual's social environment. Universality conceived in this manner will play a central role in the account of the normative implications of sociality that I will develop in chapters 3 and 4, and that will provide the normative framework for an account of democracy that is both radical and cosmopolitan. Before turning to explicitly normative considerations, however, the nature of the concept of the universal community, and hence that of universality itself, needs to be further clarified by briefly looking at the role it might play in a Meadian account of the social that emphasizes its communicative dimension.

As mentioned, for Mead, all interaction through the use of significant symbols presupposes a universe of discourse, which, stated most basically, is the social context within which symbols gain their significance. This term can apply simply to a single group or community that is engaged in cooperative social activity with "a system of common or social meanings" (Mead, *MSS* 90). The concept of the universe of discourse already discussed, then, provides us with a basic concept upon which to elaborate a more robust conceptualization of

²⁴ The obvious affinities between this Meadian view and Habermas' account of communicative rationality and the ideal speech situation will be explored in later chapters.

social groupings. Mead divides such groupings, or ‘classes’ as he calls them,²⁵ as they emerge in more complex and highly functionally organized societies into two categories: the concrete and the abstract. He describes the former as “actually functional social units, in terms of which their individual members are directly related to one another,” citing as examples “political parties, clubs, corporations” (MSS 157). ‘Abstract’ social groups, “such as the class of debtors and the class of creditors,” on the other hand, involve only indirect relations among their members and indirect functioning *qua* social units (157). I mention this distinction here not to defend it as an empirically useful mode of categorizing social groups, but rather to draw attention to the principle of the indefinite expandability of the universe of discourse, which Mead claims is illustrated most clearly in the case of ‘abstract’ social groups, which “afford or represent unlimited possibilities for the widening and ramifying and enriching of the social relations among all the individual members of the given society as an organized and unified whole” (157). It is not clear why ‘concrete’ face-to-face social groups could not in principle exhibit the same aspect. Indeed, the argument could be made that certain more concrete, face-to-face, grassroots social groupings could in fact offer better resources for encompassing a proliferation of perspectives than certain large, abstract, but relatively homogeneous and static groups could. In any case, the principle of the indefinite expandability of universes of discourse provides us with a unique perspective from which to conceptualize social groupings of various levels of complexity and unity in a way that reflects our experience of the social world, indeed allowing

²⁵ In Mead’s use, the term ‘class’ has a much broader scope than it does in sociological theories of class; for instance, in Marxist theory, classes are specifically defined as locations within the relations of production, while on a Weberian account they are construed as positions within status hierarchies based on ‘life chances.’ While Mead’s term ‘class’ can certainly refer to such social positions, it should be kept in mind that here he means by the term something much more generic, such as ‘social group or sub-group.’ I, on the other hand, will use the term ‘group’ where Mead uses ‘class’ in order to prevent confusion regarding my own invocation of more specific concepts of ‘class.’

for the potential investigation of ‘society as an organized and unified whole,’ i.e. at the level of a *totality*.

It should be clear, however, that the notion of social totality that can be derived from Mead’s work cannot be conceptualized as the closed or sutured totality that Laclau and Mouffe warn against. Rather, this model of totality is compatible with such concerns insofar as it too is a model of the social as process rather than structure; where it differs from the model of Laclau and Mouffe, however, is in its allowance for the social terrain to be differentiated into degrees of ‘structuredness’ or reification according to the capacity for change and novelty displayed by social groups or sets of social relations such as institutions. This difference thus finds its roots in Mead’s concept of sociality, with its emphasis on emergent novelty, as well as in the presence of the Meadian concept of universality, according to which the limits placed on the malleability of a structure or group can always be challenged by an appeal to a wider set of perspectives. Indeed, due to the possibility of abstraction from concrete social relations offered by symbolically mediated interaction, Mead is able to present a picture of an abstract social group that potentially includes all speakers. This group is defined by what he calls the logical universe of discourse, “which enables the largest conceivable number of human individuals to enter into some sort of social relation, however indirect and abstract it may be, with one another—a relation arising from the universal functioning of gestures as significant symbols in the general human social process of communication” (MSS 158). The boundaries of any particular universe of discourse can therefore in principle be expanded to the logical universe of discourse, which makes possible a social group (albeit an abstract one) consisting of all speakers. While it always emerges from the concrete context of a social situation, this abstract universal community provides the background of every concrete universe of discourse. In later chapters I will develop the respects

in which universality conceived in this manner lays epistemic and ethical demands upon us as reflective social beings.

4. Conclusion

My intention in putting forth the account of this chapter is to begin to make up for the insufficiencies diagnosed in Mouffe's account of radical democracy in order to pave the way for the development of a conception of political practice that is truly radical and truly democratic. The respects in which my account is democratic will be discussed in later chapters; however, we can already begin to see the force of the claim to radicalism. I contend that this conception of sociality, of a basic social situation from which emerges human social conduct, must form the roots of a genuinely *radical* political practice; *radicality* is predicated on this articulation of the link between practice and the social *roots* of that practice. Rootedness in the communicative dimension of the social, as we shall see, allows for the articulation of a type of *universalist perspectivalism* that is adequate to the project of radical democracy, providing both the normative rootedness and the transformative political efficacy that was lacking in Mouffe's project. In subsequent chapters I will develop the conceptual inextricability of the radical and the normative, arguing that rootedness in a conception of the social with rich normative consequences allows us to conceive democracy, not merely on the level of the political, but on an epistemically and ethically normative level that serves as the underpinning of the political.

The mode of political practice that is articulated on this basis is predicated on the link between the deepening of democracy and the radical transformation of social conditions; the resultant picture of political struggle can thereby be described as radically democratic. As mentioned in the previous chapter, then, the notion of radicality serves as the bridge between the

normative content of the communicative dimension of sociality, on the one hand, and political practice, on the other.

In closing, I wish to call attention to the following passage from Mead's essay "Cooley's Contribution to American Social Thought." I will quote this passage at length, for it concisely captures the connections that I wish to draw out between the possibilities for transformative and critical political practice and the rootedness of such practice in sociality, as well as the centrality to this enterprise of the notion of universality as involving the expansion of the boundaries of the universe of discourse, the appeal to an indefinitely proliferating number of perspectives:

If we can carry back the social behavior within which selves and others arise to a situation that antedates the appearance of the psychological as distinguished from an outer world, it will be to this primitive behavior that we can trace back the origins of the social patterns which are responsible not only for the structure of society but also for the criticism of that structure and for its evolution. The social pattern is always larger than the group that it makes possible. It includes the enemy and the guest and the morale of behavior toward him. Its mechanism of communication carries with it the possibility of conversation with others who are not members of the group. It has in it the implication of the logical universe of discourse. If symbolization can be stated in terms of the behavior of primitive communication, then every distinctively human being belongs to a possibly larger society than that within which he actually finds himself. It is this, indeed, which is implied in the rational character of the human animal. And these larger patterns afford a basis for the criticism of existing conditions and in an even unconscious way tend to realize themselves in social conduct. (705-06)

This passage encapsulates, in very general terms, what will be developed in subsequent chapters.

The task before us, then, is to render this generality more specific. A first step in doing so is to draw attention to the unique aspect of *human* sociality that bestows normative weight on the general field of sociality. We have seen that the uniqueness of the human social realm results from the attainment on the part of the organism of the ability to adopt the perspective of others toward itself, its importation of the perspective of the generalized other and the normative structure of its community into itself. The constitution of the human subject, then, requires the concomitant emergence of a structure of *intersubjectivity*. It is with the emergence of intersubjective communication that the normative aspects of human sociality and the normative structure of human community establish themselves. My contention, then, is that the crucial

aspect of the normativity that we are investigating lies in its relation to intersubjective communication. The following chapters trace the consequences of such communication for our understanding of the normativity that will inform the project of radical democracy.

CHAPTER III

THE COMMUNICATIVE ROOTS OF NORMATIVITY

Having outlined the view of sociality that I contend constitutes the proper root of an adequate theory of radical democracy, I focus now on this view's normative implications for human sociality, particularly with regard to the nature of the social world as *perspectival*, arguing that normative consequences arise alongside the emergence of the ability of an organism to adopt the perspective of, or project itself into the social location of, another organism. This ability gives rise to the human capacities for awareness of public meanings and for reflective action, as well as to the organism's importation of the perspective of the generalized other and the normative structure of its community into itself.

The reflexive mechanism that allows the human organism to adopt the perspectives of others both gives rise to a self constituted by the internalization of shared meanings and a normative social order, and allows for that self to broaden its own perspective on this constitutive normative social order and hence to respond to and transform it in novel ways. The work done in this chapter sheds light on the implications of the self's ability to transcend its own immediate perspective—or the normative perspective of the generalized other—and appeal to a wider framework—the normative perspective of the universal as described in the previous chapter, which transcends that of the generalized other via the appeal to a broader perspective.

The democratic ideal that I draw out of sociality does not constitute a defense of a particular political order, such as Western liberal democracy; indeed, it provides a standpoint from which we can critique actually existing 'democracies.' I also do not defend any type of

normative majoritarianism, which falls prey to difficulties that not only are a threat to the democratic credentials of any normative project, but also run the risk of evacuating normativity of any critical force at all. While these claims will be filled out below, it remains to be said here just what makes the upshot of my subsequent accounts democratic. I argue that the evaluation of the claims subject to the normative constraints in question requires an appeal to the conception of universality I developed earlier; this concept is tied to the concept of democracy insofar as it accounts for individual autonomy and implies an openness and attentiveness to input from an ever-widening range of perspectives. The democratic ideal itself consists in the freedom of individuals to criticize and work to reform the social order; as well as the subjection of the collective coordination of human social life to the constraint of legitimation via the input, evaluation, and interplay of the claims, interests, and perspectives of all subject to its decisions.

In the previous chapter, I briefly discussed the centrality of the concept of ‘the game’ to the understanding of the individual’s internalization of the normative structure of community—the *rules* of the game are understood in terms of the internalization of the various perspectives involved and the relations among them. In the first section of this chapter, I further fill out the Meadian picture of social, communicative normativity, drawing on the previous chapter’s discussion of the universality of meaning. I juxtapose this account with an exploration of some problems regarding communicative normativity emerging from the literature on Wittgenstein’s account of rule-following. I show how the Meadian model can address these problems via a social account of communicative normativity that displays the capacity for individuals to appeal to a critical, context-transcendent perspective.

This basic framework for thinking about the sociality of normativity leads us into the second section, where I develop a social account of the epistemic ideal of *objectivity*. I follow

Longino in providing a democratic social account of procedural objectivity, according to which we can evaluate processes of inquiry. I go beyond Longino's account by maintaining that, in order to motivate and legitimate this conception of objectivity as a method-norm, we also need a conception of objectivity as an end-norm, which I refer to as veritistic objectivity. I argue that the epistemic ideal of veritistic objectivity should be seen in terms of intersubjective shareability as the capacity of a claim about the shared empirical world to win the assent of all relevant inquirers. In concluding, I draw parallels between my conception of veritistic objectivity and Habermas's treatment of truth, thus laying the groundwork for the following chapter.

1. Sociality and Normativity as Rule-Following

In this section, I use rule-following as a model for understanding the social account of communicative normativity that emerges from my Meadian account.¹ In this discussion, I take rule-following to stand in for normative practice in general, and I treat the application of concepts or meanings in particular cases (and hence the use of language) as the paradigm for rule-following. Wittgenstein, followed by Saul Kripke, suggests that an individualistic account of meaning, according to which the conception of a private language (or rule-following practice more generally) makes sense, cannot account for the normative force of claims about meaning, for it collapses 'being right' into 'seeming right.'² While Kripke—or, rather, Wittgenstein-as-

¹ Given the close link between communicative normativity and the Meadian account of meaning, as well as the centrality of claims about meaning to the rule-following discussion, I sometimes discuss communicative normativity in terms of the 'normativity of meaning.' In doing so, I do not mean to imply that I hold this type of normativity to be *semantic*, in a narrow sense. For the purposes of this work, I remain agnostic as to whether the normative force of meaning claims belongs to the realm of the properly semantic or to some broader communicative domain.

² Kripke's version of this argument has generated a great deal of discussion, far more than I can go into here. See for instance, Baker and Hacker, "On Misunderstanding Wittgenstein: Kripke's Private Language Argument," Ebbs, *Rule-Following and Realism*, Horwich, "Wittgenstein and Kripke on the Nature of Meaning," and section II of Wright, *Rails to Infinity*. Miller and Wright, eds., *Rule-Following and Meaning*, collects several of the most prominent papers on the topic, and Kusch, *A Skeptical Guide to Meaning and Rules*, contains a thorough treatment of the issue, as well as a more comprehensive bibliography.

read-by-Kripke (hereafter KW)—takes this point to serve as a vindication of the necessarily communal nature of normative practice, Simon Blackburn in turn demonstrates that the problem of apparent normative vacuity emerges at the communal level as well.³ Blackburn’s account essentially extrapolates the difficulty with individualism to the communal level, hence articulating what I refer to as the problem of ‘normative majoritarianism.’ For normative majoritarianism, the correct in the domain of rule-following is simply that which is deemed correct by most of a given community; such a view makes the community infallible, ruling out the possibility of community-wide mistakes. Thus, like individualism, normative majoritarianism collapses ‘being right’ into ‘seeming right’ (now for the community rather than the individual), at the expense of normativity. Normative majoritarianism represents a key difficulty from the perspective of my overall project, since the specter of self-enclosed communities that think they are correctly applying concepts, though they are susceptible to community-wide mistake, presents a real social and political problem for a universalist picture of radical democracy—if normative majoritarianism is correct, then the possibility of the type of critical perspective for which I argue throughout is eliminated, leaving us only with relativism or provincialism.

I argue that the Meadian model of communicative normativity offers a conception of community that avoids normative majoritarianism via the appeal to a universalistically conceived regulative ideal community. The Meadian model of meaning harbors this universal appeal while remaining perspectively situated, linked to concrete contexts. The key element of the model for addressing normative majoritarianism is the rejection of the model of community as closed and

³ For purposes of clarity it is important to distinguish KW (also sometimes referred to as ‘Kripkenstein’) from both Kripke, who maintains that he is putting forward a position that is not necessarily his own, and Wittgenstein himself—while KW’s argument was inspired by Kripke’s reading of Wittgenstein, Kripke emphasizes that his account should not be read as an attempt at a faithful exegesis of Wittgenstein’s own position. This last point is important, as many of Kripke’s critics charge him with misreading Wittgenstein, which is really to miss the point of what Kripke is doing. Worse still, the underlying assumption of many such objections appears to be that uncovering what Wittgenstein *really meant* and uncovering *the correct view* are identical ends; see e.g. Baker and Hacker, “On Misunderstanding Wittgenstein: Kripke’s Private Language Argument.”

static in favor of an open-ended and dynamic depiction of community. Emphasizing the distinction between meaning as *general*—i.e. shared among the various members of a particular universe of discourse—and meaning as *universal*—i.e. in principle open to new inputs from an expanded universe of discourse—allows for the articulation of normative demands that outstrip those of the immediate community. Such a conception allows for critique and social change at the level of the production of meanings, for the social whole, in dialectical relation to the individual, is not closed but is rather always subject to the reciprocal reconstruction of the individual. While the individual, as a ‘me,’ is partially constituted by the normative structure of the generalized other, the individual can also, as an ‘I,’ appeal to these context-transcendent normative demands via the adoption of the normative perspective of the universal.

On the Meadian view, communicative normativity is social in a strong sense. In particular, the normativity of meaning, according to which one could be evaluated as right or wrong in one’s application of a concept, emerges as the result of the internalization of the perspectives of others in one’s community, including that of the generalized other; as such, the external constraints imposed by the various forms of *correction* enacted by one’s community come to regulate one’s behavior. This requires the external correction of the community, as well as the type of reflexive mechanism exemplified by the vocal gesture used in *communication*. Rule-following behavior such as that exemplified in the meaningful application of concepts manifests such internalization of social structure. As such, normative practices such as language or other forms of rule-following require reference to a communal backdrop which plays the dual role of that from which rule-following behavior emerges and that to which one has recourse in evaluating such behavior. Rule-following must therefore be conceived as not only public (i.e. in-principle subject to evaluation from a standpoint outside of that of the individual rule-follower)

but also *social* or *communal* in the stronger sense of requiring the actual presence of a communal context, an intersubjective backdrop against which it is allowed to emerge and to which recourse is always possible for justificatory purposes.

A similarly social account of rule-following emerges from Kripke's treatment of Wittgenstein. Kripke famously argues that the core contentions of the private language argument in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* are already articulated in the preceding comments on rule-following, where, according to Kripke, Wittgenstein establishes the impossibility of a private language in the sense of a normative, rule-bound practice that can be adhered to by an individual without recourse to public or communal resources.⁴ Kripke reads Wittgenstein as presenting, in the earlier passages, a skeptical paradox regarding meaning, according to which there is no fact about me that can serve as justifying the claim that I meant in the past, or mean now, one thing rather than another; as well as a skeptical solution on which the appeal to communal practices, 'what we do,' provides the warrant for the assertion of meaning claims. As a result, such a practice as language, which is inherently normative, cannot be made sense of when considered as private, as ultimately no criterion can be provided in such a case to distinguish between 'being right' and merely 'seeming right.' We thus get from Kripke a version of the common reading of Wittgenstein as arguing that language and thus normativity are only possible in a social context; i.e. in the context of a preexisting linguistic community—hence the impossibility of a private language.

⁴ On Kripke's reading, the application of this argument in §§243-onwards to private language in the sense of a language in principle understandable only by one person in that it refers to private, 'inner' states of affairs, is just that: an *application* of the broader argument, rather than a stand-alone argument in its own right. Much of the controversy surrounding Kripke's book focuses, among other things, on this reading. I, however, am not concerned here with debates regarding Wittgenstein interpretation and exegesis, let alone with textual debates regarding the structural features of the *Investigations*. I am concerned, rather, with the philosophical question Kripke raises regarding the relationship between normativity, publicity, and sociality; hence my focus on private language in the sense articulated in the text above, rather than in the sense cited at the beginning of this footnote.

While Kripke deals primarily with the normative difficulties that arise for the notion of privacy in the rule-following discussion, the private language argument proper offers the most sustained attack on privacy *per se*. For this reason, it is useful to explore the problems of normativity that arise in the later sections in order to get a grasp on what it is that Wittgenstein is criticizing, before bringing the rule-following considerations themselves to bear on the problem. I want to stress that normativity (and its impossibility in the case of ‘privacy’) provides the thread that links these two seemingly disparate discussions; in this sense, the following remark by Kripke is well-taken:

... [A] ‘private language’ is usually defined as a language that is logically impossible for anyone else to understand. The private language argument is taken to argue against the possibility of a private language in this sense. This conception is not in error, but it seems to me that the emphasis is somewhat misplaced. What is really denied is what might be called the ‘private model’ of rule-following, that the notion of a person following a given rule is to be analyzed simply in terms of facts about the rule-follower and the rule-follower alone, without reference to his membership in a wider community. (109)

With this in mind, I want to briefly explore the private language argument itself in order to bring to light the respects in which the difficulty to which such a concept gives rise is a difficulty regarding the concept of a private normative practice.

The private language argument, beginning at §243 of the *Investigations*, broaches the issue of privacy by appealing to the idea of a language that refers solely to a person’s ‘private’ ‘inner’ states. Throughout the argument Wittgenstein uses sensation, particularly the sensation of pain, as the paradigmatic example of what the private language would denote. Wittgenstein asks us to try to imagine a language in which a person names such sensations only to herself. This is not just a diary of sensations, but is completely private, in that the words “refer to what can only be known by the person speaking; to his immediate private sensations. So another person cannot understand the language” (§243). How is it, though, that words come to refer to sensations in the first place? Wittgenstein hypothesizes in §244 that we learn to give names to sensations through

being trained to replace the natural, primitive expressions of sensations with verbal, linguistic expressions: “A child has hurt himself and he cries; and then adults talk to him and teach him exclamations and, later, sentences. They teach the child new pain-behaviour” (§244). This is all well and good, but this picture of sensation-naming as a trained behavior that replaces primitive expressions of pain is clearly both *public*—it is inherently one that can be understood by others in the same linguistic community—and *communal*—it presupposes the existence of a social group from which the practice of bestowing meaning on sensation-terms emerges. The defender of a private language must deny that either of these aspects of this picture of the *genesis* of meaning are part of the *definition* of meaning, or are constitutive of meaning. As such, it must in principle be possible to separate the names for sensations from their natural expressions, and to do away with these natural expressions altogether, while allowing the names to retain their meaning, such that we have a truly private sensation-language: “...suppose I didn’t have any natural expression for the sensation, but only had the sensation? And now I simply *associate* names with sensations and use these names in descriptions” (§256). We can describe the resulting picture as one in which the meanings of sensation-terms are generated via private ostensive definition.

Such a language is in principle unteachable and cannot be understood by others—that is, it is genuinely private. It is here, however, that we get to the crux of the problem: in the case of such a language, we have no criterion according to which we can evaluate the correctness or incorrectness of subsequent uses of any given term in the language. One might argue that this is merely an epistemic limitation on our part: of course such a criterion is inaccessible *to us*—the language is private, after all. The requisite normative constraints, however, are immediately present to the individual using the private language. However, Wittgenstein’s point (and one on

which Kripke will insist) is that these normative constraints are not even epistemically accessible to the private-language user, for there are in fact *no constraints to be had*—it is impossible to make sense of their existence in the case of a private language. Wittgenstein explores this theme by demonstrating the incoherence of what we might call ‘subjective justification.’ In §265, he explicitly problematizes this concept by speculating on the possibility of justifying, for instance, the translation of one word for another by appealing to a dictionary-like table that one somehow has in one’s imagination. Such a subjective justification, one might be tempted to say, is a legitimate form of private normative practice. Wittgenstein responds to such a claim as follows:

But justification consists in appealing to something independent.—“But surely I can appeal from one memory to another. For example, I don’t know if I have remembered the time of departure of a train right and to check it I call to mind how a page of the time-table looked. Isn’t it the same here?”—No; for this process has got to produce a memory which is actually *correct*. If the mental image of the time-table could not itself be *tested* for correctness, how could it confirm the correctness of the first memory? (§265)

In such a case, we have no independent standard to which we might appeal, such that we have no criterion of correctness, no normative constraint on meaning. ‘Subjective justification,’ then, is not a form of justification at all: “One would like to say: whatever is going to seem right to me is right. And that only means that here we can’t talk about ‘right’” (§258). The impossibility of such a legitimate private justification simply exemplifies, for Wittgenstein, the normative difficulties that will beset any attempt to formulate a private model of a normative practice such as language. These difficulties are not restricted, however, to Wittgenstein’s polemic directly against private language, but also emerge in his more wide-ranging discussion of the normative practice of rule-following itself.

Wittgenstein approaches the concept of rule-following from several directions, addressing, for instance, how one knows the proper use of a word in a particular context and how one applies a mathematical formula in a specific case. Such examples, when considered closely,

give rise to puzzles concerning how correct application is determined. While we describe such situations as ‘understanding’ the meaning of the word or the use of the formula, Wittgenstein says, “It becomes queer when we are led to think that the future development must in some way be present in the act of grasping the use and yet isn’t present” (§197). That is, we cannot show that every future application of a rule is somehow contained in any given interpretation of the rule itself. The interpretation of a rule is thus indeterminate in every case, as is the correct application of the rule. As a result, we are faced with KW’s skeptical paradox: a rule cannot determine a particular course of action, because any course of action can be made to accord or conflict with some interpretation of the rule, “And so there would be neither accord nor conflict here” (§201). The problem that emerges here is one of a lack of a criterion of correctness; we never have any way of knowing if a rule is being followed correctly or incorrectly, such that correct and incorrect lose their meaning. We have in this case the collapse of the distinction between ‘being right and seeming right,’ and hence of normativity itself.

KW latches on to this skeptical problem as the central idea of the *Philosophical Investigations* as a whole, developing the argument via the employment of what Blackburn calls ‘bent-rules,’ such as ‘quaddition,’ which are analogous to what we might call Nelson Goodman’s ‘bent-predicates,’ such as ‘grue.’ The upshot is that there is no fact about me considered in isolation that provides the criterion for distinguishing between my following one rule, say addition (where the sign ‘+’ indicates that, given any function ‘ $x + y$ ’, I ought to give the sum of the arguments as the answer, such that ‘ $68 + 57 = 125$ ’ is correct), and my following a bent version of it, in this case quaddition (where, for instance, the sign ‘+’ indicates that, given any function ‘ $x + y$ ’, I ought to give the sum of the arguments in all cases where the arguments are less than 57, and ‘5’ otherwise, such that ‘ $68 + 57 = 5$ ’ is correct). As a result, *anything* I do in

attempting to follow a rule can be made to accord with *some* rule or other—which just means that we can’t talk about ‘accord,’ and thus about rules themselves. Moreover, the analogy with Goodman is more than just an analogy—predicates such as ‘grue’ are examples of exactly the type of problem KW is outlining. Indeed, all *concepts*, insofar as they can be applied (seemingly correctly or incorrectly) to an infinite number of particular cases, display the relevant features of rule-following. As such, any concept-use whatsoever can be made to accord with some interpretation of the *meaning* of the concept in question, which just means that we can’t talk about meaning insofar as it has lost any normative force; the concept of meaning itself comes unmoored from its normative foundation. KW’s treatment of rule-following thus naturally gives rise to a generalized skepticism about meaning and the normativity of meaning—at least when restricted to an individualist view on which the relevant facts must be facts about the rule-following individual considered in isolation.

KW’s skeptical *solution* to this problem lies in the appeal to a community in which agreement upon the correct application of a rule establishes one’s correctness or incorrectness in following the rule in a particular case.⁵ The status of rule-following as a public practice, grounded in substantive agreement among the members of a community, generates the requisite normativity by providing the conditions under which we are warranted in asserting the correctness or incorrectness of any particular instance of rule-following.⁶ Wittgenstein himself presents a closely related explanation of the centrality of a social context to rule-following,

⁵ Kripke purports to follow Hume in responding to a skeptical problem with a ‘skeptical solution,’ which is contrasted with a ‘straight solution’ insofar as the latter attempts to dissolve the skeptical worries at work in the problem by showing they are unwarranted or can be answered, while the former “begins on the contrary by conceding that the sceptic’s negative assertions are unanswerable. Nevertheless our ordinary practice or belief is justified because—contrary appearance notwithstanding—it need not require the justification the sceptic has shown to be untenable” (66).

⁶ Kripke contends that the rejection of private language emerges as a corollary from this account: “It turns out that the skeptical solution does not allow us to speak of a single individual, considered by himself and in isolation, as ever meaning anything” (68-69).

anticipating the arguments he will later level against the possibility of a private language by drawing attention to the normative difficulty to which a private model of rule-following gives rise: “to *think* one is obeying a rule is not to obey a rule. Hence it is not possible to obey a rule ‘privately’: otherwise thinking one was obeying a rule would be the same thing as obeying it” (§202). In other words, once again, there is no distinction between ‘being right’ and ‘seeming right.’⁷

In “The Individual Strikes Back,” Blackburn argues that the same problems regarding a conception of private normativity pointed out by KW likewise beset the community.⁸

Blackburn’s strategy is to pursue the skeptical problem put forth by KW to a more radical conclusion, by trapping the skeptic between two horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, if the normative problems of rule-following are inescapable for the private language user, then they are

⁷ At this point it should be noted that this account—like the Meadian view as a whole—has the controversial implication that private rule-following, conceived on the model of rule-following by a human who is completely isolated from birth, is not just empirically impossible but conceptually incoherent—say, a rule-following Romulus (*sans* Remus). I take this implication for granted above, but I will take this opportunity to at least gesture toward a response (which I have more fully developed elsewhere) to critics who, like Colin McGinn in *Wittgenstein on Meaning*, defend an ‘individualist,’ as opposed to ‘community,’ view of rule-following. McGinn wonders where the difficulty is in imagining Romulus deciding to distribute signposts to guide his future wanderings, or of keeping a diary in which he writes signs that he has invented for his own use. Indeed, this does not seem immediately incoherent, but it nevertheless is on the view that I defend. Thus, when we imagine Romulus following rules, we are imagining a socially isolated individual displaying behavior that presupposes social interaction, which is incoherent; we are sneaking socialization into our description of this supposedly non-socialized individual. McGinn denies this, claiming that “all he needs is a good reason to introduce the signs and the intelligence to operate with them” (197). It is unclear what type of ‘intelligence’ McGinn has in mind here, but if he means the characteristically human activity of reflexive thought—which it seems to me *would* be necessary for rule-following—the type of reflexivity involved is again predicated upon social interaction as described in the previous chapter. Moreover, it is, on my view, misleading to call such a human an ‘individual’ given the social conception of individuality outlined in the last chapter. Indeed, many of the confusions surrounding this issue may well arise from the application of the term ‘individual’ to such a human; such application leads to the faulty assumption that the individual is prior to any forms of social relatedness, which in turn leads to the equally faulty conclusion that such an individual is no different from socialized individuals when it comes to normative behavior.

⁸ McGinn offers a similar argument against what he calls the ‘community thesis’ regarding rule-following in *Wittgenstein on Meaning*. He points out that the same skeptical problems emerge at the community level as at the individual level, “for can we not ask what justifies our assumption, as a community, that yesterday *we* meant the same by our words as we do today?” (188). Insofar as we can conceive of a “community-wide transtemporal linguistic mistake,” we have made no progress; for, with no other criterion, whatever seems right to the community will be right—so we can’t talk about right. I focus on Blackburn’s version of this argument above because it is more fully developed; however, it is from McGinn that I take the useful notion of ‘community-wide mistake,’ which so nicely articulates the normative vacuity of normative majoritarianism.

the same for the community: unable to appeal to outside of its own normative practices, the community is unable to distinguish between ‘being right’ and ‘seeming right’ with regard to these practices. On the other hand, if the skeptical solution of appealing to agreement in its own practices provides legitimate justification for the normativity of the community’s activities, then the same appeal is in principle available to the private language user. Blackburn purports to have thereby vindicated the private language user’s claims to normativity, which can only be rejected at the cost of an unavoidable linguistic skepticism at the community level.⁹

After reiterating the difficult situation that the private linguist runs into in the face of the normative difficulties presented by KW, Blackburn asks: how does the community escape the problems with normativity that beset the private language user? KW’s skeptical solution boils down to the observation that, in a way, it does not; rather, it merely has recourse to customary agreement in practice among its members. As such, Blackburn insists, the Kripkean skeptic must admit that the situation for the community is no different than it is for the individual. Correctness and incorrectness still remain elusive in the case of the community. While the community might dignify its members as rule-followers in a quasi-realist fashion, this gives us no explanation of *how* the community, as still only having access to a finite number of applications of a particular rule, can distinguish between ‘being right’ and ‘seeming right.’

⁹ Blackburn thus firmly grasps the second horn of the dilemma. To do so, he appeals to his own ‘projectivist quasi-realism,’ describing KW’s skeptical solution as a version of such a view. It is projectivist insofar as it holds that “we speak and think ‘as if’ the world contained a certain kind of fact, whereas the true explanation of what we are doing is that we have certain reactions, habits or sentiments, which we voice and discuss by such talk” (284), and quasi-realist insofar as it still upholds the legitimacy of our ordinary practice, such that we are justified in viewing particular instances of the application of a rule as correct or incorrect insofar as it accords or does not accord with our customary practice, in spite of the indeterminacy that closer inspection of any rule reveals. Blackburn mobilizes quasi-realism in order to introduce a new character to whom he refers as “BW”: “a *persona* who profits from KW’s arguments, but draws a rather different conclusion from them” (286). The central difference between KW and BW is that the latter ultimately acknowledges that he lacks the resources to argue against the possibility of a private language; for, if the community has recourse to agreement among its constituent parts as justification for the legitimacy of its normative practices, then so does the private language user.

This may lead one to the conclusion that the turn to the community to vindicate the normative force of rule-following is fruitless—Blackburn leaves us with a type of normative majoritarianism that is in no better normative position than individualism. The skeptical conclusion that Blackburn presents, however, only follows for KW’s own skeptical version of the appeal to the community; we can retain the legitimacy of the appeal to the community in justifying normative practices by rethinking the notion of community along lines laid out for us in the previous chapter. The model I have developed, drawing on Mead, involves a richer notion of community than that assumed by both KW and Blackburn, that moreover allows it to overcome the normative difficulties occurring at the levels of both the individual and the community as conceived by KW and Blackburn. While a community for KW and Blackburn appears to be a clearly delineated and fairly static conglomeration of individuals, I defend a more dynamic and open notion of community that includes an indefinitely increasing proliferation of possible perspectives; such a conception is rooted in recognizing the nature of the *universality* of meanings.

On the Meadian view, all linguistic communication, or ‘symbolically mediated interaction,’ takes place by means of ‘significant symbols,’ vocal gestures whose meaning is apprehended by the gesturing organism; and all significant symbols are inherently universal. Any symbolic interaction, then, presupposes universality of meaning, even if only two individuals are involved. Moreover, all communication also presupposes a universe of discourse, which is the context within which meanings are shared. As I explained in the previous chapter, just as meanings are inherently universal insofar as they can accommodate an indefinitely proliferating range of perspectives, the limits of any particular universe of discourse, or community, are likewise indefinitely expandable.

The universe of discourse as described by Mead provides the basic model for reconceiving the concept of community at play in discussions of rule-following. We already have, in the notion of the indefinitely expandable universe of discourse, a modified notion of the community that extends beyond the particular, finite community dealt with by KW and Blackburn and can encompass indefinitely proliferating perspectives. Moreover, this notion of community involves such proliferation with an eye toward a final organization of perspectives as a regulative ideal serving as the standard of correctness in any case of meaning evaluation. The turn to the community that vindicates normative practice is therefore not only a turn to a particular group of individuals, or a particular set of perspectives such as that of the generalized other; while this is of course an essential aspect of normativity, Blackburn has shown that such a community considered statically and in isolation runs into the same normative problems as the ones that plague the private language user. It is also the appeal to an ever-expanding ideal community, a universal perspective, that grounds the normative practices of the particular community. This ideal community, as a regulative ideal, provides a standard of correctness that transcends every context and provides an in-principle check on meaning claims.¹⁰ The normative character of our concept-possession, the basic template of rule-following, is secured by the turn to the community in this form. Communicative normativity, then, is constituted by the simultaneous internalization, on the part of the individual, of the *generalized* perspective of the

¹⁰ This regulative ideal, ideal community, or ‘final’ organization of perspectives can be understood along the lines of Peirce’s conception of the end of inquiry. We need not understand this concept in a finalistic way, as, on my view, the ideal is constitutively unattainable; as such, it underwrites a type of fallibilism in every actual case. As unattainable, it plays the role of a specifically *regulative* ideal insofar as it places normative or ‘regulatory’ demands on any actual instances of meaning- or knowledge-production; in particular, it demands openness to a context-transcendent perspective. These concepts will be further filled out in the next section and in later chapters; the affinity with Peircean fallibilism is particularly evident in the realm of philosophy of science, as will be seen in the next section. I do not, however, go into details regarding Peirce’s work here; on this theme, see especially “The Fixation of Belief” and “How to Make Our Ideas Clear.”

community, on the one hand, and the individual's adoption of the normative perspective of the *universal*, which transcends this community, on the other.

Thus, for Mead, the structure of language provides a basis for a view of normativity that can be appealed to in specific contexts in spite of its transcendence of any particular context. Indeed, close attention to the nature of language itself, as Mead describes it, reveals that the normative difficulties presented, for instance, by bent rules and indeterminacy of meaning are actually illusory:

...[T]here seems to be absolute freedom of arrangement and language seems to be an entirely mechanical thing that lies outside of the process of intelligence. If you recognize that language is, however, just a part of a co-operative process, that part which does lead to an adjustment to the response of the other so that the whole activity can go on, then language has only a limited range of arbitrariness. (*MSS 74*)

Language so conceived provides the basis for an understanding of community that is able to escape the skeptical problems faced by the static community and the private language user through continual revision, indefinite proliferation of perspectives, and speculative projection into the future. This projection takes the form of an ideal community, which serves as a regulative ideal that motivates and authorizes the procedure of continuous correction via the negotiation of perspectives. Moreover, I contend that this account is intrinsically democratic insofar as the conception of normativity I offer entails a concept of correctness that requires the constant input and negotiation of various perspectives, allows for conceptual innovation and criticism, and subjects shared meanings to legitimation via the input of individual participants.

Moreover, while such a notion of community seems absent in Kripke's reading of Wittgenstein, which only appeals to the community as a given determinate social group, one can also find resources for understanding this more open-ended conception of community in the

work of Wittgenstein himself.¹¹ For instance, the metaphor of the city that he employs in §18 calls attention to the indeterminate and ever-expanding aspects of the normative practice of language:

... [A]sk yourself whether our language is complete;--whether it was so before the symbolism of chemistry and the notation of infinitesimal calculus were incorporated in it; for these are, so to speak, suburbs of our language...Our language may be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses.

The picture of language that Wittgenstein offers here reveals a rich normative structure that is simultaneously sedimented in preexisting communal practices and always open to new perspectives and practices. §23 likewise calls attention to the inherent multiplicity of language and the possibility of the emergence of new language-games, which arises from the social nature of language itself: “Here the term ‘*language-game*’ is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or of a life-form.” Language thus contains within its very structure and functioning a reference to some community, and this community must extend beyond the given social group in order to account for language’s transformative potential.

This conception of the community allows for the possibility of a Blackburn-style community-wide mistake regarding the nature of our linguistic rules, meanings, or concepts at the level of a particular given community in the present. However, such a community considered diachronically as projecting itself into the future entails the possibility of the emergence of a new perspective that plays (or attempts to play) the role of corrective for our communal assumptions. Of course, it is possible that these new perspectives are the ones that need correction; however, the key insight lies in how such correction takes place: via the continuous interplay of, and

¹¹ Again, I am not in the business of Wittgenstein interpretation—I do not intend to argue that Wittgenstein’s own conception of community or of social life maps onto the one I offer here; I rather intend only to draw on some of Wittgenstein’s remarks as potential resources for enhancing the understanding of how my own view operates.

openness to, a variety of perspectives. Arguably, this democratic standard of correctness regarding rule-following offers us a way of reconceptualizing the *objectivity* of our concepts—for the objectivity, and hence the normative force, of rules is largely what is at stake in the rule-following considerations. In the next section, I further develop this view via an account of the epistemic norm of objectivity conceived in terms of intersubjectivity.

2. Sociality and Objectivity

Objectivity, as an epistemic ideal, is often construed in an aperspectival terms, as embodying the transcendence of all perspectives, a God's-eye-view or view from nowhere. In this light, an insistence on the primacy of perspectives seems to rob such an ideal of force. For this reason, proponents of such traditional conceptions of objectivity are quick to label views of objectivity as perspectival, contextual, or social as relativist threats to epistemic normativity itself; while their opponents have used the focus on the social character of knowledge production to debunk claims to objectivity. In this section I argue that the aperspectival construal of objectivity that the opponents in this debate share is an error. My account of sociality provides a framework from which we can navigate between these two extremes, allowing us to articulate objectivity as a norm (or cluster of norms) that emerges from sociality as intersubjectivity while avoiding relativism via the appeal to universality implicit in every meaningful claim. I here conceive this universality in terms of the contextually-rooted normative perspective of the universal, which is robustly democratic insofar as it involves a demand that claims to knowledge be subject to collective coordination and the evaluative input of an ever-proliferating array of perspectives. I construe this general requirement, of the subjection of knowledge claims to

legitimation via the input and negotiation of various perspectives, as the inherently social core of the epistemic ideal of objectivity.

Objectivity, of course, can apply in many ways to various domains. I focus here on objectivity purely as an epistemic norm, drawing a distinction within the domain of the epistemic (hence bracketing issues of the nature of ‘objective reality,’ as well as of truth) between the objectivity of inquirers and their methods, on the one hand, and the objectivity of the knowledge produced by these inquirers via these methods, on the other. The first I call ‘procedural objectivity,’ or objectivity as ‘method-norm’; the second I call ‘veritistic objectivity,’ or objectivity as ‘end-norm.’¹² Drawing on resources from Mead’s work, I follow Helen E. Longino in articulating a social account of the norm of procedural objectivity, according to which a process of inquiry is evaluated as objective insofar as it allows for criticism from diverse perspectives. I go beyond Longino, however, in arguing that the normative force of the ideal of procedural objectivity requires an ideal toward which the process of correction moves, providing a motivation for the process such that it does not stagnate or collapse into normative majoritarianism, and demanding the expansion of perspectives at work in procedural objectivity. In sum, the conception of procedural objectivity requires an ideal from which it gains its normative force; this ideal, here conceived as veritistic objectivity, demands the expansion of perspectives at work in procedural objectivity. For the purpose of articulating this ideal, I again draw on the Meadian account of the universality inherent in all significant symbols.

¹² The language of ‘method-norm’ and ‘end-norm’ comes from Campbell, *Illusions of Paradox*. I take a cue from the work of Alvin Goldman (see, e.g. *Knowledge in a Social World*) in calling the second sense of objectivity ‘veritistic,’ though I do not mean to imply that I endorse Goldman’s veritism. I recognize (as my terminology reflects) that veritistic objectivity plays a role analogous to truth *within* the epistemic domain. I distinguish it from truth, however, in order to leave room for the possibility of a non-epistemically-constrained conception of truth. For a helpful account of the debates around epistemic vs. non-epistemic conceptions of truth, see Lynch, *Truth in Context*. Lynch argues against epistemic conceptions. Prominent among those who have rejected their own previously held epistemic conceptions of truth are Habermas (to be discussed below) and Hilary Putnam. The *locus classicus* for the latter’s previous view (internal realism) is *Reason, Truth, and History*; several of his later works take up the shortcomings of the earlier text—see, for example, *The Threefold Cord*.

On this basis, I interpret empirical claims, such as scientific hypotheses, as making an implicit appeal to the normative perspective of the universal, which transcends confinement to any particular context and constitutes the condition for the possibility of, as well as the source of the normative demand for, the critical evaluation of claims. On this view, claims about the objective world presuppose a contestability that is predicated on the possibility of being wrong about the objective world. With this possibility in mind, we are able to acknowledge that, even though a given community of inquirers has come to an agreement about the objective world, they might still be wrong—i.e. they remain *fallible*. In this way, we require that that community be open to the critical input of other perspectives for the sake of the pursuit of a more correct view. Veritistic objectivity represents the limit-concept of this pursuit, thereby lending the standards of procedural objectivity their normative force. Such a limit-concept, like the Peircean ideal of truth as the end of inquiry, serves to underwrite and motivate the fallibilistic stance of procedural objectivity; in other words, we have to have a conception of what it would mean to be right in order to acknowledge the possibility of being wrong. In the domain of the social conception of objectivity, this means that the demand for the accommodation of critical input from others requires a conception of inquiry in which correctness involves the capacity to win assent from all perspectives. Veritistic objectivity, then, as the capacity to engender consensus, emerges as a regulative ideal from structures of intersubjectivity and further implies that the pursuit of veritistic objectivity requires appeal to a democratic conception of inquiry.

While it may seem that construing epistemic objectivity as social or perspectival might inevitably dig us deeper into relativism, I argue that the social nature of scientific knowledge actually vindicates the normative force of the ideal of objectivity. Such an account of objectivity, in both (1) veritistic and (2) procedural senses, plays itself out in Mead's philosophy of science

insofar as the hypotheses that emerge from scientific inquiry as Mead conceives it are (1) inherently claims to universal validity, hence displaying a claim to veritistic objectivity as I will describe it below; and (2) as such they are accountable not only to the empirical world, but also to the criticism and revision of the community in which they take place, and which also draws on the resources of the empirical world—herein lies the procedural objectivity of scientific practices. These aspects of the epistemic objectivity of scientific claims are inextricably tied together, for the accountability involved in *procedural* objectivity is always already contained in the initial claim insofar as it displays a claim to *veritistic* objectivity. In what follows I trace these themes in Mead’s work.

With the development of subjectivity, perspective, as the organic unity that is the relation between organism and environment, is endowed with reflexivity, allowing for self-consciousness and the conscious organization of perspectives into a more coherent form. In “The Genesis of the Self and Social Control” Mead elaborates this essentially social dimension of thought and connects it to a notion of objectivity:

Our thinking is an inner conversation in which we may be taking the roles of specific acquaintances over against ourselves, but usually it is with what I have termed the “generalized other” that we converse, and so attain to the levels of abstract thinking, and that impersonality, that so-called objectivity that we cherish. (288)

Mead clearly refers here to objectivity in its procedural sense; the transcendence of a ‘subjective’—idiosyncratic or biased—perspective is achieved via appeal to such a notion of objectivity. However, such objectivity is precisely *not* the transcendence of *any perspective whatsoever*, or the achievement of a view from nowhere; rather, it is an appeal to a broader perspective, one that transcends our current situation or perspective by abstracting certain features from it and/or bringing other perspectives to bear on it. As a result, Mead can still refer to this perspective as a ‘generalized other,’ although it is one that outstrips the generalized other

represented by one's immediate community. Mead thus depicts abstract or 'objective' thinking as essentially *intersubjective*; intersubjectivity thereby provides the ground for the procedural objectivity of the practice of science.

Mead's account of science stems from his adoption of a pragmatist perspective, according to which all critical and reflective activity emerges only insofar as it serves the purposes of ongoing conduct.¹³ In this vein, Mead defines science in *Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth Century* (hereafter *MT*), as "an instrument by means of which mankind, the community, gets control over its environment" (360). On this view, science only responds to emergent problems in experience.¹⁴ In *The Philosophy of the Act* (hereafter *PA*) Mead explains that "A problem can be most generally described as the checking or inhibition of some more or less habitual form of conduct, way of thinking, or feeling. We meet an obstacle to overt action, or an exception to an accepted rule or manner of thought, or some object that calls out opposing emotions" (82). The specific problem is always what is at stake in the pursuit of scientific knowledge. The problem, however, at the level of science, is not merely a local doubt or difficulty, but an emergent event that threatens the breakdown of a previously held generalization or law. On this basis, Mead offers a definition of knowledge—the paradigm, of course, being scientific knowledge—as "a process in conduct that so organizes the field of action that delayed and inhibited responses may take place"—that is, so that conduct that has been stalled or blocked

¹³ Mead's philosophy of science is far more rich and complex than I can do justice to here; in addition to the essays and passages cited below, see especially "The Nature of Scientific Knowledge" (*PA* 45-62). As one will see there, much of Mead's philosophy of science is bound up with his philosophy of perception as well, which lies beyond our scope.

¹⁴ In *PA*, for instance, Mead outlines the steps in the 'experimental method,' which always begins with the emergence of a problem (82-83).

by a problem may continue (68). The world that we know is thus a world that is the product of interaction between ourselves and what Mead calls the ‘world that is there.’¹⁵

Mead is a thoroughgoing pragmatist in this respect, and his pragmatism leads him to articulate a pragmatist theory of truth that may seem antithetical to the universalist view of veritistic objectivity on offer here.¹⁶ How might we draw a conception of objectivity out of such an account? The answer is to attend to the social elements of Mead’s account of scientific knowledge. The elements that allow for the possibility of objectivity on Mead’s view are shared world and shared language—in Meadian terms, the ‘world that is there’ and the set of significant symbols shared among a universe of discourse.

The ‘world that is there’ is not the independent reality presupposed by the correspondence theory of truth; rather, it is the changing world within which research goes on. In “Empirical Realism,” (hereafter “ER”), Mead discusses the status of the ‘world that is there’ from within the scientist’s perspective, which accepts the reality of a world of things that outstrips any given scientific account. The scientist’s conduct, as we have seen, rests upon such an assumption. The given, unquestioned world is the backdrop for whatever problematic phenomenon the scientist is investigating. In “A Pragmatist Theory of Truth,” Mead offers a philosophical account of truth that takes a page from the scientist’s book: “every problem

¹⁵ This phrase appears throughout Mead’s work, especially in *The Philosophy of the Act*; for example, Mead claims, “[K]nowledge...is a process of finding something that is to take its place in a world that is there, which world that is there is the presupposition of the undertaking that we call ‘knowledge’” (64). Discussion of the character of the objective ‘world that is there’ would take us from the epistemic to the metaphysical domain, and is thus beyond our scope here; for what is perhaps Mead’s clearest exposition on this matter, see “The Objective Reality of Perspectives.”

¹⁶ See his “A Pragmatist Theory of Truth.” Here, for instance, Mead makes claims like “Truth is then synonymous with the solution of the problem” (328). On the surface, this appears to be the crudest pragmatism. However, on the same page he suggests that such solution is merely a *criterion* of truth (“The test of truth which I have presented is the ongoing of conduct”), and even denies that truth is to be equated with “the *achievement* of the solution, still less the gratification of him who has achieved it” (328). Mead thus attempts to distance himself from crude pragmatism while maintaining that *knowledge* is always the result of the reconstruction of a perspective in response to a problem that has inhibited the functioning of that perspective. The key here, it seems to me, is that Mead has broader definitions of ‘problem’ and ‘solution’ in mind than one might intuitively think. See the treatment of this article in Lewis and Smith (145-48).

presupposes what is not involved in that problem, and which is insofar valid. The truth of the judgment which represents the solution of the problem rests upon the harmony of its dictum with that whose validity is not problematic” (324). The valid backdrop is not amenable to judgments of truth and falsity unless it becomes in some way problematic. In “Scientific Objects and Experience” Mead argues that this unquestioned context comprises an intersubjectively shared reality consisting of common objects (142). Scientific hypotheses and theoretical claims are evaluated partially in terms of their fit with this shared world of objects, which, Mead insists, *just is* objective reality; no sense can be made of claims about the world if this is denied. In this sense, the objective world is a *presupposition* of scientific inquiry and discourse. The intersubjective availability of scientific claims is rooted in the commonality of this world and the objects of inquiry it contains.¹⁷

The second social element allowing for the articulation of a Meadian account of objectivity is the intersubjective normative structure of shared language. This intersubjective backdrop holds a central position in Mead’s discussions of the claims of science, conditioning both their origin and their evaluation. Regarding the former, in “Scientific Objects and Experience” he insists that scientific practices such as experimentation on and measurement of objects cannot be divorced from the intersubjective context from which they have emerged:

The individual, that is, does not first make his own measurements and reach his own identifications, and then compare these with those of others in order to reach a common object; his method of determination is rather in terms of a language that with its various symbols comes into existence only through the fact that the individual assumes the attitude common to all those involved in the common undertaking. (142)

¹⁷ Moreover, even the relationship with nature, for Mead, is a social one; in scientific research, nature appears as a conversation partner that occasionally disagrees with one’s claims and with which we must aim at cooperation: “Nature is intelligent in the sense that there are certain responses of nature toward our action which we can present and which we can reply to, and which become different when we have replied. It is a change we can then answer to, and we finally reach a point at which we can co-operate with nature. . . . In so far as we are rational, as we reason and think, we are taking a social attitude toward the world around us, critically in the case of science, uncritically in the case of magic” (185-86).

The claims of the individual scientist are rooted in the language and practices of the community of which she is a part, as well as in the common world that it shares. In “Scientific Method and Individual Thinker” Mead explains further that the scientist’s appeal to this shared world allows the scientist “to make his thought a part of the socially accepted and socially organized science to which his thought belongs” (201). As thus rooted in both the shared set of languages and practices of a community—a universe of discourse—as well as the shared world, scientific claims are likewise always accountable to that community and that world. The social backdrop therefore conditions the evaluation of scientific claims insofar as, upon being formulated in terms accessible to the community, they are then held up to the intersubjective criticism and revision of the community: the scientist “asks that his view of the world be cogent and convincing to all those whose thinking has made his own possible, and be an acceptable premise for the conduct of that society to which he belongs” (201). The perspective of a larger community and an openness to criticism from new and diverse perspectives is thus built into all scientific claims—this, in turn, is the root of the potential for the procedural objectivity of science.

This point risks seeming trivial, insofar claims to objectivity are typically also claims to intersubjective shareability.¹⁸ The claim being put forward here, however, is stronger: subjection to intersubjective validation is in fact *constitutive* of claims to objectivity. There is no calling a claim objective in the absence of this intersubjective backdrop—and this is a conceptual claim, not merely an empirical one. In this respect, the Meadian view I have articulated has affinities with that developed by Helen E. Longino, for whom scientific objectivity requires critical inquiry from multiple situated perspectives. In *Science as Social Knowledge* (hereafter *SSK*),

¹⁸ Although Goldman challenges even this; see his “Science, Publicity, and Consciousness.” Goldman’s objection is based on the fact that reports of allegedly private intersubjective episodes are considered evidentiary in contemporary psychology. Mead’s social behaviorism (and opposition to Watsonian behaviorism) arguably precedes him in making this point; Mead, however, expands the concept of publicity instead of calling it into question as a criterion of objectivity altogether.

Longino's concern is to articulate and defend a notion of scientific practice that can make claims to objectivity and rationality while acknowledging the influence of social values on this practice. In order to do this, she insists that scientific practice must be reconceptualized as "a necessarily social rather than an individual activity, and it is the social character of scientific knowledge that both protects it from and renders it vulnerable to social and political interests and values" (12). She casts objectivity as characterizing, on the one hand, methods of observation and measurement (which, as in Mead, arise in the context of social practices), and, on the other hand, "the extent to which [a method] provides means of assessing hypotheses and theories in an unbiased and unprejudiced manner" (63). The former locus of objectivity is inevitably socially conditioned and potentially tainted by 'subjective' or idiosyncratic factors stemming from the inquirer. Longino roots her account of such conditioning, in both *SSK* and the more recent *The Fate of Knowledge*¹⁹ (hereafter *FK*), in a version of the underdetermination argument, according to which one must inevitably make a conceptual leap from observational evidence to the theory or hypothesis to be supported by it. This leads in turn to what Longino sometimes calls 'the contextualist analysis of evidence,' according to which evidence is always selectively attended to and interpreted against the background of a conceptual framework and a set of communal assumptions. As a result, objectivity in its properly procedural form is called upon to counteract the skewing effects of these factors.

It may seem that this view simply presents a mundane view of objectivity in which we achieve objectivity by filtering out the elements that are idiosyncratic to particular perspectives, abstracting out the common elements to achieve a type of 'view from nowhere.' However, in my view as well as Longino's, the perspective-dependence of knowledge is inescapable; knowledge is always perspectivally situated, even if located in a complex interplay of perspectives. This,

¹⁹ This is not a typo—the word 'knowledge' is emphasized in the title of the book.

however, seems to give rise to a difficulty—how is *objectivity* possible if we cannot break away from *socially conditioned* or *subjective* points of view? The difficulty is dissolved, however, when we realize that it is based on a false dichotomization of objectivity and sociality. Longino’s task in *FK* is to challenge precisely such a dichotomy under the rubric of the apparent incompatibility of the *rational* and the social.²⁰ She also accomplishes this task effectively in *SSK*, where she explicitly develops a socialized account of objectivity that meets the demand of articulating the implications of the Meadian account.

Longino contends that it is precisely the social nature of science that secures its objectivity, locating the epistemic ideal in the process as a whole rather than in the attitudes or actions of any of its practitioners. Longino emphasizes that scientific research cannot be performed by an individual in isolation, but depends on the concerted effort and interaction of a community. Moreover, the knowledge produced by such research cannot be construed as the sum of the knowledge of the individuals in such a community: “It is instead produced through a process of critical emendation and modification of those individual products by the rest of the scientific community” (*SSK* 68). Hypotheses are subject to the social controls of critical evaluation according to scientific standards, the replication of results, peer review in scientific journals, and further critical uptake by the scientific community. In this way, scientific knowledge, as a coherent body of knowledge, emerges out of the intersubjective interplay of the critical input of participants with various perspectives, or “the clashing and meshing of various points of view” (69). Longino also, like Mead, points out that scientific hypotheses are

²⁰ From my point of view, this is one of the more puzzling aspects of *FK*: why does Longino focus on the dichotomization of the social and the *rational*, rather than the social and the *objective*, when so much of her earlier work seems to be concerned with objectivity? Longino herself even points this out in a footnote where she distinguishes her work from that of Miriam Solomon, who is explicitly concerned with characterizing the social dimension of scientific rationality (see her *Social Empiricism*). Longino’s concern, by her own admission, is “with knowledge and objectivity” (*FK* 166 n. 34). *FK* focuses entirely on knowledge, seldom addressing the concept of objectivity head-on; the conception seems to be much the same as that found more explicitly addressed in *SSK*. As such, I focus largely on the earlier work above.

necessarily situated in a shared world and shared language, and are thus *public*; and it is this publicity or intersubjective shareability that makes the transformative criticism that is the mark of objectivity possible (70-71).

From this point of view, objectivity is predicated of the process of inquiry as a whole to the degree that it allows for the input of multiple perspectives and the openness to transformative criticism. Such criticism requires input from new and contestatory perspectives insofar as the dominant perspective in the scientific community may harbor background assumptions that affect the interpretation of evidence in ways that need to be challenged, but would go unchallenged without the input of an external perspective.²¹ Longino thus offers a powerful conception of procedural objectivity that stems from the social character of knowledge production. She also indicates the implicit democratic demand embodied in this conception of objectivity, in particular specifying four conditions necessary for effective criticism, and hence for the ascription of objectivity to a process of inquiry:

(1) [T]here must be recognized avenues for the criticism of evidence, of methods, and of assumptions and reasoning; (2) there must exist shared standards that critics can invoke; (3) the community as a whole must be responsive to such criticism; (4) intellectual authority must be shared equally among qualified practitioners. (76)

While the emphasis on a diverse array of perspectives is not explicit in this list of conditions, Longino makes it clear that the exclusion of, or failure to be open to, such perspectives will inevitably be a failure to attain a level of procedural objectivity that would otherwise be available. As such, she has a way of correcting for a potentially exclusionary aspect of these

²¹ I take this point to be part of the core of the standpoint-epistemological approach to objectivity; see Harding's elaboration of the concept of 'strong objectivity' in Ch. 6 of *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking from Women's Lives* and "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What Is 'Strong Objectivity?'" My own perspectivalism is heavily informed by standpoint epistemology, which emphasizes the social locatedness of knowers (see Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective") and argues that certain standpoints have access to knowledge and modes of knowing that are inaccessible from other standpoints. This gives rise to a powerful argument for the epistemic and critical importance of openness to a diverse array of perspectives and of a democratic approach to inquiry of the type defended here. From the wide array of literature on this topic, see also Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* and Wylie, "Why Standpoint Matters."

conditions themselves—namely, the proviso that intellectual authority be shared by ‘qualified practitioners.’ While standards of qualification serve as mechanisms of exclusion, maximizing objectivity requires leaving open the possibility of criticizing these standards, as well as making it possible for individuals with diverse backgrounds and perspectives to meet these standards, via the institutionalization of equal access to education, for instance; or, more procedurally, via the critical interrogation of the norms of epistemic authority and credibility that hold in a given knowledge community.²² The fourth of Longino’s conditions, then, coupled with the demand for criticism from multiple perspectives, leads us in the direction of a radically democratic socialized conception of inquiry.²³

Longino thus offers a powerful conception of procedural objectivity that dovetails well with the Meadian account. The latter account of objectivity also involves a second component, that of veritistic objectivity, the end-norm that motivates Longino’s method-norm. The full account of veritistic objectivity is developed below; I first motivate this account by pointing out the difficulties that emerge from the absence of a veritistic sense of objectivity in Longino’s account. Briefly put, on my account, the availability to intersubjective criticism that renders claims subject to revision and transformation via a procedurally objective method likewise secures their potential *veritistic objectivity*, while acknowledging their emergence from a social context. Longino, however, resists such a move, preferring to appeal to the here-and-now consensus of the scientific community as the criterion for the warrant of hypotheses or theories:

To say that a theory or hypothesis was accepted on the basis of objective methods does not entitle us to say it is true but rather that it reflects the critically achieved consensus of the scientific

²² These modes of pursuing democracy in the epistemic realm are also a prominent theme in the work of Elizabeth Anderson; see, for instance, her “The Democratic University: the Role of Justice in the Production of Knowledge.”

²³ Longino does not, of course, require that epistemic authority be entirely eradicated or that the playing field be entirely leveled. To guard against such an interpretation, she expands upon her fourth condition in *FK*, here referring to it as ‘tempered equality.’ She includes under this heading a *requirement* that multiple perspectives—indeed “all (relevant) perspectives”—be included in critical discourse; and this is an epistemic requirement, not a moral one (131 n. 15).

community. In the absence of some form of privileged access to transempirical (unobservable) phenomena it's not clear we should hope for anything better. (SSK 79)

Notice that Longino here divorces whatever warrant it is that hypotheses or theories can achieve not only from *truth*, but also from any form of objectivity that might be seen as veritistic in character—i.e. that outstrips a given “critically achieved consensus.” Throughout, she restricts her discussion of objectivity to its procedural aspect. It is not clear, however, where the value of such procedural objectivity stems from in the absence of some veritistic account. Alvin Goldman, defending a veritistic social epistemology in *Knowledge in a Social World*, specifically targets Longino on just this point, suggesting that her procedural conception of objectivity has inevitable ‘consequentialist’ or end-oriented overtones, insofar as the objectivity of the process of transformative criticism is valuable precisely insofar as it “promote[s] greater impartiality and nonarbitrariness” (78). These virtues themselves, however, seem not to be valuable in themselves, but insofar as they in turn “foster accuracy and truth” (78).²⁴ Without delving into an analysis of ‘accuracy and truth,’ we can see here that Goldman suggests that the value or normative force of a procedural conception of objectivity must rest in turn on some conception of a veritistic form of objectivity.²⁵

²⁴Again, I do not mean to imply that I endorse Goldman’s form of veritism; indeed it seems to me he gives short shrift to the social or intersubjective roots of veritistic objectivity itself. I mean only to draw the valid insight out of Goldman’s critique that a type of veritistic ideal is a presupposition of the valorization of procedural objectivity.

²⁵Longino does, however, have a conception of *knowledge* to which her account of objectivity is in service, and it may seem that it is here that the veritistic (and hence normatively forceful) aspect of objectivity can be maintained. In *FK*, she explicitly thematizes knowledge as the communal product of critical intersubjective inquiry, simultaneously attempting thereby to bolster the normative force of her conception of objectivity and staving off demands for ideals like truth upon which objectivity might be parasitic. Here again she outlines the parameters of a conception of scientific knowledge that meshes well with the Meadian account I offer. Observation, for instance, is itself conceived, as in Mead, as conditioned by a socially organized framework that must be intersubjectively shareable; hence the centrality of the potential repeatability of experiments. Longino’s account of repeatability bears a striking resemblance to Mead’s account of the universality of significant symbols cited in the previous chapter: “The requirement of the repeatability of experiments is a requirement for the intersubjective accessibility and cross-subject invariance of data serving as evidence because it is a requirement that anyone similarly placed with similar equipment would see (perceive) the same thing” (101). Observation itself, then, is inherently social insofar as, to obtain evidentiary status, it must be subject to the negotiation of multiple perspectives. Reasoning works much the same way: “Justificatory reasoning can be understood as part of a practice of challenge and response: challenge to a claim is met by the offering of reasons to believe it, which reasons can then be challenged on grounds both of truth

In order to see why Goldman is correct in pointing out this difficulty in Longino's account, consider the specter of community-wide error. Pegging correctness to a given communal consensus leads to the impossibility of distinguishing between 'being right' and 'seeming right,' such that a community-wide mistake is rendered impossible; and hence normativity is rendered vacuous. In outlining her conception of procedural objectivity, Longino insistently defends a contextualism according to which the standards of a given local community cannot be transcended, and hence pegs the criterion of epistemic *success* of scientific claims to the current consensus of the scientific community. Given her resistance to the transcendence of local standards, Longino cannot account for the possibility of epistemic *failure* in cases of 'objectively achieved' consensus within a given context; but this possibility of failure is precisely what makes the demand for input from new and external perspectives—i.e. for the pursuit of greater objectivity in its procedural sense—intelligible as a normative demand. In other words, the denial of some ideal of veritistic objectivity evacuates procedural objectivity of normative content. Insofar as Longino wants to lend normative force to procedural objectivity, therefore, she requires some version of veritistic objectivity—the denial of this results in the normative vacuity of her otherwise powerful model of procedural objectivity.

In sum, Longino's conception of procedural objectivity offers a powerful resource for the articulation of a social view of epistemic normativity with radically democratic implications. Yet this account has no force without an accompanying account of veritistic objectivity; that is,

and relevance, provoking additional reasoning" (103). This is thus, as in Mead, an inherently intersubjective process. Nevertheless, the difficulty Goldman points out regarding the normative force of Longino's account of objectivity remains in spite of her tying it to an account of knowledge, for she includes her version of objectivity in her analysis in the form of a procedural condition for knowledge. She does not, however, explain *why*, on her account, it *is* such a condition. The normative force of procedural objectivity is thus not *provided* but *presumed* by her analysis of knowledge. A similar objection applies to her treatment of 'conformation' in *FK*, which she treats, along with knowledge, as a 'success term.' Given the contextually bound criteria for the achievement of these success terms, it is unclear how they provide the account of procedural objectivity with normative force.

Longino tells us what we ought to do, but has deprived herself of the resources for telling us *why* we ought to do it.

Yet, how do we accommodate a conception of veritistic objectivity within the framework of an account of sociality according to which epistemic norms are perspectival and emergent from intersubjectivity? The answer to this question actually lies in a central aspect of Longino's own account—the publicity of both world and language that are the presuppositions of critical inquiry. *Contra* Longino, the social nature of knowledge does not warrant the inference to a contextualism that proscribes all context-transcendent norms. Indeed, her account of the inherent publicity of observation and reasoning entails the possibility of transcending local contexts in the same way that Mead's account does—that is, it entails some conception of universality like the one I defend here. As such, Longino's allegiance to a contextualism that insists on denying the possibility of any type of universalism is doubly problematic: it causes the normativity problem I have pointed out above, and it by no means follows from (and in my view is incompatible with) her general account of the social nature of scientific knowledge.²⁶ Longino's account of communities as overlapping and open-ended seems incompatible with a contextualism that denies context-transcendent norms. Indeed, such a conception of community, instead of being a closed and monadic collectivity whose norms cannot be transcended, is rather self-transcending in the manner required by my conception of veritistic objectivity. In fact, communities do not just overlap; they interpenetrate, and broaden their own boundaries to encompass and to become larger communities. This in turn entails that norms, contrary to always being restrictively contextual, in fact always transcend the contexts within which they are deployed. As a result,

²⁶ Indeed, while Longino explicitly resists forms of veritism or universalism, her manner of speaking reflects these views at times. For instance, in discussing the social nature of the assumptions employed in inferential reasoning, Longino sounds an almost Peircean note in implicitly appealing to a veritistic standard of correctness: “Just as not all experiments are repeated, not all assumptions are in fact so scrutinized; but the presumption in inference is *that they would survive scrutiny and criticism, if subjected to it*” (FK 104, emphasis added).

given that publicity involves the assumption that an observation or a reason can in principle be shared by anyone who might find herself in a relevantly similar position, scientific hypotheses based on such observations and reasons make an implicit claim to universal validity. Indeed, on the Meadian account, this universal appeal inheres in hypotheses simply as bearers of meaning.

On my view, then, the susceptibility of a claim to the critical tests that constitute procedural objectivity relies on its fundamental claim to veritistic objectivity, or universal validity. This formulation appears to reverse the order of dependence one usually finds in accounts of objectivity. Longino cites this “common wisdom” in her discussion of objectivity: “if science is objective in the first [veritistic] sense it is because it is objective in the second [procedural]” (SSK 63). Longino and I both reject this common wisdom, but for different reasons. As mentioned, I reverse the order: if science is objective in the procedural sense, it is because its claims are claims to objectivity in the veritistic sense. Of course, I do not mean to claim that any scientific hypothesis is *already veritistically objective*—this would not only be a completely untenable view, but would make the procedural sense of objectivity superfluous. Rather, my view is that such claims are inherently *claims to veritistic objectivity*—such a status does not insure that they are discursively redeemable as such, but only that they are subject to a procedurally objective process, which itself in turn feeds back (and this is where the common wisdom is correct) on the status of the initial claim to veritistic objectivity.

Longino, on the other hand, rejects the common wisdom because she eschews any discussion of objectivity in its veritistic sense, focusing instead on the demands of procedural objectivity. She does so in the context of a highly socialized account of scientific knowledge, the result of which is a powerful account of procedural objectivity with radically democratic implications; moreover, this account dovetails well with the Meadian account of procedural

objectivity that I draw out of Mead. Longino and I are largely in agreement, then, about the demands of procedural objectivity. However, if the account adumbrated above of the relationship between the two forms of objectivity is correct, then a focus on the procedural aspect misses a crucial part of the picture: the veritistic claim to universal validity that motivates the procedure of testing scientific claims in the first place.

While Longino maintains that a social approach to scientific knowledge requires the rejection of any and all claims to universality, Mead insists that scientific claims are claims to universal applicability and validity.²⁷ Such an understanding of scientific claims is necessary not only insofar as they are bearers of meaning, but also for the practice and progress of scientific research; for, as Mead explains in “SMIT,” “No one would waste his time with a hypothesis which confessedly was not applicable to all instances of the problem. A hypothesis may again and again be abandoned, it may prove to be faulty and contradictory, but insofar as it is an instrument of research it is assumed to be universal and to perfect a system which has broken down at the point indicated by the problem” (198). Furthermore, the claim to universality on the part of its theories itself allows for scientific change—for the claim to universality is precisely what allows for exceptions to emerge, and hence to become problems that require reconstruction of the standing theory (196). While hypotheses always emerge in concrete contexts, it is their claim to context-transcendent validity—i.e. their claim to acceptance from an indefinite array of perspectives—that allows us to conceive of situations in which we might reject them as *wrong*—i.e. situations in which they fail to discharge this claim. The claim to universality, then, underwrites fallibilism itself. Moreover, the perspectival nature of our knowledge of the world does not undermine its universality: “One still looks upon it with a universal eye” (PA 64).

²⁷ On this point, in addition to the works cited below, see PA 318 and “Consciousness, Mind, the Self, and Scientific Objects” 191.

However, this universal perspective remains perspectively situated, rather than transcending all perspectives whatsoever. Mead explicitly rejects an account of objectivity as an aperspectival ideal in “ER”: “[I]f mind is simply an emergent character of certain organisms in their so-called intelligent responses to their environments, mind can never transcend the environment within which it operates. Nor can it by generalizing all possible experiences get beyond any possible experience; for it must do its thinking within some experience” (118). Nevertheless, the scientist is not restricted to the perspective of her community, but transcends it via the adoption of the normative perspective of the universal. Mead illustrates the employment of such a perspective when he claims, in “The Objective Reality of Perspectives,” that “the critical scientist is only replacing the narrower social perspectives of other communities by that of a more highly organized and hence more universal community” (311). Here we see that scientific inquiry, while never going beyond perspectival situatedness, nevertheless represents a field of universalization of perspectives through its very sociality. The universalism here lies in the fact that the perspective of the generalized other always remains open to challenge and revision, and cannot close itself off to outside inputs whether from the ‘world that is there’ or from other human perspectives. Mead nicely captures the critical force of the normative perspective of the universal as adopted by the ‘I’ over against its social situation in the following passage from *MT*:

And the scientific method is that by means of which the individual can state his criticism, can bring forward the solution, and bring it to the test of the community. We do have in social consciousness—or, better, in social experience, since ‘consciousness’ is an ambiguous term—a real organization of perspectives. That is what takes place. Whether that can be taken over and made the basis for a philosophic solution is another question. But the problem as it lies is whether to take it in terms of relativity and of a space-time world or whether to take it in terms of the lives of individuals in a human community. Whether in terms of scientific advance in any direction, the problem is definitely one of this organization of individual perspectives and the finding-out of what is universal, but with the recognition that, when we do find out, the very character of one’s self as an individual lies in discovering some exception to the universal and going on to the formation of other universals. (415)

As we see here, Mead interweaves the notion of universality, which he draws as a consequence of his principle of sociality, with the aspects of scientific objectivity we have already discussed. This universality lies in the indefinite openness of a claim to new perspectives which can criticize and reconstruct it. Mead thereby articulates a conception of veritistic objectivity within a thoroughly social theory of knowledge.

This, in turn, implies a regulative ideal that outstrips any result achieved in a concrete context and thus requires further subjection of the results of inquiry to both encounter with the world and critical examination from other perspectives. Precisely this ideal motivates the process of scientific research to which procedural objectivity applies; the ideal of veritistic objectivity thus underwrites the normativity of procedural objectivity. For this reason Mead claims that the regulative ideal of a rationally explicated set of laws that govern the world—an (albeit unreachable) end of inquiry in the Peircean sense—is “the fundamental assumption of science” (*MT* 276). On this account, a claim is objective precisely insofar as it can withstand the critical interrogation, and ultimately win the assent, of all relevant inquirers. Without such a standard, whatever seems ‘true’ to the community automatically garners the status of ‘truth’—in which case truth will have lost its normative force. The communal context within which consensus can be reached among all participants in inquiry, which in Meadian terms we might call ‘the logical universe of discourse,’ thus stands, not as an unreachable utopia, but as the normative ground of our current practices in our particular context.

The universality to which a scientific hypothesis lays claim is therefore inextricably tied to the aforementioned openness to new perspectives and criticism that characterizes the procedural aspect of scientific objectivity. Claims regarding the objective world garner objectivity via their subjection to the critical evaluation of an indefinitely proliferating array of

perspectives; the demand for such subjection stems for their inherent claim to universality, conceived here in the form of the normative perspective of the universal.

The democratic implications are clear. This is not a normative majoritarianism, but an account of epistemic normativity according to which innovation and criticism occurs via the input of all concerned perspectives and knowledge production is thereby democratically organized. In this context, new perspectives must have the opportunity to engage critically with the body of knowledge of the community—this is a condition for epistemic success conceived of in terms of veritistic objectivity. Veritistic objectivity, then, *requires* the input and negotiation of various perspectives, this time allowing for innovation and criticism within the domain of knowledge-production, and subjecting its outcome to legitimation via the input of individual participants. The production of knowledge thus requires a democratic openness to other perspectives.²⁸

Criticism and innovation in the production of knowledge become possible via the democratic collective coordination of inquiry by those subject to or affected by the knowledge that emerges from it. Inquiry must operate within an ever-expanding universe of discourse such that social agents are able to express their interests, and have them taken into consideration. I propose here, then, that we conceive of the context of epistemic normativity as an ever-expanding knowledge community. On this basis I argue that objectivity in its normative epistemological sense is a democratic standard, and, rather than evacuating objectivity of normative or critical force, this social construal of objectivity renders innovation, critique, and

²⁸ These are, of course, procedural norms, and one might object that the veritistic aspect of objectivity is not necessary when we have the procedural norms in place. The point here, however, is that veritistic objectivity is required precisely to, in a sense, put these procedural norms in place; i.e. it provides them with their normative force. A *pure* proceduralism which rests its normative claims on the procedural norms themselves fails to actually give procedural ‘obligations’ any *obligatory* force; by claiming that procedural norms are valid norms in the absence of any procedure-independent standard, pure proceduralism is guilty of bootstrapping. Such an approach also forecloses the possibility of criticizing a community for epistemic failures—if they do not act in accordance with procedural norms already, *why should they?* Note that this is a normative question, not a motivational one.

reform possible. These normative consequences, again, emerge from the reflexive capacity of humans to project themselves into the social locations of others—to take on perspectives that transcend their own. In sum, epistemic normativity, like the normativity of meaning, emerges from intersubjectivity, and as such makes an inherent claim to universality that in turn carries with it a demand for the democratic pursuit of knowledge.

3. Conclusion

Objectivity as the regulative epistemic ideal that emerges from this account serves as a standard independent of any given community of consensus, such that we might appeal to it in a contestatory mode in the face of such consensus and have a normative constraint on our current practices. Objectivity is thus obtained, not by abstracting away from all perspectives to attain an unreachable God's-eye-view, but in maintaining a receptivity to a broader perspective that transcends our current social situation by providing a check on certain of its idiosyncracies, abstracting away from them and subjecting them to contestation from other concrete perspectives. Objectivity thus does not transcend subjectivity altogether, but is constitutively *intersubjective*. In this way, situatedness in a context and universal epistemic validity converge in the account of veritistic objectivity.

As mentioned, this formulation of veritistic objectivity bears a clear resemblance to the Peircean ideal of the end of inquiry, which underwrites a fallibilistic approach to epistemology. Habermas has mobilized this Peircean view to support a formalistic version of universalism. In what follows I provide a brief sketch of Habermas's account of truth as the regulative ideal

governing the enterprise of theoretical discourse; my account closely resembles Habermas's account, which in turn lays the groundwork for the next chapter.²⁹

For Habermas, scientific hypotheses emerge within a specialized domain of argumentation oriented toward the objective world: theoretical discourse. Discourse is a domain of argumentation within which validity claims are proposed, subjected to the yes/no responses of interlocutors, backed up with reasons if contested, and abandoned in the face of stronger arguments against them, all with the aim of achieving mutual agreement among the interlocutors. Discourse as a form or mode of argumentation is characterized by the positing of validity claims, which are in turn evaluated as to their validity by virtue of their capacity to engender mutual understanding in the participants in discourse. As validity claims, scientific hypotheses make an implicit claim to the unique mode of validity according to which they are evaluated and redeemed in argumentative discourse: truth. Within the discursive domain, such claims are themselves subject to an affirmative or negative response on the part of an interlocutor and are hence open to criticism; as such they are subject to rational intersubjective evaluation. Such evaluation always takes place with an eye toward agreement upon the matter under dispute.

The framework within which we can understand the concept of mutual agreement upon which Habermas relies here is one in which the structure of communication itself involves perspective-taking. Following Mead, Habermas argues that the structure of communication, as characterized by the roles that interlocutors take up in dialogue, presupposes the possibility of taking the perspective of the other. Habermas likewise shares Mead's conception of the inherent universality of symbolic meaning. In "The Unity of Reason in the Diversity of Its Voices" he argues also that the process of communication always implies a common reference point among

²⁹ My understanding of Habermas' position on objectivity has benefited greatly from Hesse, "Science and Objectivity" and Lafont, "Is Objectivity Perspectival? Reflexions on Brandom's and Habermas's Pragmatist Conceptions of Objectivity."

interlocutors: "...all parties appeal to the common reference point of a possible consensus, even if this reference point is projected in each case from within their own contexts" (138). As such, while validity claims are always made within a particular context, they also always make an appeal to the universal, or claim universal validity. In "An Alternative Way out of the Philosophy of the Subject: Communicative versus Subject-Centered Reason" Habermas clearly expresses this essential aspect of validity claims:

Of course, these validity claims have a Janus face: As claims, they transcend any local context; at the same time, they have to be raised here and now and be de facto recognized if they are going to bear the agreement of interaction participants that is needed for effective cooperation...The validity claimed for propositions and norms transcends spaces and times, "*blots out*" *space and time*; but the claim is always raised *here and now*, in specific contexts, and is either accepted or rejected with factual consequences for action. (322-23)

One can see here the conception of meaning as universal that Habermas shares with Mead:

validity claims, *qua* meaningful claims, always emerge from a particular social situation while simultaneously transcending that context via an openness to perspectives beyond it. Their claim to universality simultaneously involves the *publicity* that Longino depicts as inherent to the world and language of science and calls for the *critical engagement* that she describes as essential to the procedural objectivity of the practice of science.

Here the claim to universality on the part of validity claims converges significantly with my account of the claim of knowledge-claims to veritistic objectivity. In both cases, theoretical discourse, or inquiry, which requires the critical interchange of validity claims, presupposes a contestability on the part of these claims predicated on the possibility of being wrong about the objective world. With this possibility in mind, we are able to acknowledge that, even though a given community of inquirers has come to an agreement about the objective world, they might still be wrong.³⁰ In this way, I argue, we require that that community be open to the critical input

³⁰ In the *Theory of Communicative Action (TCA)* Vol.1, the objectivity of the objective world finds its way into the account, in connection with the implicit truth-claim of a scientific hypothesis, in the guise of a constraint on

of other perspectives for the sake of the pursuit of a more correct view. Veritistic objectivity represents the formal limit-concept of this pursuit, thereby lending the standards of procedural objectivity their normative force.³¹ Epistemic success is therefore tied to intersubjective agreement, as it is for Habermas:

In communicative action, the very outcome of interaction is even made to depend on whether the participants can come to an agreement among themselves on an *intersubjectively valid* appraisal of their relations to the world. On this model of action, an interaction can succeed only if those involved arrive at a consensus among themselves, a consensus that depends on yes/no responses to claims potentially based on grounds. (TCA 106)

Claims about the world, such as scientific hypotheses, display the commonality of the objective world and are subject to discursive validation in this light.³² This discursive validation operates

theoretical discourse, the form of this constraint being the necessary presupposition that there is a single objective world out there about which we can either be right or wrong. The objective world (“the totality of all entities about which true statements are possible” (100)) on this account is a “formal world-concept”, i.e. one of the “*formal presuppositions of intersubjectivity* that are necessary if we are to be able to refer to something in the one objective world” (50). The objective world thus plays the role of pre-theoretical backdrop against which theoretical claims can be raised; in this respect it bears affinities with Mead’s ‘world that is there.’ In both cases, it is only on the basis of such an assumption that we can make sense of the enterprise of theoretical discourse. For a further treatment of this idea by Habermas see “Richard Rorty’s Pragmatic Turn.” In “Peirce and Communication” Habermas connects this idea to the Peircean regulative ideal of the end of inquiry; both forms of objectivity serve as constraints on discourse, though they come, in a sense, from different directions: “Both common sense and science operate with the supposition of a reality that is independent of us. In our practices, however, that which we take to be unavoidable and indubitable has the status of an acritical certainty, although it is by no means immune *a priori* against objections. In the realm of argumentatively tested knowledge, on the other hand, we are conscious of the fallibility of every insight. In order to believe that we are capable of truth nonetheless, we need the compensatory reference point provided by the ‘final opinion.’” (104).

³¹ In *Ideals and Illusions* Thomas McCarthy outlines an account of the role of truth in a Habermasian framework that strongly parallels my own account of veritistic objectivity: “Any adequate account of our practices of truth will have to attend not only to the situated, socially conditioned character of concrete truth claims and of the warrants offered for them but to their situation-transcending import as well... Though never divorced from social practices of justification, from the rules and warrants of this or that culture, it cannot be reduced to any particular set thereof... *It is this moment of unconditionality that opens us up to criticism from other points of view.* Without that idealizing moment there would be no foothold in our accepted beliefs and practices for the critical shocks to consensus *that force us to expand our horizons and learn to see things in different ways.*” (33, emphasis added).

³² In Habermas’s earlier formulations, this framework gives rise to a consensus theory of truth at the discursive level, at which the only criterion for evaluation is the capacity to engender intersubjective consensus. Habermas combats the implicit relativism of a consensus theory of truth, which would seem to harbor a normative majoritarianism that would in fact render it devoid of normativity, by situating consensus in the ideal speech situation, an updated version of a Peircean ideal end of inquiry. This leads to the possibility that any given consensus will be a false one—but this is precisely what calls for further critical examination, and hence grounds the normative force of procedural objectivity. Nevertheless, this theory gives us a strongly epistemically-constrained conception of truth. For instance, that which explains the capacity of a claim to engender consensus is investigated by Habermas in *Wahrheitstheorien* as the claim’s ‘warranted assertibility.’ See Pettit, “Habermas on Truth and Justice,” for further discussion of this work. Habermas recognizes that his earlier consensus theory was subject to crippling objections *as an account of truth*, and jettisoned it in favor of a non-epistemically-constrained conception of truth (see especially

with an eye toward a regulative ideal of mutual agreement among all relevant inquirers. Habermas articulates a conception of such an idealized standpoint in filling out the aforementioned notion of the projection of a common reference point that occurs in every communicative context. Habermas draws directly on Mead in “Individuation Through Socialization” to elaborate this projection as a “mode of anticipation” which allows judgment “in the anticipation of symmetrical relations of unforced reciprocal recognition” (188). All communication, then, presupposes the anticipation of an ideal community that Habermas calls “the unlimited communication community.” Moreover, throughout his work he argues that discursive interactions aiming at agreement operate on the assumption of the achievement of an ‘ideal speech situation’ in which all have equal claim to participate and in which the only consideration which leads in the direction of agreement is the force of the better argument.

Such idealizations recall Mead’s description of what he calls the ‘voice of reason,’ discussed in the previous chapter, as exemplifying the role of universality as a normative perspective that is context-transcendent insofar as it allows for the adoption of new perspectives beyond the given universe of discourse. The logical universe of discourse, the limit concept of this indefinite expandability of the universe of discourse, provides the background for all concrete universes of discourse, as well as “the formal ideal of communication” (*MSS* 327). In “Philanthropy from the Point of View of Ethics,” Mead describes this ideal as “a universe of discourse which transcends the specific order within which the members of a community may, in a specific conflict, place themselves outside the community order as it exists, and agree upon changed habits of action and a restatement of values” (404). Mead’s concern here lies in the realm of ethics rather than that of scientific research. Nevertheless, the operative principles are

Truth and Justification). I do not enter into a discussion of these complex issues here, as I am not interested in articulating a theory of truth, but rather a theory of veritistic objectivity, which is epistemically constrained, yet still harbors the critical force of a Habermasian conception of the validity claim of truth.

similar. In both cases, we can deploy the concept of the normative perspective of the universal, which maintains both the necessity of the appeal to universality and the importance of attending to concrete perspectives in particular contexts. In this way my Meadian reformulation mediates between a Habermasian formalism, on one side, and the restrictive contextualism I have discerned in Longino's view, on the other. In this chapter, then, I have drawn on the concept of the normative perspective of the universal in order to argue that communicative and epistemic normativity both stem simultaneously from the internal standards of the community as well as from the demand to transcend that community and those standards. In the following chapter, I extend these considerations into the domain of ethics by articulating a parallel account of the ideal of impartiality or the moral point of view.

CHAPTER IV

UNIVERSALIST PERSPECTIVALISM AND MORAL IMPARTIALITY

In the previous chapter I began to develop the democratic normative ramifications of my account of sociality, arguing that an epistemic ideal of objectivity can be derived from sociality as intersubjectivity. While remaining perspectively rooted, this conception of objectivity avoids relativism by maintaining an implicit orientation to universality. In this chapter I carry the discussion into the moral-political realm by articulating a corresponding notion of the moral stance of impartiality. Rather than consisting in an aperspectival, disinterested perspective that abstracts from all particular and contextual factors, this conception of impartiality emerges from our capacity to transcend our immediate conditions and appeal to a broader perspective that heeds the claims and accommodates the perspectives of others. In other words, the implicit normativity that emerges from sociality demands the adoption of *the normative perspective of the universal* as described in Chapter II, and this normative perspective itself serves as a democratic ideal to which we can appeal in concrete contexts of evaluating the legitimacy of collective outcomes in the service of pursuing more just and ethical social arrangements.

The communication-based conception of impartiality that emerges from this view has, thus far, best been captured by discourse ethicists like Jürgen Habermas, who articulate their account of the moral point of view on the basis of the communicative relations between moral agents. In this chapter I thus draw on discourse ethics to develop a view of impartiality as a dialogical ethical demand that involves an appeal to a universal perspective, while still accommodating particularity such that it can lay claim to being genuinely democratic. My

account operates via critical responses to three thinkers who fall into the camp of discourse-ethicists (or communicative ethicists): Habermas, Iris Marion Young, and Seyla Benhabib.¹

I begin from the side of universality, laying out some of the basic principles of Habermas's own discourse ethics in Section 1. Habermas lays the groundwork for the understanding of impartiality as rooted in the basic structure of communication; however, in offering his distinction between the moral and the ethical, he bifurcates the domains of universality and particularity in a way I ultimately reject. This also gives rise to a conception of the moral point of view that is deficient insofar as it abstracts from the ethical substance of concrete perspectives. While this abstraction is a virtue from Habermas's perspective, it has potentially exclusionary consequences.

The risk of exclusion is of central concern for Young, to whom I turn in Section 2. In reaction to these implications of Habermas's universalism, Young offers a perspectivalism according to which, she argues, the appeal to universality or impartiality ought to be rejected. On the one hand, Young begins to pave the way for a radical democratization of the discourse ethical account via the inclusion of particular concrete perspectives; on the other hand, by jettisoning the possibility of any appeal to a standard of universality, she likewise jettisons much of the normative force of her own account. In a sense, her error has the same root as Habermas's—namely, the strict bifurcation of universality and particularity. While Young privileges the opposite pole of this dichotomy, she also misses the interplay between the two poles. As a result, she cannot articulate the normative resources needed for the democratic negotiation of particularity.

¹ 'Discourse ethics' and 'communicative ethics' are often used synonymously; I draw attention to the distinction here largely for the sake of preventing confusion regarding Young's position—while she launches a critique of discourse ethics in its Habermasian form, as will be discussed below, she remains committed to some form of communicative ethic, and can thus be placed in the same camp.

Finally, in Section 3 I turn to Benhabib's version of discourse ethics, which, of the three accounts discussed in this chapter, best accommodates the mutual relationship between universality and particularity. Like Young, she recognizes the need to correct for the potentially exclusionary excesses of Habermas's position; however, this does not lead her to reject universalism altogether. She maintains, with Habermas, that a communicative ethic must also be a universalist morality. She insists, however, that the only way to simultaneously maintain universalism and the appeal to particularity is to offer a strictly procedural account of universality; on this view, the democratic ideal can only be located in the process of moral discourse itself, rather than in any ideal outcome. The collapse of the claim to universality into the procedure itself leaves us bereft of a procedure-independent standard of universality, such that Benhabib cannot offer grounds on which we can challenge procedural outcomes from a context-transcendent perspective.

This leaves us with the need for a discourse-ethical account that offers a non-procedural conception of universality, but that can also accommodate the demands for the inclusion of particularity that Young has voiced. In closing Section 3 I draw on the Meadian conception of universality in order to articulate such a view, according to which impartiality takes the form of the appeal to the normative perspective of the universal. The limit-concept of impartiality as this expansive appeal serves as a regulative ideal from which comes a dual demand, on the one hand, for the attainment of critical distance from one's given personal or community perspective and, on the other, for openness to input from particular others. Such an account highlights the deeply moral nature of radical democracy as the subjection of the collective coordination of human social life to the constraint of legitimation on the basis of the interchange of perspectives. In this way, rather than being in conflict with the particularity of concrete perspectives, moral

universalism emerges *precisely from* concrete and contextual human sociality. On the basis of this internal connection between universality and the particularity of concrete perspectives, I describe the view outlined here as universalist perspectivalism.

1. Habermas and Moral Universality

In this section I approach the democratic ethical ramifications of sociality as intersubjectivity from the side of moral universalism by engaging with Habermas's discourse ethics. My treatment of Habermas builds on previous chapters' exploration of the Meadian concept of universality as an indefinite openness to the input of new perspectives that emerges from the individual's capacity to transcend her immediate context and perspective via the future-oriented operation of the 'I.' As discussed in Chapter II, Mead outlines the nature of the normative perspective that emerges from this capacity in terms of the 'voice of reason'—that is, the appeal to a context-transcendent perspective that accommodates both concrete others and a broadening of the generalized other. In the moral realm, this depiction provides the framework for the elaboration of an intersubjectively conceived notion of impartiality. Such a concept of impartiality has most effectively been developed further in the discourse ethics pioneered by Habermas and Karl-Otto Apel.² I thus focus on Habermas here as the foremost proponent of the type of discursively-oriented moral universalism, with its concomitant notion of impartiality, that I am furthering in this project.

The central themes I want to explore in Habermas are (1) the grounding of morality in the normative presuppositions of the communication that plays such a central role in human sociality and (2) the distinction he makes between moral universality and ethical particularity. I share a

² See Apel, "The A Priori of the Communication Community and the Foundations of Ethics: The Problem of a Rational Foundation of Ethics in the Scientific Age."

good deal of ground with Habermas on the first of these topics, but depart from him with regard to the second. While I depict a substantive moral universalism as emergent from concrete sociality, Habermas depicts the domain of moral universality as an autonomous realm set over and against ethical particularity in a way that detaches it from concrete contexts and lived experiences. He thus puts forward an account of the moral stance of impartiality, or the moral point of view, as abstractive and reliant on a generalizing perspective that brackets the demand of the concrete other. While he acknowledges that the moral domain can only get its content from particular needs, interests, and forms of life, Habermas ultimately maintains the autonomy of the moral at the expense of its ethical substance. A critique of Habermas's view leads us into Section 2, which approaches the debate from the opposing point of view of an emphasis on particularity that rejects moral universalism.

As briefly discussed in the previous chapter, Habermas offers an account of communicative rationality as predicated upon the nature of discursive claims as claims to universal validity. In the realm of moral-practical discourse, these take the form of claims to normative validity or *rightness*. Habermas analyzes such claims in "Discourse Ethics: Notes on a Program of Philosophical Justification" (hereafter "DE") with the aim of accounting for the universally binding force, or "'ought' character," of such claims while opening them to critical evaluation. 'Ought' claims, Habermas insists, are claims to a type of normative validity that is analogous (but not identical) to propositional truth, for "To say that *I ought* to do something means that *I have good reasons* for doing it" (49). As such, making an 'ought' claim entangles the speaker in the discourse of moral argumentation, in which the claim is subject to the positive

or negative appraisal of an interlocutor and must thus be defended or rejected on the basis of reasons.³

Habermas focuses on argumentative moral discourse in order to retain the possibility of the critical evaluation of normative claims. The cognitivist aspects of Habermas's metaethical position (which was, indeed, formulated in "DE" as a response to a range of value-skeptical and non-cognitivist positions) are thus central to the critical force of his moral theory. While I do not insist on the isolated purity of the realm of moral argumentation, I do retain the core cognitivist thrust of his view by emphasizing the centrality of *critical engagement* to communication, such that openness to new perspectives remains *critical* openness; only in this way can we challenge the isolation of decision from reason, i.e. the claim that the normative is not open to rational evaluation. This critical engagement need not, however, involve argumentation in an agonistic sense, nor in the strict sense of articulating agreed-upon premises and drawing conclusions from them via inference rules; nevertheless, we can retain a central role for argumentation if we take it in a broader sense as communication oriented toward mutual agreement or legitimate consensus—though in most of what follows, in order to avoid confusion, I refer to 'critical engagement' and 'moral conversation' rather than 'argumentation.'⁴ As we shall see, though such agreement or consensus may not be achievable due to the limitations on concrete communicative contexts and on the capacities of the agents participating, it nevertheless remains

³ Habermas draws on Stephen Toulmin's work on moral reasoning in articulating his own model of this distinct form of argumentation. See Toulmin, *An Examination of the Place of Reason in Ethics* and *The Uses of Argument*.

⁴ As we shall see in the next section, Young objects to the bias toward argumentation in accounts of democratic deliberation, insisting that room be made for alternate modes of communicating in order to avoid excluding those who may not be able to effectively express themselves in the strict argumentative mode of premises and conclusions. I agree with Young's point here, though I insist that it should not make us lose sight of the *critical* aspect needed in moral communication; the broadened notion of argumentation mentioned above is formulated simultaneously to anticipate this concern and to retain the critical edge of Habermas's conception of moral argumentation.

as a counterfactual ideal presupposed by moral conversation. On this score I am in agreement with Habermas.

The implicit orientation of moral conversation to agreement stems from the discourse-ethical commitment, which I also share with Habermas, that claims on behalf of norms are necessarily claims to universal validity; only on this basis, Habermas argues, can they be impartial and hence morally authoritative, a character that subjective preferences, for instance, lack. As such, they are subject to the critical appraisal of those subject to those norms, a critical appraisal that involves the intersubjective exchange of perspectives with an eye toward mutual understanding and agreement. The evaluation of moral norms thus cannot take place in isolation from actual contexts of debate or from actual engagement with other speakers—that is, normative appraisal cannot be carried out monologically. The only way the moral skeptic can avoid this implication is to drop out of moral conversation altogether, which would in turn require dropping out of the set of communicative practices that give rise to such conversation—a dropping out of the social world that (barring some form of self-destruction) is not possible for the socialized individual.

Critical engagement in moral discourse thus involves a set of obligations that stem from its intersubjective character, one of which is that the defender of an ought claim cannot exempt herself from participation in communicative interaction with, and openness to, the perspectives of others.⁵ Habermas captures these requirements in his formulations of the basic principles of discourse ethics. These are based on the conviction that general agreement is only conceivable

⁵ In “Discourse Ethics and the Communitarian Critique of Neo-Kantianism,” William Rehg nicely summarizes the discourse-ethical strategy here as that of providing “a general argument to the effect that anyone who seriously argues about morality must pragmatically accept the basic intention of discourse ethics, in that the procedural foundations of discourse ethics are necessarily presupposed in the performance of argumentation. Thus discourse ethics attempts no more than the explication of what each of the participants in the current debate at least tacitly accepts” (132).

on the basis of a basic moral principle that allows for the construction of a bridge between particular needs and their interpretations, on the one side, and general normative claims, on the other. Habermas finds the motivation for this principle in Kant's categorical imperative, but shifts it from Kantian monological grounds to the dialogical domain: "The moral principle is so conceived as to exclude as invalid any norm that could not meet with the qualified assent of all who are or might be affected by it" (63). In other words, "*modes of action* and *maxims*, or the *interests* furthered by them" must be in principle universalizable so as to allow the achievement of a consensus or "*general will*" with regard to them; the impartiality of a norm relies on the possibility of the discovery of a common interest (63).⁶ This discovery in turn relies on the capacity for participants in discourse to adopt a universalizing perspective; Habermas here draws on Mead to describe a standpoint closely related (but, as we shall see, not identical) to the normative perspective of the universal: "The principle of universalization is intended to compel the *universal exchange of roles* that G. H. Mead called 'ideal role taking' or 'universal discourse'" (65). On this basis, Habermas formulates the basic standard that norms must meet in order to ensure their validity, (U), alongside the basic principle of discourse ethics, (D):

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

(D) *Only those norms can claim to be valid that meet (or could meet) with the approval of all affected in their capacity as participants in a practical discourse. (65-66)*

(U) serves as the aforementioned bridging principle between particular needs and interests and general norms, designed to make general agreement possible.⁷

⁶ Below I qualify this strong version of the regulative ideal of consensus, though I maintain in the face of its critics the need for such an ideal. For an extensive engagement with the obstacles faced by such an ideal, especially the neo-Aristotelian critique of Alasdair MacIntyre, see Rehg, "Discourse Ethics and the Communitarian Critique of Neo-Kantianism."

⁷ For a rigorous attempt to more formally derive (U) from premises about practical discourse, see Rehg, "Discourse and the Moral Point of View: Deriving a Dialogical Principle of Universalization." In *Situating the Self*, Seyla Benhabib denies the possibility of such a formal and decisive defense of discourse-ethical universalism, but instead

On the face of it, this account of discourse-ethical obligation appears to miss some of the complexities of concrete normative interaction contexts. As we shall see Young argue in the next section, there may be situations in which an agent's taking on the perspective of another may not be possible or desirable. In such cases, what is worrisome about the above claim in its bare form is that it seems to imply that such an agent would be failing in her obligation, such that she cannot legitimately make claims on behalf of her own interests. This would raise problems for how we conceive of our obligations to those with cognitive disabilities or mental illnesses that prevent them from being able to fully engage other perspectives, as well as to victims of violence or oppression for whom it would be traumatic to engage with the agents of their victimization. Since I do not want to deny that we have strong obligations to such individuals, such cases do indeed stand as exceptions to the general rule cited above. As such, it is only a *prima facie* obligation, defeasible in certain contexts—it is not intended to range across the entirety of our interpersonal interactions. My view leaves room for countervailing obligations and circumstances. However, while I acknowledge that the scope of the obligation to engage other perspectives may have limits, I do not offer any principled way to carve out those limits; rather, they must themselves be subject to continuous appraisal and contestation.

I also think it would be a mistake to conclude, from the fact that perspective-exchange is not possible or desirable in certain cases, that the discourse-ethical principles that enjoin such exchange should be rejected. Rather, they still constitute at least *prima facie* demands on normative interaction, and they present the basis for the articulation of a radically democratic

offers a family of non-decisive but collectively powerful arguments for universalism, each of which, moreover, is historically situated “*within* the normative-hermeneutic horizon of modernity” (30). Detailed discussion of this point is not necessary here, for, as Rehg points out in acknowledging that the derivation of (U) presupposes “a modern pluralist society beset by conflicts of interests,” “If this limits the scope of ‘U’, it hardly detracts from its relevance for our current situation” (38). Moreover, even if one objects that this begs the question or dogmatically favors modernity, as Benhabib herself points out, one can only deny this dogma with paradoxical consequences—for instance, forwarding an anti-egalitarian or anti-democratic position still presupposes that one is willing to defend it in an argumentative sphere that presupposes egalitarian and democratic principles (32-33).

moral view. While formal, counterfactual, and idealized, on the one hand, these principles require actual engagement with actual others in order to subject both one's own need-interpretations and one's interpretations of others' needs to public scrutiny and critique. As such, they provide an inherently democratic picture of communication regarding norms as well as a democratic principle of validity based on consensus. At the same time, they pave the way for a conceptualization of a democratic ideal, an 'ideal speech situation' that serves as a normative yardstick for the critique and reform of all actual instances of moral discourse in institutional procedures or public spheres. The idea of "a speech situation immune to repression and inequality" stems from the unavoidability of "the presupposition that...the structure of [participants'] communication rules out all external or internal coercion other than the force of the better argument and thereby also neutralizes all motives other than that of the cooperative search for truth" (88-89). Moreover, the ideal speech situation extends to all potential participants in moral conversation; it thus overlaps with Mead's universal community of communication, the logical universe of discourse.⁸ Thus, for Habermas as for Mead, normative claims make an implicit appeal to universal validity that emerges from the structure of intersubjective discourse itself.

Habermas also follows Mead in conceiving of the universal as necessarily involving a counterfactual component that is tied to its open-ended or indefinite nature. The universality of meaning, for Mead, lies in the *potential shareability* that it presupposes, which does not rely in any given case on *actual sharedness*. Similarly, while the rules of discourse that Habermas

⁸ In more recent work, Habermas has warned against the possible reification or hypostatization of the ideal speech situation, while still maintaining its normative role in discourse ethics. In *Between Facts and Norms*, for instance, he explains that "This perspective...enables [participants in argumentation] to do justice to the meaning of *context-transcending* validity claims. But...they are not themselves transported into the beyond of an ideal realm of noumenal beings" (323, emphasis in original). Much the same can be said for the Meadian ideal of the logical universe of discourse.

articulates are presupposed as binding on any given instance of argumentative communication, this does not mean that their demands are always met or that they cannot be violated; indeed, they are always to some extent counterfactual, for “Discourses take place in particular social contexts and are subject to the limits of time and space” (92). Moreover, the normative implications of this counterfactuality reflect those I have been drawing from Mead’s concept of universality: namely, that their counterfactual nature gives these principles their critical force as normative yardsticks or regulative ideals against which particular institutionalizations of discourse can be evaluated. In “Discourse and the Moral Point of View” William Rehg explains the role of these principles as normative yardsticks as follows:

No doubt these suppositions are always to some extent counterfactual; if one did not make them, however, one could hardly take seriously our everyday intuitions about the effort to convince. Moreover, as soon as one discovers that a consensus did not even approximately fulfill the above rules, the rationally binding character of its results becomes questionable. That is, one can hardly consider the acceptance of a norm (regulating a potential conflict of interests) to be based on an insight into the norm’s intrinsic validity if its justification depends on the systematic exclusion of certain viewpoints and possible objections. (39)

The product of the discourse-ethical position here outlined, then, is the uncovering of a commitment, implicit in the structure of communication, to adopt an orientation toward democratic engagement with the interests of all affected by whatever norm is under discussion. Habermas thus highlights the moral force of the normative presuppositions of communication; it is here that his view most closely parallels the radically democratic moral universalism that I draw out of Mead.

We have already discussed to some degree the scope of the demands that this type of discourse-ethical universalism makes upon us as moral agents. While I have resisted the temptation to articulate this scope *a priori*, Habermas attempts to delineate it via his much-disputed distinction between the *moral* and the *ethical*. The former refers to the formal and procedural elements of a moral point-of-view oriented toward universalization and generalizable

interests and involves the appeal to universality of normative validity claims intended to apply to all; the latter, on the other hand, concerns conceptions of the good life and the particularized values of a given community. For Habermas, ethical questions do not admit of the type of universality that applies to moral questions; they fall into the domain of aesthetic or evaluative critique rather than moral or practical discourse, and thus do not admit of the possibility of consensus, let alone presuppose it. In conditions of a plurality of legitimate conceptions of the good life, then, moral theory must depart from the path of ethics, of pursuing *substantive* questions of *happiness* or *the good*, and concern itself only with *formal* or *procedural* questions of *justice* or *the right*. This distinction thus places Habermas firmly in the liberal tradition following John Rawls.⁹ In “The Moral and the Ethical: A Reconsideration of the Issue of the Priority of the Right over the Good,” Habermas explains that “Precisely with regard to the questions that have the greatest relevance for us, philosophy retires to a metalevel and investigates only the formal properties of processes of self-understanding, without taking a position on the contents themselves” (32). The only ethical view compatible with pluralism, for Habermas, is a discourse ethics confined to the evaluation of form rather than content, to “the existential *mode*, not the particular value orientations, of individual life-projects and specific forms of life” (39).

Habermas recognizes, however, that the formal universalism of the moral is empty if completely divorced from the concrete needs and interests of particular forms of ethical life—

⁹ This is not to say that Habermas’ political theory is strictly speaking Rawlsian. The dialogical ideal speech situation is formulated in explicit contrast to Rawls’ monological model of the original position. Moreover, Habermas explicitly distances himself from the liberal tradition in “Three Normative Models of Democracy.” Nevertheless, in the latter he also criticizes the civic republican and communitarian traditions on precisely the point under discussion above, specifically for their ethical constriction of politics: “Political questions may not be reduced to the type of ethical questions where we, as members of a community, ask who we are and who we would like to be” (24). He subordinates such questions to moral questions, which are questions of justice: “The politically enacted law of a concrete legal community must, if it is to be legitimate, at least be compatible with moral tenets that claim universal validity going beyond the legal community” (25). Here we see quite clearly the relevance of this distinction, then, to a picture of democratic politics.

that is, he has absorbed the lesson of Hegel's critique of Kantian morality. As such, the moral point-of-view must be oriented to some degree toward the consequences that norms have for needs and interests, and must therefore address interpretations of those needs and interests. Without such an orientation, discourse ethics would fall prey to the Hegelian critique of Kantian formalism. As it stands, the procedure of argumentatively testing the validity of norms must draw its content from an external source, namely the concrete individual or form of life: "It would be utterly pointless to engage in a practical discourse without a horizon provided by the lifeworld of a specific social group and without real conflicts in a concrete situation in which the actors consider it incumbent upon them to reach a consensual means of regulating some controversial social matter" ("DE" 103). This approach allows Habermas to sidestep several of the problems that beset a strictly formal Kantian ethic.

Nevertheless, by insisting on the priority of generalizable interests from the moral point-of-view, Habermas still privileges the moment of Kantian morality, albeit now incorporating an ethical moment, over that of ethics—i.e. the substantive element of the norms governing a particular life history or form of life. Participants in moral discourse must therefore adopt a hypothetical attitude towards, or critical distance from, the norms into which they have been socialized; in Meadian terms, this involves stepping beyond the perspective of the given generalized other deposited in the 'me' to adopt the perspective of a broader community or generalized other via the mechanism of the 'I.'¹⁰ On my version of this Meadian picture, however, this broadened perspective must be recognized to be just that: still a given perspective, to be deposited in the 'me' in the form of a broader generalized other. The appeal to the normative perspective of the universal, it must be remembered, is thus precisely *not* an appeal to

¹⁰ Habermas also elaborates this point in terms of Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of the sociocognitive development of moral consciousness; see especially "Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action."

an aperspectival viewpoint, but only to an indefinitely encompassing intersubjective one—the transcendence of a *given* perspective in a broader organization of perspectives, in Mead’s terms, not the transcendence of perspective as such. This forecloses the possibility of the actual achievement of a *final* universality—hence the continuous call for further transcendence, which generates a gap between the given organization of perspectives and the ideal.¹¹ In this respect, then, Habermas’s insistence on the attainment of critical distance from one’s own normative commitments dovetails with my Meadian account of the normative perspective of the universal.

For Habermas, however, the articulation of a gap between norms that are valid and norms that are *de facto* accepted, which allows for the critique of the latter, requires a corresponding gap between generalizable and non-generalizable normative contents. In this way the principle of universalization provides a mechanism for the strict weeding out of particular cultural contents, interests, and values that cannot be generalized beyond the current context of their intersubjective acceptance. Where such universalization is not possible, Habermas contends, the content lies beyond the scope of *moral* discourse, and is thus situated in the domain of the ethical. It is here—at the point of a delineation of the scope of discourse ethics along the lines of the moral/ethical distinction—that Habermas’s view most significantly departs from mine, raising problems from the point of view of discourse ethics as a democratic moral theory.

Some feminist critics, for instance, have raised the concern that this opposition between the moral and the ethical represents a dangerous mode of opposing reason to affect. This charge draws on Carol Gilligan’s critique of Lawrence Kohlberg’s theory of moral development.¹² The latter explicitly places a universalistic rights-based ethic at a higher cognitive level than moral

¹¹ In *Between Facts and Norms*, Habermas thematizes this gap as the ‘tension between facticity and validity.’

¹² Much feminist criticism of Habermas draws on Gilligan’s critique of Kohlberg, as Habermas draws a great deal of his own theory of moral consciousness from Kohlberg’s work; rather than engaging directly with Gilligan and Kohlberg here, however, I only deal with this debate insofar as it bears on criticisms directed against Habermas. For the original debate, see especially Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* and Kohlberg, *Essays in Moral Development* vol. 2.

dispositions rooted in such affective dimensions as relations of care. In response, Gilligan recommends making room in the moral sphere for a care-based ethic to supplement a rights-based one. In “Impartiality and the Civic Public,” Young argues that “Gilligan’s work suggests that the deontological tradition of moral theory excludes and devalues women’s specific, more particularist and affective experience of moral life” (58). Young uses this insight to challenge the dichotomization of affect and reason that finds its way into Habermas’s own work on moral consciousness. Benhabib draws on the same dichotomization and criticizes its appearance in Habermas under the heading of the moral/ethical distinction. Like Young, Benhabib is concerned that exclusive attention to the moral dimension will lead to the exclusion of certain perspectives from the realm of public debate due to their particularity. That is, the prioritizing of the generalizable over the non-generalizable can quickly become a mask for a privileged perspective that presents itself as universal and bars opposing perspectives from expression. Such a stance is bound to thwart the egalitarian aspirations of the ideal speech situation, and arguably runs counter to the aims of radical democracy by closing off from political discussion much that should be politicized.

In “The Utopian Dimension in Communicative Ethics,” Benhabib argues that Habermas’s discourse ethics represents an advance over other neo-Kantian views of morality in its attention to need-interpretations, but insists that he fails to go far enough in this regard. The Habermasian viewpoint, according to Benhabib, allows for the articulation of a situation in which “the highest stage of a universalistic ethical orientation is...open, reflexive communication about our needs and the cultural traditions in light of which they are interpreted,” such that “Conceptions of justice and of the good life flow into each other” in a “*utopian break*” with formalistic universalist ethical theory (91). However, while Habermas sets the stage for a

utopian conception of happiness to come to the fore, he attempts to foreclose this by isolating the realm of moral discourse, concerning questions of justice, from evaluative critique, which concerns questions of happiness and the good life and involves non-universalizable claims. Habermas's goal in this isolation of spheres of argumentation is to accommodate the plurality of value-orientations that characterizes modernity. Benhabib insists, however, that Habermas cannot maintain the purity of the moral sphere, oriented as it necessarily is toward need-interpretations itself. Moreover, the attempt to maintain such a purity brings with it the danger of an "inability to treat human needs, desires, and emotions in any other way than by abstracting away from them and condemning them to silence" (94).¹³

Habermas is aware of this type of objection, and acknowledges that the hypothetical or distancing perspective required by morality can only be secondary to our situatedness in a lifeworld that brings with it particular moral feelings and commitments. Questions of justice, he admits, can only be posed against the background of a pregiven set of assumptions about the good life. Indeed, this is why the skeptical renunciation of morality is bound to fail: the skeptic cannot "deny that he moves in a shared sociocultural form of life, that he grew up in a web of communicative action, and that he reproduces his life in that web. In a word, the skeptic may reject morality, but he cannot reject the ethical substance (*Sittlichkeit*) of the life circumstances in which he spends his waking hours" ("DE" 100). This point can also be cast in the Meadian terms of previous chapters, insofar as the autonomous 'I' cannot operate in a reflexive fashion without an identity rooted in the 'me,' and hence in the normative structure of the community

¹³ In "Diversity and Democracy: Representing Differences," Carol Gould similarly criticizes Habermas for relegating the expression of difference to the aesthetic domain via his distinction between moral discourse and evaluative argumentation, which parallels that between the moral and the ethical insofar as the latter does not involve the presupposition of the possibility of mutual agreement. Such a separation, Gould notes, "removes from the public sphere not only difference but also the creativity that issues forth in imaginative critique and rejection of existing agreement and in the generation of new and unexpected frameworks for agreement" (173).

from which it emerged. Habermas makes substantially the same point: “Individuals acquire and sustain their identity by appropriating traditions, belonging to social groups, and taking part in socializing interactions... They do not have the option of a long-term absence from contexts of action oriented toward reaching understanding” (102). As such, on Habermas’s account as on mine, impartiality as aperspectival, or as total transcendence of all concrete contextuality and particularity, is illusory; this paves the way for reconceiving impartiality itself as a moral ideal. Nevertheless, Habermas insists that the critical force of the moral lies precisely in producing a reflexive distance from the web of moral feelings and commitments in which the self is situated; more precisely, it lies in the capacity to distinguish moral questions from ethical or evaluative questions via the mechanism of universalization.

This formulation creates a number of difficulties for a radically democratic moral universalism. While Habermas acknowledges that the moral is empty and purely formal without input from the lifeworld of ethical particularity, he nevertheless conceives of the moral as a realm unto itself, independent of the ethical while receiving its content from it. This strong dichotomization falsely polarizes universality and particularity, which are in fact always intertwined in human social life. Far from being autonomous, moral universality emerges precisely from the concrete particularities of social interaction. Nevertheless, the moral/ethical distinction leads Habermas to construe the moral point of view, here described in terms of impartiality, as a generalizing perspective that falls short of what I have been calling the normative perspective of the universal insofar as it neglects the perspectives of concrete others in favor of the perspective of a broadening generalized other. For the remainder of this section I turn to Habermas’s account of the moral point of view, which suffers as a result of the moral/ethical distinction; I thus point toward a reconceptualization of the moral ideal of

impartiality along the lines of the normative perspective of the universal, which better reflects the dialectic between the moral agent's rootedness in communicative social contexts alongside concrete others and her capacity (itself rooted in precisely the same sociality) to transcend those contexts via appeal to other perspectives.

For Habermas, the achievement of a specifically moral point of view follows upon the capacity to distinguish the moral and the ethical. Habermas draws on Kohlberg's work to describe the moral point of view as a "*postconventional* stage of moral consciousness" in which "moral judgement becomes dissociated from the local conventions and historical coloration of a particular form of life" (109). The moral point of view, for Habermas, is a standpoint from which norms can be evaluated in abstraction from one's particular needs and interests and in light of those of a more generalized perspective. Such a standpoint requires the bracketing of any needs and interests that can only be articulated relative to a particular life history or form of life; that is, the interests and needs at stake in the moral point-of-view must be generalizable. This account, of course, runs into much the same set of criticisms that faced the moral/ethical distinction. Benhabib, for instance, argues that Habermas fails to thematize the utopian dimension of discourse ethics precisely because "following George Herbert Mead, he assumes the standpoint of the 'generalized other,' of rights and entitlements, to represent the moral point of view par excellence" (92). While I think this is based on a misunderstanding of both the generalized other and the moral point of view in Mead's own work, Benhabib is right to criticize the constriction of the moral point of view on Habermas's part to the generalizable.¹⁴ For Benhabib, this

¹⁴ In a footnote to *Situating the Self* Benhabib acknowledges that her use of the term 'generalized other' is different than Mead's (174 n. 22). However, she uses it there in much the same sense as she uses it in the above quote. What Benhabib means by the 'generalized' might better be termed the 'generalizable'—it is closer to a universalistic point of view than is Mead's generalized other. While this may lead to some confusion, we may retain Benhabib's usage, as the point at issue is that the moral point of view for Mead is not, as Benhabib claims above, that of the generalized other, but is rather what I have been calling the normative perspective of the universal, of which the perspective of the generalized other in either sense is only one aspect.

conception of the moral point of view remains basically ego-centered and cannot account for the perspective of the concrete other.

Habermas's construal of the moral point of view does have clear advantages over the standard picture handed down by Kantian moral philosophy due to its decentered, dialogical nature, which is more feasible than the monological conception; for on this model, impartiality is not achieved by the unitary subject's willful detachment from needs and interests including its own, but, as Rehg points out in "Discourse and the Moral Point of View," is instead the product of "a reciprocity defined in terms of the argumentative role-taking given with the need to find arguments convincing in the language of the other participant... Individuals 'take' the moral point of view precisely in so far as they give themselves over to such a process of dialogical interchange" (44). This aspect of the moral point of view will play a central role below in my formulation of the moral stance of impartiality as an intersubjective comportment, an openness to critical engagement with the perspectives of others.

I thus follow Habermas to the extent that he 1) locates democratic moral commitments in the structure of communication and 2) develops from this a picture of impartiality as constitutively intersubjective. However, Habermas's view has other elements that we cannot take up into a radically democratic moral universalism. Specifically, Habermas problematically bifurcates the universal and the particular, the perspectives of the generalized and concrete others, in his account of the moral point of view and his insistence on the autonomy of the realm of moral universality. The jettisoning of this bifurcation has the consequence that moral universality is not detached from a realm of particularity from which it must draw content, but is rather itself a perspective that is generated out of the very human sociality that Habermas finds inadequate to the demands of morality. Further attention to the demands of the particular leads us

in the next section to explore the topic of a discursively-grounded ethics from the side of an emphasis on particularity that rejects universalism altogether. While I maintain that this rejection is a mistake, the elaboration of such a view, especially as developed in the work of Iris Marion Young, provides crucial resources for the type of universalism I ultimately defend.

2. Young and the Particular

The difficulties regarding Habermas's moral/ethical distinction and conception of the moral point of view might lead one to reject certain aspects of moral universalism altogether. This leads us to explore the debate from the side of an emphasis on ethical particularity to the exclusion of moral universality and impartiality. To do so I discuss an account that goes in this anti-universalist direction. Iris Marion Young offers a conception of a communicative ethics that rejects impartialism altogether, as well as any appeal to a principle of universality. Working from this perspective, Young has leveled a series of powerful critiques of Habermasian discourse ethics, as well as of the program of deliberative democracy that stems from it. As we saw in the previous section, Young agrees with Benhabib that Habermas runs into problems by limiting input into the moral realm to that which can be a general interest; in doing so, he silences many interests that need to be taken into account in moral discourse. This is a matter of the strong bifurcation of the moral and the ethical, the universal and the particular, having undemocratic or anti-egalitarian consequences. I endorse this critical aspect of Young's project insofar as she directs our attention to difference and particularity in ways that offer valuable resources for rendering our social ethics radically democratic.

The solution is not, however, to reject the category of universality, or the moral, as such, but to more closely link it to the particular, or ethical. In rejecting the universalist principles that

she does, Young leaves herself without the normative resources to give critical bite to the views she offers.¹⁵ The difficulty for Young, as for Habermas, lies still in too radical a bifurcation of universality and particularity; this time, however, rather than serving to exclude particularity, the dichotomy is overdrawn in an attempt to *protect* particularity from universality to the degree that the latter is eradicated altogether. It is precisely at this point, however, that the particularist view is left bereft of the normative resources required for the democratic ethical negotiation of particularity. *Contra* Young, I argue that a universalist perspectivalism can account for difference and be radically democratic while retaining the normative resources of universalism and impartialism. I first approach this point from the angle of the perspectivalism that I share with Young, showing that she goes wrong in overemphasizing the incommensurability of perspectives. The talk of perspective-sharing or taking the perspective of the other that has played such a central role in my Meadian account of the emergence of a communicative normativity reflects a view that Young explicitly rejects, and indeed thinks is incompatible with perspectivalism. Moreover, as we shall see, she thinks that perspectivalism is irreconcilable not only with perspective sharing, but also with the normative concepts of impartiality and universality. She comes to this conclusion via her critique of unity, which is at the root of her rejection of perspective-sharing; and her antipathy for unity in turn leads her to reject both impartiality and universality. I thus move from the issue of perspectivalism to a discussion of the concept of unity as it emerges in Young's work. A critique of her treatment of unity leads to a concomitant critique of her rejection of impartiality. Finally, I argue, this last rejection is not

¹⁵The reader will notice that this critique parallels that of Mouffe in the first chapter, and might wonder why Mouffe was targeted there in preference to Young. The reason is that Mouffe's anti-universalist stance flows from a more basic conviction on her part about the nature of sociality, thus providing the motivation for my competing conception of sociality. In contrast, I do not think there is anything intrinsic to sociality as conceived by Young that leads to her anti-universalism; indeed, part of the argument of this section is that my perspectivalism is quite close to Young's and that Young in fact offers resources for a specifically *universalist* perspectivalism.

only problematic in itself, but it also stands in tension with Young's otherwise fruitful conception of objectivity. In spite of her rejection of universality and impartiality, Young's conception of objectivity provides a powerful resource for the rethinking of Habermas's universalism in the direction of a *radically democratic, perspectival* universalism that adequately accounts for particularity.

The basic components of Young's own perspectivalism come to the fore in "Asymmetrical Reciprocity: On Moral Respect, Wonder, and Enlarged Thought," where she insists on the non-reversibility of perspectives, such that the perspective of the other retains its sense of alterity, of being unassimilable.¹⁶ Her concept of 'asymmetrical reciprocity' implies that "[m]oral respect between people entails reciprocity between them, in the sense that each acknowledges and takes account of the other. But their relationship is asymmetrical in terms of the history each has and the social position they occupy" (343). The claim that perspectives are asymmetrical in *this* respect is certainly true, and must be kept in mind for the purposes of any theory of democracy or of social critique. However, Young uses this insight to launch a much more problematic critique of views according to which moral respect requires some degree of sharing or reversibility of perspectives; Benhabib's argument for 'symmetrical reciprocity' as constitutive of moral respect serves as the exemplar here. By itself, the asymmetry claim Young makes above (and which I concede) does not warrant the rejection of *all* symmetry claims. Nevertheless, Young contends, approaches such as Benhabib's run counter to the aim of "elaborating a communicative ethics that recognizes difference and particularity," because "It is neither possible nor morally desirable for persons engaged in moral interaction to adopt one another's standpoint" (340). On Young's view, the Kantian/Arendtian ideal of 'enlarged thought'

¹⁶ The concept of perspective as such also receives direct attention in "Difference as a Resource for Democratic Communication," where Young argues for a conception of *social* perspective as a relationally constituted location in the social field. Young's conception of perspective here in fact dovetails well with my own Meadian account.

that Habermas and Benhabib seem to invoke requires not actually taking on the perspectives of others, but rather simply communicating with them across the gap of difference.

In drawing attention to the problematic nature of perspective-sharing, Young highlights both the limits and the dangers of perspective-sharing. First, she repeatedly, and correctly, emphasizes that one cannot adopt the perspective of another wholesale, due to differences in personal history, experience, social location, etc. For example, a privileged person's claim to be able to fully understand the perspective of a member of a group with a history of being oppressed is not only ontologically and epistemically problematic, but morally and politically suspect. Young is right to call attention to such experiential asymmetries and demand that we attend to them in intergroup and interpersonal interactions; yet this, by itself, does not show that perspective-sharing as such does not or cannot occur, but only that there are limits to it. As we saw in Chapter II, the sharing of meaning across perspectives, for instance, does not require a complete isomorphism between them, but only a functionally adequate similarity of response. Similarly, successful communication does not require the total occupation or colonization of one perspective by another, but only enough sharing of content to successfully carry out the communicative interaction that is at stake—that is, for speakers to come to an understanding of one another. On the other hand, symmetry *is* required for communication to take place, insofar as each interlocutor must understand that the other is a subject in order for genuine communication, rather than manipulation, to take place. Thus, sharing and symmetry should not be identified with complete identity between perspectives, or the assimilation of one into another. Young makes precisely this identification throughout her critique of symmetrical reciprocity, thereby

overstating the case for the incommensurability of perspectives and against their shareability.¹⁷

While I endorse Young's aim of accommodating difference and particularity, then, her strategy is based on far too strong a reading of the symmetry claims implied by perspective-sharing.

Young also, however, calls attention to the potential dangers of attempts to take on the perspectives of others. This, for instance, is the upshot of the three stories Young tells in "Asymmetrical Reciprocity," regarding disability, Lakota religious practices, and Anita Hill (343-45). Each story depicts a group failing to appreciate or respect the needs, desires, or experiences of another group precisely by assuming that they can imagine what it must be like to be a member of the former group. These stories do, then, highlight some of the dangers of too quickly assuming one has managed to put oneself in another's shoes. I agree with Young, here, that the problem that emerges in these stories is precisely the failure of the first group to actually communicate with—listen to—the second.

Young, however, does not explain just how such communication across difference is supposed to occur without at least some degree of perspective-sharing. She claims that encountering and understanding another perspective does not involve actually obtaining or occupying that perspective, distinguishing between "taking the perspective of other people into account, on the one hand, and imaginatively taking their positions, on the other hand" (341); though, again, she does not explain how the former is supposed to take place if it entirely divorced from the latter. Young acknowledges that she must give an account of how understanding across difference is possible, gesturing toward the possibility of transcending our own perspectives for this purpose (354). However, she never gives an account of the mechanism that makes such transcendence possible; and, by staving off perspective-sharing, she has in fact

¹⁷ The degree to which Young conflates sharing with identity or assimilation can be seen in her suggestion that the fact that individuals "could rarely be said to share everything" tells against views that emphasize perspective sharing as such (347).

cut off access to the mechanism that, on my account, allows for the communication across difference that she admits is requisite for ‘enlarged thought.’ Even taking the perspective of the other into account in fact requires understanding the other as a subject, with a subjectivity independent of one’s own and to which one is an object. Understanding oneself as object requires in turn *seeing oneself from the perspective of another*. Communication across difference is predicated upon this capacity to transcend one’s perspective via taking on the perspective of another, whether it be a generalized other or the concrete other with whom one is engaging. In the absence of an alternative account of how communication across difference is possible, Young’s rejection of perspective-sharing risks foreclosing such communication, leaving us instead with incommensurable perspectives that are inaccessible to one another.

Moreover, the moral demand that governs effective perspective-sharing in the social arena in fact requires that one offers one’s interpretations of the needs or experiences of the other to critical scrutiny, including scrutiny by the other one claims to be representing. On this account, then, the lack of engagement between groups is precisely the *failure* of effective perspective sharing, not its result. Nevertheless, as we saw in the previous section, there may be situations in which the exchange of perspectives is not possible or desirable. In cases of systemic injustice or oppression, for example, one might maintain that the oppressed group has *no obligation* to exchange perspectives with the oppressors. The political facts of oppression and privilege, then, seem to make perspective reversal not only difficult, but potentially unjust.

Young puts this point as follows:

The idea of reversing perspectives assumes that the perspectives brought to a situation are equally legitimate. Where structured social injustice exists, this may not be true. The perspective of those who maintain privilege under an unjust status quo does not have legitimacy in the same way as does that of those who suffer the injustices. Even under conditions of injustice, the interests and perspectives of those who belong to privileged groups should not be disregarded; moral respect does require that everyone’s perspective be taken into account. But asking the oppressed to reverse perspectives with the privileged in adjudicating a conflict may itself be an injustice and an insult. (350)

Young's point here is an important one, but it harbors puzzles. First, Young acknowledges that the perspective of the privileged should be taken into account—but who is it that is supposed to discharge this obligation?

Perhaps a different example will be more perspicuous here—that of an individual victimizer (such as a rapist or abusive spouse). It is certainly reasonable to not require this individual's victim(s) to engage in earnest normative interaction and perspective exchange with him or her. It would not be accurate, however, to say that a victim *never* has *any* obligation toward his or her victimizer in any case, even if it is only the negative obligation not to seek vengeance or 'take justice into his or her own hands.'¹⁸ We might describe such cases as ones in which the victim is enjoined to only adopt a perspective from which the victimizer is seen only as a moral agent with rights, such as to a fair trial; we can call this, perhaps, taking the perspective of the generalized other toward the victimizer. The claim that a victim has some obligation toward his or her victimizer may seem troubling; however, its denial is still more problematic, particularly in the context of a democratic society with a criminal justice system that has some claim to legitimacy. Indeed, Young's own claim that the perspective of the oppressors should be taken into account suggests that, in a parallel fashion, *someone* should attend to the concrete perspective of the victimizer, even if it is in a role-specific capacity such as that of psychiatrist or court-appointed defense attorney. In the case of the relation between the oppressed and their oppressors, on the other hand, we may simply want to acknowledge that, in some respect, the perspective of the oppressor *qua* oppressor should not be taken account of because, *ex hypothesi*, it is not legitimate—it is inherently unjust or anti-democratic. There is a

¹⁸ Of course, there are limits even to this, such as cases that could legitimately be called self-defense; in other cases a victim may be so traumatized that it would be unjust for us not to suspend judgments of moral or legal responsibility. Also, the example presumes a society with a legitimate criminal justice system, and is disputable at that level.

problem here too, however. While it may be true that perspectives that are only possible on the basis of injustice lack some form of legitimacy, we can only identify the injustice, and hence the illegitimacy, via public debate and critical engagement of precisely the kind that risks being limited by the foreclosure of perspective sharing.¹⁹ Such public discourse is precisely what we require to play the role of legitimating social relations or of revealing them to be unjust.

Young's rejection of perspective sharing dovetails with a larger project of articulating a communicative ethics that respects difference and particularity; concomitant with this project is a resistance to *unity*, which Young identifies as appearing in a variety of forms. In the case of perspective sharing, that unity takes the form of the assimilation of the other's perspective into one's own. In Young's broader critique of Habermasian discourse ethics and deliberative democracy, this problematic conception of unity emerges both in the moral stance of impartiality as well as in norms of public discourse and the appeal to a principle of universality. However, the concept of unity is used for such a wide range of applications that its meaningfulness becomes questionable, and Young so habitually aligns it with other concepts that she is forced to jettison many useful, even necessary, concepts in the attempt to purge her account of unity—we have already seen her do this with perspective sharing. In what follows I trace some problematic consequences from Young's rejection of unity by turning to her critique of discourse ethics and

¹⁹ Another potential worry emerges here. My emphasis on continuous engagement and contestation might make it appear that we never actually get anywhere, that we cannot even get democracy as a decision-making procedure off the ground. For instance, on this view, we seem unable to lay views to rest once and for all, so that a small contingent of, say, neo-Nazis or people who want to be able to own slaves will continually be able to raise their view and insist that it be respected as a legitimate one. I actually do not think these cases cause problems for my view; from the perspective of the democratic moral view I am outlining above, slavery and Nazism are manifestly indefensible precisely on the grounds that moral communication involves a commitment to engaging with others as equals; another way of putting this is that we cannot possibly conceive of a broader perspective from which one of these commitments would be defensible. Most cases in our public life are not this clear-cut. (This is not to deny that neo-fascism is not a contemporary threat). While I believe that there are indeed views in contemporary public discourse that fail from the perspective of this moral theory, it would be counterproductive and anti-democratic for me to rule such views out *a priori* on this basis. Nevertheless, we *should* make it very difficult to defend views that appear to violate the constraints of the democratic ideal by forcing them to discharge a heavy burden of proof, for the burden of proof is always on the one who would like to deny some form of equal respect to another.

deliberative democracy, which she sees as in part perpetuating the oppressive aspects of the Enlightenment project.

In “Impartiality and the Civic Public: Some Implications of Feminist Critiques of Moral and Political Theory” (hereafter “ICP”), Young rejects the Habermasian linkage of emancipatory politics to the realization of the potential of Enlightenment ideals, arguing that it is in the interests of feminists to abjure such ideals due to their implicitly oppressive and exclusionary character. As mentioned in the previous section, she draws here on Gilligan’s critique of a rights-based ethic that excludes a care-based one in order to challenge the assumption that an impartial and universal reason is opposed to care, desire, and affect. Young describes her overall target here in terms of unity—specifically, the unity of public discourse, which is threatened by the input of desire and affectivity (66). In the political realm, Rousseau exemplifies for Young the articulation of a public sphere that stands opposed to the private, with his picture of a ‘civic public’ that begets a general will transcending all particular interests. The impartialism and universalism of this public represent precisely the Enlightenment ideals Young wants to move beyond. Such a depiction of the public is, according to Young, inherently exclusive of affect and of particularity, and hence homogenizing: “It excludes from the public those individuals and groups that do not fit the model of the rational citizen who can transcend body and sentiment” (66). She rightly suggests that a Habermas-inspired communicative ethics “offers the best direction for developing a conception of normative reason that does not seek the unity of transcendent impartiality and thereby does not oppose reason to desire and affectivity” (59). Young points to the promise of Habermas’s reconceptualization of reason, fittingly, by pointing to its shift from the monological to the dialogical: “Reason in such a model does not mean universal principles dominating particulars, but more concretely means giving reasons, the

practical stance of being reasonable, willing to talk and listen” (68). Young maintains the promise of a dialogical view in terms of enlarged thought, and defends a communicative, inclusionary, and participatory view on its basis.

Nevertheless, Young leverages her critique of unity into a critique of the moral stance of impartiality, even in its dialogical Habermasian form. Even before contending with Habermas, Young targets the concept of impartiality as not only *unified*, but also as *aperspectival*, or transcendent of perspective as such. So conceived, impartiality is a dangerous illusion, necessarily both impossible to attain and insidious as an aspiration. The operation of such a non-perspective is predicated upon the elimination of two forms of difference or alterity: “the irreducible specificity of situations and the difference among moral subjects” (61). The charge that the concept of impartiality as such is necessarily a threat to alterity does not obviously apply, at least in this formulation, to the discourse ethical conception of the moral point of view. The danger to the first form of alterity, for instance, stems from the attempt on the part of deontological moral theory to articulate universal norms that fit all situations without regard to contextual specifics, with the result that morally relevant considerations fall from view. This difficulty can be passed over here, however, as it is precisely one of the difficulties that discourse ethics is designed to address; Habermas argues (following Klaus Günther) that a successful moral theory must accommodate discourses not only for the justification, but also for the application, of moral norms.²⁰ The second form of alterity is more pertinent to our purposes, however, as it ties to the issue of the moral point of view as discussed in the previous section. Young expresses the problematic and potentially oppressive character of an *aperspectival* conception of impartiality in particularly stark terms as follows:

²⁰ See *Justification and Application*, as well as Günther, *The Sense of Appropriateness*. I will not go into the details of this issue here.

Impartial reason must judge from a point of view outside the particular perspectives of persons involved in interaction, able to totalize these perspectives into a whole, or general will...The impartial subject need acknowledge no other subjects whose perspective should be taken into account and with whom discussion might occur. Thus the claim to be impartial often results in authoritarianism. By asserting oneself as impartial, one claims authority to decide an issue, in place of those whose interests and desires are manifest. From this impartial point of view one need not consult with any other, because the impartial point of view already takes into account all possible perspectives. (62)

Habermas's conception of the moral point of view does not fall prey to much of this critique, insofar as his discourse ethics rests precisely upon conceiving impartiality as an intersubjective stance that requires moral agents to engage with actual others. In this way, the charge that impartiality risks closing off discourse, a risk that Young places particular emphasis upon here, is already foreclosed in the turn from a monological to a dialogical moral view.

Nevertheless, the distinction between the moral and the ethical still runs the risk of placing *certain* perspectives or interests at risk of being shut out of discourse insofar as they do not meet the demands of generalizability as conceived by Habermas. For Young, such exclusion results from the demand for the *unity* of the moral point of view, which requires a bracketing of “the sensuous, desiring and emotional experiences that tie me to the concreteness of things, which I apprehend in their particular relation to me” (62). In this way, as we have seen Benhabib argue, Young argues that a conception of the moral point of view that insists on the autonomy of the moral realm runs the risk of silencing certain voices or being closed to certain perspectives. On this basis, Young rejects *impartiality as such* insofar as it is a manifestation of *unity* and is incompatible with a view that denies the possibility of transcending all perspectives—i.e. with the perspectivalism that she and I share. This leaves room, however, for a conception of impartiality that does not depend on the bifurcation of the moral and the ethical, and that is not aperspectival and difference-transcending. I develop such an account of impartiality below. In the meantime, I contend that, in rejecting the concept of impartiality altogether, Young jettisons a concept that she requires to give her account normative critical bite. Rather than reject the

concept of impartiality, as well as the concept of universality that Young consistently pairs with impartiality, we in fact require them as regulative ideals that give force to our criticisms of failures here and now to accommodate perspectives and engage others.

In the Habermasian framework, as we have seen, the moral stance of impartiality with which Young takes issue translates in the political realm into a public sphere dominated by argumentation and governed by its norms. Young worries that the dominant norms of communication engendered by this framework exclude alternative modes of communication; she thus leverages her critique of unity into a critique of the unification of public discourse in the form of argumentation. In “Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy” (hereafter “CO”), Young extends this line of thinking into a critique of deliberative democracy. Here again she targets Enlightenment ideals, this time in the form of the institutions of bourgeois revolution which, despite their egalitarian pronouncements, remained elitist and exclusionary insofar as they were dominated by property-owning white men. The norms of these institutions reflect this type of sociocultural exclusion, particularly insofar as deliberation is styled agonistically, in terms of contest and battle. These norms serve to silence, frustrate, and even demoralize certain would-be participants. Young indicts deliberativists of “restricting their concept of democratic discussion narrowly to critical argument,...[thereby] assum[ing] a culturally biased conception of discussion that tends to silence or devalue some people or groups” (120). Moreover, this exclusion is not merely the result, according to Young, of the faulty application of the norms of discourse, but is constitutive of the norms themselves.

In response to these problems Young offers a view of *communicative* democracy that sees differences between participants as a resource for reaching understanding rather than a difficulty to be overcome. As part of the project of including types of input that the norms of

deliberation rule out, she calls for the expansion of the model of communication beyond argumentation (120). She mobilizes other modes of communication, such as storytelling, precisely with the goal of resisting the unification of public discourse. Young argues for the importance of storytelling for democratic communication partly by claiming that “[v]alues, unlike norms, often cannot be justified through argument. But neither are they arbitrary... Through narrative the outsiders may come to understand why the insiders value what they value and why they have the priorities they have” (131-32). Beyond the implicit appeal to perspective sharing here, Young also insinuates that, while public discourse ought not be *limited* to argument, the contributions to such discourse cannot simply act as inert inputs, but must be taken up and engaged with. This engagement, moreover, must be critical, and can even be characterized in some respect as *rational*; for instance, in “ICP” Young claims that “Individual needs, desires and feelings can be rationally articulated and understood, no less than can facts about the world or norms” (69). Here she suggests that we have some rational access to affect, such that these elements can be inputs to moral conversation. Such rational and critical engagement, however, at least requires argumentation in the broader sense adumbrated above, i.e. as critical engagement oriented toward consensus. While Young acknowledges that we must conceptualize argumentation as an important part of public discourse, she clearly construes it in a much narrower sense and seems to give it the role of a mere rhetorical device. However, Young’s defense of other modes of communication, which nevertheless require critical engagement, can easily accommodate my recommendation of an expansion of our understanding of argumentation, such that values and narratives can be seen as inputs to it. On such an expanded account, Young’s examples of agents engaging in *extra-argumentative* modes of communication could still be seen as engaged in argumentation *qua* critical engagement with

other perspectives and with a view toward agreement. In this way, we can include particularity and affect in public discourse without detriment to the crucial moment of critical scrutiny.

Indeed, conceiving public communication along the lines of critical engagement is central to conceiving it as *democratic*. The capacity to transcend one's own given perspective embodied in the 'me' via the critical distancing activity of the 'I' is central to democratic sociality. As such, public communication does not become democratic until critical negotiation of perspectives occurs. The 'willingness to talk and listen' that Young values must be distinguished from, and recognized to involve more than, 'willingness to talk and let others talk.'

Young's critique of the argumentative bias of deliberativism and her objection to appeals to impartiality and universality merge in her rejection of *unity* as the aim of democratic communication. In "CO" she objects not only to a conception of the common good, but also to the goal of mutual agreement, which she argues can again serve to exclude insofar as it casts difference as an obstacle to be transcended and will thus protect already existing privilege. She is correct only if the consensus is predicated upon the complete shedding of all particular interests and motivations—as in the model of impartiality she rightly attacks in Habermas. This is not the only model of impartiality to which we can appeal here, however. On a view of impartiality as an intersubjective stance that involves an openness to an expanding array of perspectives coupled with critical distance from one's own perspective, we can construe the exclusionary model as a failure of complete impartiality, and recast consensus as a meaningful regulative ideal. While I will fill this view out more in the next section, I can here point out that the protest against exclusion that Young herself makes here relies for its force upon a more inclusive sense of impartiality, and hence a more democratic model of consensus.

At this point, Young can offer a rejoinder to the charges above by appealing to the conception of *objectivity* that she deploys in several places, which could play the role of evaluative ideal or criterion for judgment that I have claimed her account lacks.²¹ In fact, Young's conception of objectivity dovetails with that discussed in the previous chapter, offering an intersubjective ideal that remains perspectival. On the one hand, then, my dispute with Young may appear to be entirely verbal, insofar as she articulates a conception of objectivity very close to my own, while she prefers to avoid the insidiously aperspectival and difference-suppressing connotations of the term 'impartiality.' At the same time, I argue that one can develop a view of impartiality that avoids these difficulties, just as Young argues in the case of objectivity. I can accept, then, that this is a verbal dispute when it comes to impartiality.

On the other hand, Young deploys this conception of objectivity while at the same time purporting to eschew not only an insidious version of the concept of impartiality, but also any concept of universality. However, without the appeal to universality that I have linked to the epistemic ideal of objectivity (as well as to the moral ideal of impartiality), the normative and critical force of her conception of objectivity remains unclear.²² Young appears to implicitly rely on such appeals in developing her account of objectivity; her repeated insistence on the inclusion of *all* rests precisely on the universalism she claims to be rejecting—a radically democratic

²¹ See *Inclusion and Democracy*, 112-115 for the fullest statement of Young's conception of objectivity.

²² I am tempted to suggest that the arguments directed against Longino in the previous chapter can be applied to Young as well. However, it is not clear that this is the case (although it is difficult to say whether it is or not, since Young's account of objectivity is not as fully articulated as Longino's); as it is not obvious that Young's account is a purely procedural one, as Longino's is. Young sometimes speaks as if objectivity can play the role of veritistic end-norm. In *Inclusion and Democracy* she even says that her interpretation of deliberation relies on the assumption that "the outcome of deliberation has a 'truth' value" (31 n. 24). On this basis, she defends an 'epistemic' account of democratic communication. Again, this view dovetails with my own, and provides a valuable resource for the type of project in which I am engaged. The difficulty, however, lies in making sense of this conception of objectivity without making some universalist appeal.

version of the all-affected principle that is quite consonant with my project.²³ However, her explicit rejection of universalism in any form undermines the normative force of this otherwise powerful account.

While I have focused on what I find lacking in Young's account, it is important to point out what she does offer in the way of resources for a radically democratic moral universalism. In the closing section of "ICP" she articulates two principles that flow, in her view, from the feminist slogan 'the personal is political,' but are also central to the account of the democratic ethical ramifications from sociality as intersubjectivity as I have been describing it: "(a) no social institutions or practices should be excluded a priori as being the proper subject for public discussion and expression; and (b) no persons, actions or aspects of a person's life should be forced into privacy" (74). While I agree with the content of, and motivation behind, these principles, they only get their critical bite from the ideals of universality and impartiality that Young rejects. Radical democracy means forcing into the space of public debate those issues that certain interests want kept private, so that they can be open to democratic negotiation and legitimation. Only on this basis can Young claim that "[e]mancipatory politics should foster a conception of public which in principle excludes no persons" (76). The demand for such a public comes from the universalist ideal of consensus that Young rejects; it is precisely this ideal that calls for a just and moral order or just society.

In spite of this, Young points us in the direction of perspectival universalism in a number of ways. For instance, she provides an important insight in emphasizing the impossibility of the transcendence of all perspectives. Impartiality on my view cannot be seen as the transcendence

²³ The all-affected principle is discussed further in Chapter V. One might object that the all-affected principle is constrained to specific contexts, and thus requires no context-transcendent appeal. However, as we shall see in Chapter V, the bounds of the context to which the principle applies are themselves open to contestation; they cannot be determined *a priori*.

of perspectives achieved by an isolated moral subject, but can only be a stance of critical distance from one's own commitments and critical openness to the perspectives of others. Overall she offers resources for my radically democratic and universalist perspectivalism insofar as she relies on a version of the all-affected principle, articulates the importance of attentiveness to particular interests, argues that difference is a resource rather than an obstacle to democratic discourse, and offers resources for challenging the dominant norms of the status quo.

3. Benhabib and Procedural Universality

Given the pitfalls of the attempts to defend a thoroughgoing universalism of the Habermasian type, on the one hand, and a particularism like Young's that rejects the appeal to universality altogether, on the other, a reasonable response seems to be to articulate a synthesis of the two views that navigates a middle course. Benhabib's modification of Habermas's discourse ethical proceduralism into a view that more adequately accommodates particular (non-generalizable) needs and interests exemplifies such a strategy. In order to do this, Benhabib shifts the aim of moral discourse from consensus to conversation; the procedure of ongoing moral conversation, for Benhabib, becomes the locus of a purely procedural account of universality, in which we aim, not for an ideal outcome, but for an idealized form of the procedure itself. She thereby provides a conception of impartiality that parallels Longino's conception of objectivity—that is, she gives us a method-norm divorced from any end-norm. In doing so, she jettisons the possibility of articulating impartiality as a regulative ideal that can motivate and legitimate procedural impartiality (i.e. the procedural norms of moral conversation) in the same way that, as I argued in the previous chapter, veritistic objectivity motivates and legitimates procedural objectivity.

As a result, in spite of the advance she has made on the potentially exclusionary or anti-egalitarian consequences of Habermas's view by rejecting the delimitation of the moral sphere to generalizable interests, Benhabib is unable to articulate the source of the normative force of procedural impartiality, and thus cannot account for the critical force of radical challenges to any given instance of the procedure of moral conversation as exclusionary. Impartiality as a regulative ideal, on my alternative model, generates the demand for procedural impartiality, which involves critical openness to other perspectives and critical distance from one's own perspective. I argue, then, that maintaining a more robust regulative ideal of impartiality, on the model of the normative perspective of the universal, allows us to more forcefully articulate the demand for attention to particular perspectives, such that universalism simultaneously moves us in the direction of a radically democratic perspectivalism.²⁴

In *Critique, Norm, and Utopia* and *Situating the Self*, Benhabib attempts to take stock of the potential for defending a deontological ethical view of the Kantian stripe in the wake of Hegel's critique of Kant, as well as Neo-Hegelian and Neo-Aristotelian critiques of the implicit rationalism and formalism of contemporary forms of deontological proceduralism. Like Habermas, Benhabib defends a discourse-ethical updating of Kantian deontology on the grounds that the shift from a monological to a discursive, dialogical stance provides precisely the resources for accommodating Hegel's critique. The deontological aspect of her view manifests itself primarily in her emphasis on the legitimating force of proper procedure; and its discourse-ethical nature rests on the conception of this procedure as one of testing the intersubjective validity of norms, where norms take the form of validity claims that are in principle open to critical evaluation on the part of interlocutors. Benhabib, like Habermas, conceives of moral

²⁴ While, for the epistemic realm, it makes sense to refer to the end-norm of objectivity as 'veritistic,' this term does not clearly work to describe the moral concept of impartiality. I thus use the terms 'procedural impartiality' and 'impartiality as a regulative ideal' to refer to impartiality in its 'method-norm' and 'end-norm' sense, respectively.

justification in terms of public debate and argumentation constrained by the demands of the discourse principle, (D).

As we saw above, however, Benhabib maintains that Habermas falls short of fulfilling the promise of discourse ethics. Specifically, for Benhabib, discourse ethics contains within it an implicit utopian projection or ideal of the good life, given that it accommodates particular needs and interests as inputs to moral discourse and considers the potential consequences of the norms under discussion for the various participants. However, as soon as Habermas opens the door to this utopian projection, he quickly shuts it again by instating a strict distinction between the moral and the ethical, and proscribing the latter from the realm of moral discourse. In the closing chapter of *Critique, Norm, and Utopia* Benhabib mobilizes Hegel's critique of Kant against this stricture of Habermas's discourse ethics, charging that his attempt to derive discourse-ethical moral principles (specifically the universalizability principle, (U)) from the presuppositions of argumentation must either 1) fail to warrant the inference from the latter to the former, or 2) build in implicit ethical premises that are disallowed on Habermas's version of the universalistic moral point of view.²⁵ Benhabib's strategy is to firmly grasp the latter horn of the dilemma in an attempt to develop a more ethically substantive and contextually sensitive discourse ethics. She openly abandons neutrality at the moral level in favor of explicitly privileging the thick ethical presuppositions of a modern, postconventional, secular form of life, from which she derives the inherently democratic discourse-ethical principles

(1) that we recognize the right of all beings capable of speech and action to be participants in the moral conversation—I will call this *the principle of universal moral respect*; (2)...that within such conversations each has the same symmetrical rights to various speech acts, to initiate new topics, to ask for reflection about the presuppositions of the conversation, etc. Let me call this *the principle of egalitarian reciprocity*. (*Situating the Self* 29)

²⁵ See esp. pp. 298-309.

The principles of respect and reciprocity represent the substantive commitments that provide the constraining normative framework of the procedure of moral conversation. Benhabib thus insists that the conception of the right embodied in discourse ethics retains a thin conception of the good life as one lived in accordance with the demands of justice and equality.

Benhabib's attempt to provide ethical substance to the discourse-ethical conception of morality involves a reformulation of the account of the moral point of view that we find in Habermas. While Habermas attempts to accommodate Hegel's critique of Kantian formalism by allowing for interests as inputs to moral conversation, he limits these inputs to generalizable interests—ethical particularities that are not thus generalizable are weeded out by virtue of the application of the universalizability principle. In Benhabib's terms, borrowed from Mead, Habermas's version of the moral point of view only accommodates the perspective of the 'generalized other.' In taking the standpoint of the generalized other, we treat everyone as equal, abstracting from difference and assuming needs and interests much like our own; we treat every other as a rational and moral agent, and as a possessor of the same rights to which we lay claim.²⁶

Given Benhabib's move to include non-generalizable inputs to moral discourse, her norms of respect and reciprocity require attentiveness to the *concrete other* as well as the generalized—i.e. attention to the needs and interests of particular others and groups as well as to the 'general interest.' Benhabib's concrete other involves a standpoint that takes into account difference and particularity, with "each and every rational being as an individual with a concrete history, identity and affective-emotional constitution" (159). In addition to the fact that it follows

²⁶ As mentioned in Section 1, Benhabib's use of the concept of the 'generalized other' does not map onto Mead's; in *Situating the Self*, Benhabib acknowledges this, though she charges Mead with making the same mistake here that Habermas does (i.e. restricting the moral point of view to that of the generalized other). Below I discuss the effect of shifting back to properly Meadian terminology on this account of the moral point of view.

from the allowance of non-generalizable interests and needs into moral conversation, Benhabib's account requires the expansion of the moral point of view to accommodate such a perspective for yet another reason, which regards the epistemology of moral argumentation and provides further justification for rejecting the restriction of the moral point of view to the perspective of the generalized other in the first place. Benhabib argues that it is only on the basis of adopting the standpoint of the concrete other that we can recognize others as different from ourselves at all, such that a conception of the moral point of view that ignores the concrete other falls prey to an 'epistemological blindness.' The result of this blindness is a 'substitutionalist universalism' that, by focusing only on the standpoint of the generalized other, renders every moral subject essentially replaceable by every other. Such a view ends up reducing the other to the self in a way that renders dialogue unnecessary; as such, Habermas has undone the progress he made in shifting to an emphasis on dialogue by restricting that dialogue to the generalizable, thereby disallowing the expression of difference among moral subjects.²⁷

Benhabib thus encourages a shift from substitutionalist to *interactive* universalism, which supplements the perspective of the generalized other with that of the concrete other. The latter perspective requires precisely the type of dialogue that Benhabib worries will be rendered unnecessary on a substitutionalist account. Moreover, from the point of view of interactive universalism, substitutionalist universalism is not a type of universalism at all, but rather one of two other phenomena: 1) a manifestation of the mistake of taking a particular perspective to be the universal perspective; or 2) a formalism of the kind that falls prey to the charge of emptiness.

²⁷ Here Benhabib expresses the same worry in criticizing Habermas's conception of the moral point of view that Young expresses in criticizing Benhabib's account of perspective-sharing, namely that dialogue will be rendered unnecessary: "Neither the concreteness nor the otherness of the 'concrete other' can be known in the absence of the *voice* of the other... Without engagement, confrontation, dialogue and even a 'struggle for recognition' in the Hegelian sense, we tend to constitute the otherness of the other by projection and fantasy or ignore it in indifference" (168). In spite of Young's worries, then, the type of perspective-sharing that is necessary for moral universalism is only possible dialogically—that is, as the result of actually engaging with others in the public sphere.

A robust discourse-ethical deontology, on the other hand, requires interactive universalism, for, in Benhabib's terms: "Without assuming the standpoint of the concrete other, no coherent universalizability test can be carried out, for we lack the necessary epistemic information to judge my moral situation to be 'like' or 'unlike' yours" (163-64). Benhabib's account of universalizability thus represents a departure from a strictly abstractive form of Kantian deontology, as does her account of *universality*, which she describes as "a regulative ideal that does not deny our embodied and embedded identity, but aims at developing moral attitudes and encouraging political transformations that can yield a point of view acceptable to all" (153). In this formulation, on my view, Benhabib is moving toward the Mead-inspired moral stance that I have been describing as the normative perspective of the universal.

How are we to conceive Benhabib's construction of the moral point of view as comprising the perspectives of both generalized and concrete others in the Meadian terms articulated here? We should first note that the conception of the generalized other at work in Mead is very different than Benhabib's. In Mead's terms, the generalized other is not a formal, particularity-suppressing abstraction, but is the substantive community perspective deposited in the 'me.' It thus has precisely the kind of relativity to a particular community or form of life that Benhabib's generalized other eschews. We must keep this in mind when considering the charge, which Benhabib levels, that Mead, like Habermas, conflates the moral point of view with that of the generalized other. This is certainly mistaken if Benhabib is referring to Mead's own conception of the generalized other, since for Mead this is precisely the perspective that gets transcended in moral reflection or argumentation via the appeal to a broader perspective. We might therefore say that the moral point of view is not a *generalized*, but a *generalizing*, perspective. However, this still may seem to leave our Meadian picture open to the charge that it

privileges the generalized other in *Benhabib's* sense—that is, that it ignores particular, concrete others and favors abstraction, making basically the same mistake that Habermas does.

Nevertheless, even if some of Mead's language suggests such an interpretation, I contend that we can mobilize the Meadian framework in a way that avoids this objection, thus giving an account of the moral point of view that accommodates not only the generalized other (in Benhabib's sense) but the concrete other as well.

As discussed in Chapter II, while the 'me' is the repository of the perspective of the generalized other, the 'I' provides the mechanism that makes abstraction from this perspective possible via a transcendence of given perspectives and appeal to a broader array of perspectives. Now, this broader array may include simply the perspective of a more inclusive community. This community, while on the one hand generalizing, can be seen as more inclusive only if it accommodates the needs and interests of more others—in this case *concrete* others. Moreover, for the actual perspectives of concrete others to be made available to us, I must engage them in actual communicative interaction. If I only rely on the other in myself (the generalized other) no voice comes in from the outside to challenge, criticize, or contest my representation of the interests and needs of others. On this interpretation of the Meadian framework, we are able to articulate the demand both for actual dialogue and for the recognition of the other as different from myself. Both demands must be fulfilled via the activity of the 'I,' which involves not only reflectively expanding the boundaries of a given context of communication, but also adopting responsive communicative stances in engaging with the perspectives of others.

The Meadian model of the normative perspective of the universal functions in such a way as to reflect many of the advances Benhabib has herself made in her account of the moral point of view; that is, it involves the type of procedural impartiality that Benhabib describes. However,

I argue here that, for the purposes of a critical and radically democratic model of social practice derived from the communicative dimension of sociality, the former model in fact better accommodates the demands of concrete others in particular contexts, precisely *because* it maintains a more robust conception of universality in the form of impartiality as a regulative ideal. To understand this key difference between my account and Benhabib's, we must turn to a discussion of Benhabib's conceptions of universality and utopia.

As discussed, the expansion of the context of communication to which Mead appeals in discussing the capacity of the 'I' for critique and reform meets a limit concept in the form of the logical universe of discourse, analogous in some respects to Habermas's ideal speech situation. Benhabib likewise mobilizes a conception of such an ideal to lend normative force to contestation and critique of existing practices and institutions. For Benhabib, however, this ideal is not purely formal (or *moral* in Habermas's sense); rather, taking into account the effect of norms on the needs and interests of concrete others opens a space for the articulation of a thin conception of the good life, a utopian projection. This projection serves, not as a blueprint for a good society, but rather as a normative yardstick against which to measure current arrangements and point to failures here and now, giving it critical and contestatory power:

The discourse theory does not develop a positive model of functioning institutions, which after all will always be subject to time-space constraints as well as to those of scarce resources and personnel. The discourse theory develops a normative and critical criterion by which to judge existing institutional arrangements, insofar as these current arrangements suppress a 'generalizable interest'...[O]ne can use this criterion as a critical yardstick by which to uncover the underrepresentation, the exclusion and silencing of *certain kinds* of interests. (47-48)

At first sight, the utopian projection that serves as this normative and critical standard appears to be analogous to Habermas's ideal speech situation, with the addition of attention to non-generalizable as well as generalizable interests. This, however, cannot be the case; for Habermas's ideal speech situation inherently involves the counterfactual ideal of *consensus* as the presupposed *telos* of moral conversation that undergirds its rationality. However, precisely

this demand for consensus leads Habermas to distinguish moral questions of justice—i.e. those susceptible to ideal consensus—from ethical questions of the good life—which are precisely not thus susceptible. The demand that *all* debates that Benhabib wants to treat on the level of the moral be subject to the constraint of presupposing an ideal consensus as *telos* thus raises potential problems regarding conflicts among disparate forms of life or individual life-projects. In order to *moralize* the full range of issues she wants up for discussion, then, Benhabib must uncouple moral argumentation from the demand for consensus. Her maneuver is to recouple moral norms based on generalizable interests with ethical conceptions of the good emerging from particular contexts while jettisoning the commitment to consensus embodied in (U) in favor of *ongoing moral conversation*.

Benhabib's utopian projection is thus not a model of substantive consensus, but rather an idealization of the *procedure* oriented toward collective problem-solving—that is, an idealization of moral discourse itself. In this sense, her version of discourse ethics remains, strictly speaking, a type of pure proceduralism: “What I propose is a procedural reformulation of the universalizability principle along the model of a moral conversation in which the capacity to reverse perspectives, that is, the willingness to reason from the others' point of view, and the sensitivity to hear their voice is paramount” (8). This model of moral conversation, while procedural, is not intended to be purely formal; on the contrary, precisely in formulating the notion of ongoing moral conversation, Benhabib insists that “universalizability is not only a *formal procedure* but involves the utopian projection of a way of life in which respect and reciprocity reign” (38). This, then, becomes the criterion for the evaluation of historically and contextually situated practices of moral argumentation: “[W]e begin to ask not what all would or could agree to as a result of practical discourses to be morally permissible or impermissible, but

what would be allowed and perhaps even necessary from the standpoint of continuing and sustaining the practice of the moral conversation among us” (38). The moral point of view, then, is derived from the process of moral conversation, not the idealized end of that conversation in consensus.

This move, the shift from consensus to conversation, is a key element of Benhabib’s account for our purposes, as it is here that she runs up against a difficulty that demands further rethinking of the concept of universality and its relationship with the particularity of concrete perspectives. Benhabib’s idealized procedure sits uneasily between the formal and the substantive, and it is unclear whether this stance can be maintained. On the one hand, as mentioned, Benhabib describes the ideal of moral conversation as ‘utopian’ precisely in order to resist an overly formalistic view. Nevertheless, she insists that her view is a procedural reformulation of the Habermasian regulative ideal of consensus. As such, while she acknowledges that discourse ethics is informed by substantive ethical commitments, she translates these into a procedural model in terms of which the moral point of view is defined. However, as a form of pure proceduralism, Benhabib’s view necessarily fails to distinguish a procedure-independent standard of correctness for the outcomes of procedure.²⁸ Insofar as

²⁸ I am indebted in formulating this critique to Carol Gould’s critique of Habermasian proceduralism in the first chapter of *Globalizing Democracy and Human Rights* (17-31). Gould argues that the obliteration of the normative gap between the procedurally-arrived-at and the just or correct follows from proceduralism of any kind. In her terms, pure proceduralism either subordinates considerations of justice to democratic procedures or identifies the former with the latter, so that there is no way in principle to override decisions arrived at via democratic decision-making that nevertheless violate what we would consider principles of justice. Benhabib’s shift to a proceduralism divorced from any conception of ideal outcome makes her particularly prey to Gould’s critique. However, given that I defend a modified Habermasian view myself, I clearly disagree with Gould that this critique works against *any* form of Habermasian view whatever. I in fact think that Gould interprets Habermas’s conception of consensus uncharitably, and that a version of his view that retains a conception of ideal outcome (as mine does) gets around Gould’s critique in a way that Benhabib’s account cannot. Ultimately, Gould opts to develop a substantive account of justice and rights independent of procedural considerations entirely, and hence to radically separate considerations of justice and democracy such that the latter are subordinated to the former. My disagreement with Gould regarding her critique of Habermas thus translates into a sharp contrast between our positive views, insofar as I connect the procedure-independent standard of correctness to procedural (i.e. democratic) considerations. The standard is thus

Benhabib restricts the moral point of view of impartiality to the strictly procedural domain, she cannot articulate the potential for a normative gap between a given collective decision arrived at via a relatively impartial procedure, on the one hand, and an ideally impartial outcome on the other. On this view, Benhabib's thoroughgoing proceduralism leads to the loss of any procedure-independent standard against which we can evaluate given collective decisions.²⁹

At first glance, Benhabib seems to have an obvious rejoinder to this criticism: namely, that the function of the utopian projection of idealized ongoing moral conversation is to serve precisely as the type of normative yardstick that seems to be missing according to this line of critique. However, by adopting a strict proceduralism, Benhabib has given up much of the substance of her utopian projection; the location of the utopian projection solely at the procedural level of conversation rather than consensus makes the procedure itself its own aim, a move that seems to jettison any procedure-independent perspective from which the norms that govern moral conversation are motivated or given normative force.³⁰ From this perspective, it is not clear what legitimates the ideal procedure itself—particularly if its ideality is not due to its instrumentality to the achievement of an ideal outcome. Without the possibility of appealing to

not as *radically* independent of procedure as Gould's, though it still serves to establish the normative gap required to maintain the possibility of critique and contestation.

²⁹ My line of critique against Benhabib here parallels that of the previous chapter against Longino; refer to Chapter III for further discussion of the shortcomings of proceduralism.

³⁰ Benhabib occasionally speaks as if moral conversation does have some other aim, but it is not clear what the status of this aim is. Sometimes she implies that the reasonable mutual agreement that Habermas posits as a presupposition of moral conversation should be cashed out in terms of some concept of 'general interest' as a regulative ideal. However, she does not elaborate on this, and without elaboration it is not clear how this substantively departs from a teleological conception of a regulative ideal in favor of a pure proceduralism at all. Elsewhere she suggests that the concrete *telos* is not a substantive agreement, even as regulative ideal, but rather "collective decisions...reached through procedures which are radically open and fair to all" (9). The latter formulation seems to have the advantage insofar as such decisions are temporary, local, and thus always held open to revision; moreover, it contains an important grain of truth, insofar as in actual contexts of democratic deliberation or contestation we are in fact striving to come to some *decision*, and to have that decision be evaluable as *legitimate*. However, the valorization of revisability and of the legitimacy of given local decisions in the absence of any further end simply relocates the problem of proceduralism. It is not clear how we could evaluate revision as for the better, or procedures as radically fair and open, without some ideal toward which revision moves or which the procedure strives to approximate.

an ideal outcome as the legitimating ground of the procedure of moral conversation, the status of ideal procedure itself as normative yardstick becomes groundless. In defense of retaining some conception of consensus as ideal outcome, and hence of rejecting Benhabib's shift from consensus to conversation, one could argue that precisely the ideal that consensus represents, which is of course, counterfactual, normatively authorizes the procedure in which Benhabib finds so much value.

However, the demand for consensus was what led Habermas to articulate his hard and fast distinction between the moral and the ethical, the potentially exclusionary and anti-egalitarian implications of which have come under fire above. In light of this, I have argued that Benhabib has an advantage over Habermas due to the introduction of non-generalizable interests into public debate. This in turn leads her, as we saw, to divorce conversation from consensus, which in turn is the source of her disadvantage according to this line of critique. How then is a discourse-ethical moral universalism to accommodate the force of both lines of critique—that is, how do we retain the robust conception of universality contained in the regulative ideal of consensus while nevertheless allowing for attention to non-generalizable interests and the concrete other?

I argue that the solution lies in retaining the conception of the ideal outcome of the procedure and rethinking it, along the lines of a Meadian perspectivalism, in the form of the normative perspective of the universal. This move presents us with a view of the perfect impartiality of the moral point of view as a regulative ideal to be pursued via the continuous inclusion of new perspectives, both those of concrete others and of broader generalized others. This conception of impartiality as a limit-concept allows for the articulation of the normative gap that drops out of Benhabib's account—i.e. the normative gap between the procedurally justified

and the impartial—without treating impartiality as an *aperspectival* ideal. To combat the totalizing risk associated with the Habermasian demand for consensus, this approach allows for a radically open and contestatory space in which we can create the conditions for a radically democratic public sphere that does not restrict modes of political action or which issues are subject to democratic negotiation. While this view is a robust universalism, then, it combines this aspect with a demand to attend to concrete particularity—indeed, such attention is precisely the fulfillment of the demand of universality. The claim that a substantive universalist conception will always be exclusionary misses the force of the normative conception of the universal as I articulate it: insofar as some universal is challenged on the basis of excluding certain perspectives and interests, the force of this challenge is to call for the open-ended expansion to a more inclusive standpoint, which is precisely what the normative perspective of the universal calls for. Universality as I understand it provides the standard for evaluation against which we can see exclusion as a problem that needs to be challenged. Thus, perhaps ironically, one of the elements that both Young and Benhabib have moved away from *for the sake of* the expression of difference and particularity is precisely what we need to recover in order to articulate the demand for the kind of perspectives and the kind of contestation for which Young and Benhabib hope to make room. In this sense, then, I describe my view as a universalist perspectivalism.

The Meadian conception of universality clearly plays a crucial role in allowing us to articulate this brand of universalism. In what remains of this section I draw on elements of Mead's moral philosophy for the purpose of clarifying the nature of the conception of universality I defend here. For Mead, the task of moral philosophy is not to hand down prescriptions for action from an abstracted standpoint, but rather to attend to the demand that emerges from the method of ethical reasoning, which in turn develops via socialization

processes. In “Philanthropy from the Point of View of Ethics” (hereafter “PPVE”), Mead argues that this demand stems from the social ideal of the universal community that is implicit in human sociality:

It is this feel for a social structure which is implicit in what is present that... carries a sense of obligation which transcends any claim that his [the individual's] actual social order fastens upon him. It is an ideal world that lays the claim upon him, but it is an ideal world which grows out of this world and its undeniable implications. (404)

Mead, of course, does not give a fixed picture of this universal social order—his view is not utopian in *this* sense. Rather, he argues that the demand for movement *toward* such a social order requires the democratic expansion of the universe of discourse in order to encapsulate the perspectives of a greater number of others. This concrete democratic moral demand presents the rejoinder to the worry that a conception of universality as a regulative ideal must be either dangerously totalizing or too formal to do any work. Mead's conception of universality navigates between these two poles by making concrete demands on particular agents in concrete communicative contexts without predetermining the outcome of the negotiation of perspectives that goes on in these contexts.

In dialogue with the discourse-ethical account of the moral point of view, I contend that the moral demand implicit in the Meadian conception of universality can itself be cast as a call to the moral point of view of *impartiality*. Impartiality, on this view, is an inherently intersubjective stance that involves the expansion of the boundaries of the immediate universe of discourse in order to allow for the input of a greater number of perspectives and interests, and that demands that we attend to this input in social action. The degree to which Mead articulates this moral demand from the perspective of a social conception of universality comes to the fore in his formulation of his own version of the categorical imperative in his “Fragments on Ethics”:

When it comes to the problem of reconstruction there is one essential demand—that all of the interests that are involved should be taken into account. One should act with reference to all of the interests that are involved: that is what we would call a “categorical imperative.” (MSS 386)

One can read this claim in two, not necessarily incompatible, ways. First, Mead here appears to display his indebtedness to the same brand of Kantian deontological universalism that informs discourse ethics. On the other hand, one might detect a note of irony here, which will be welcome to those suspicious of the rationalism and formalism of Kant's moral theory, insofar as Mead's view here is explicitly cast in dialogical terms that stem from the inherently social nature of the moral agent. This contrasts sharply with the monological Kantian account of the autonomous rational subject. Moreover, Mead's formulation here involves an explicit call for attention to *particular* interests; he thus overcomes formalist universalism by moving in the direction of a conception of universality that involves negotiation with particularity. The Kantian moment of universality emerges from concrete instances of sociality, as we see in Mead, rather than being an autonomous sphere. Accordingly, the moral point of view is not a perspective that transcends all particular perspectives, but is rather the call for the appeal to the logical universe of discourse; this last in turn is the limit concept of the expansion of universes of discourse—the ideal organization of perspectives, those of both generalized and concrete others.

In "PPVE" Mead provides his 'categorical imperative' with more content, giving his most robust account of the ideal of universal community as well as of the demands it lays upon us. Mead describes the logical universe of discourse as "a social order that includes any rational being who is or may be in any way implicated in the situation within which thought deals," and describes it as laying a moral demand upon us as follows:

Its claim is that all of the conditions of conduct and all the values which are involved in the conflict must be taken into account in abstraction from the fixed forms of habits and goods which have clashed with each other...The claims of the ideal world are that the individual shall take into account all of the values which have been abstracted from their customary setting by the conflict and fashion his reconstruction in recognition of them all. (404-05)

Again, Mead here offers the basics of a communicative ethic that implies a transcendence of context in the direction of a universal society, while remaining bound to context. As such, we

can draw from Mead an account of universality as the ideal outcome of democratic procedures in a way that will allow us to criticize any given outcome here and now. Among the discourse ethicists we have discussed in this chapter, Benhabib comes the closest to approximating the Meadian account as I have described it, insofar as, *contra* Habermas, she insists on attention to the perspective of the concrete other in addition to the generalized other, while still maintaining, as against Young, that we need a universalist account of the moral point of view. However, in order to maintain such a position, she offers a purely procedural conception of universality, such that she loses the critical resources of a more robust account of universality as ideal outcome. This, then, is the point at which the Meadian account I develop takes another step forward, offering up a universalist perspectival conception of impartiality as a regulative ideal in the form of the normative perspective of the universal.

4. Conclusion

In addition to drawing on resources from the work of Mead, I have developed my universalist perspectivalism as an account of the moral point of view of impartiality via critical response to the work of three prominent discourse ethicists. While I have at times focused on my disagreements with these thinkers, I should emphasize that I share with them the commitments of a discourse-ethical approach, according to which the moral point of view should be articulated on the basis of an account of communication and intersubjectivity. This program, rooted largely in the work of Habermas, thus motivates much of my account. The outlines of my view can be discerned in the positions I take with and against the thinkers I deal with above. For instance, I follow both Young and Benhabib in departing from Habermas by reconceiving the moral point of view along lines that take into account the concrete as well as the generalized other.

Meanwhile, against Young and with Habermas and Benhabib, I maintain that this account must remain committed to a form of universalism. Finally, with Habermas and against both Young and Benhabib, I affirm the necessity of a robust and extra-procedural account of universality, which on my view does not entail letting go of the particular and the perspective of the concrete other.

Such an approach leads to a reformulation of the ideal of impartiality as a dialogical stance that involves critical distance from one's own perspective and critical openness to the perspectives of others. Such an account of impartiality is not conceived as individualistic, aperspectival, or abstractive; rather it is an other-directed, social capacity rooted in the context-transcending capabilities of the 'I.' It retains a simultaneously agreement-oriented and contestatory status insofar as it presupposes its own limit concept—the impartial organization of all perspectives (not their transcendence) in a form that accommodates each—as a regulative ideal. Moral claims have normative force insofar as they are evaluable in light of this ideal; as such, impartiality itself serves as the procedure independent standard that allows us to contest failures of impartiality here and now. This ideal cannot ever be *finally* achieved, but remains before us as a constant task. We can only take up this task by pursuing conditions of democratic social interaction.

While this moral view thus brings us around to an account of radical democracy, the extent of my divergence from Mouffe could not be more glaring than it is at this point. On offer here is a conception of radical democracy that goes beyond the purely political to articulate its own deeply moral underpinnings. My moral view, universalist perspectivalism, has political implications insofar as, from a moral point of view, it enjoins a robustly democratic approach to the legitimation of collective decisions and social relations. The conception of impartiality at

work here lays upon us a demand to take a democratic approach to accommodating the perspectives and heeding the claims of others in the cooperative coordination of social life. This requires a highly participatory form of democracy—in this respect, true democracy *must be* radical. Its radicality lies both in its rootedness in concrete sociality and particular perspectives, and in its critical and contestatory power, which makes it potentially transformative of social relations. However, as we have seen, a robust conception of universality plays a crucial role here; democracy must be radically open to input from external perspectives, and must therefore be prepared to contest morally arbitrary boundaries. In a world criss-crossed with transnational economic, political, and cultural relationships, democratic considerations cannot be confined to the bounded space of monadic social wholes; nation-states will inevitably fail to attain this self-sufficient and self-contained status. The universalism that emerges from this view of radical democracy thus enjoins a *cosmopolitan* approach to democracy as well. In the next chapter, I bring the normative account that I have outlined in the last two chapters to bear on issues in political theory; in doing so, I articulate a theory of democracy that serves as the political analogue to universalist perspectivalism: radical cosmopolitanism.

CHAPTER V

RADICAL DEMOCRATIZATION AND COSMOPOLITAN-MINDEDNESS

In the previous chapters I have defended a conception of universality that emerges from the communicative dimension of sociality; more specifically, it emerges from the context-transcending capabilities of individuals in concrete contexts of communication. This universality is thus not an abstraction over against the realm of the particular, but is rather the limit concept of the indefinite transcendence of given particular contexts via the appeal to a broader generalized other as well as to the perspectives of concrete others. I call the perspective that consists in making this appeal the ‘normative perspective of the universal.’ In a given normative domain, this perspective involves an implicit appeal to a regulative ideal of an all-inclusive organization of perspectives; this takes the form, for instance, of veritistic objectivity in the epistemic domain, and of impartiality as a regulative ideal in the moral. In each case, the regulative ideal provides a perspective from which we can criticize currently existing practices and consensuses. Again, however, this universalist ideal is not entirely abstractive, but is rooted in particular perspectivally-laden contexts and demands attention to particular perspectives. As such, I have labeled the view defended here ‘universalist perspectivalism.’

In this chapter, I argue that universalist perspectivalism offers a fruitful resource in the political realm for articulating a view that is both radically democratic and cosmopolitan. Since this overall project draws from a Meadian framework, I here begin by returning to the work of Mead in order to locate there the rudiments of the two components that will characterize the radical democratic and the cosmopolitan aspects, respectively, of the view I will develop. The

conception of radical democracy that I draw from Mead consists of a fusion of the concepts of democratic self-determination or popular sovereignty and of ‘revolution in permanence.’¹ I also discuss his account of a postnational perspective that he calls ‘international-mindedness.’ I update both of these concepts for contemporary purposes, transforming Mead’s ‘revolution in permanence’ and further fusing it with self-determination to obtain what I call ‘radical democratization.’ I also articulate a more strongly postnational version of international-mindedness, now in the form of ‘cosmopolitan-mindedness.’ The task of the rest of the chapter is to develop a robust conception of radical cosmopolitanism out of these components as drawn from a Meadian communicative framework.

Since much of this framework runs parallel to Habermas’s theory of communicative action, which itself draws on Mead, I turn in the second section to Habermas’s work on democracy and cosmopolitanism, also briefly considering the work of David Held. While Habermas does provide us with the valuable concept of the public sphere, he isolates actual decision-making too strictly from popular sovereignty, thereby falling far short of offering an account of radical democratization. He also restricts a genuine cosmopolitanism to the *abstract* universalism of the human rights framework; this, combined with his commitment to a strictly legalistic conception of rights, leads him to argue for a purely juridical or legal cosmopolitan order instead of a genuinely democratic transnational political order. Similarly, David Held, one of the foremost proponents of global democracy, detaches the sovereignty of this legal order too drastically from particular perspectives and contexts to provide the resources for a radically democratic cosmopolitanism.

¹ As I develop the specifically Meadian reading of ‘revolution in permanence,’ I do not go into the historical roots of this concept, which goes back to Marx and Engels and is most famously associated with Leon Trotsky.

I turn to a more promising approach to radical cosmopolitanism in the work of Carol Gould, focusing in particular on her *Globalizing Democracy and Human Rights*. Gould steers us in the direction of radical democratization by linking democratic public life more closely to collective decision-making, and offers a more promising basis for thinking about cosmopolitan-mindedness by drawing a concept of ‘concrete universality’ out of the complex network of human social relations, which she calls ‘intersociation.’ However, in spite of the affinities between the deeply social roots of both of our views, Gould’s rejects the type of communicative framework with which I am operating in favor of her own social ontology. This leads to differences between her account and mine regarding both the ‘all-affected principle’ (that is, the principle that all those affected by a decision should have some democratic control over that decision) and the relation between democracy and justice. The question then becomes whether we can derive the positive aspects of Gould’s account from my own picture of sociality as communicative intersubjectivity.

In order to answer this question, I turn in the last section to the work of James Bohman and Nancy Fraser. Bohman and Fraser share with my account a rootedness in a Meadian/Habermasian communicative framework that promotes democracy as constitutive of just social relations. Moreover, I interpret both of them as pointing us in the direction of a perspectival form of universalism that can do the strong normative and critical work that my account demands without falling prey to abstract universalism. In the first part of this section I focus on Bohman’s account of the dual instrumental/intrinsic value of democratic deliberation, as well as his account of the democratization of transnational public spheres. His conceptions of humanity and world citizenship also offer an analogue to my own account of the normative perspective of the universal, and thus of cosmopolitan-mindedness in Meadian form. Finally, for

the further radicalization of Bohman's account of transnational democracy, I discuss Fraser's account of the transformative politics of post-Westphalian democratic justice. This last account, I maintain, comes closest to giving us the basic framework for understanding the fusion of radical democratization with cosmopolitan-mindedness—i.e. for radical cosmopolitanism itself.

Radical cosmopolitanism in this form, like universalist perspectivalism, involves the appeal to a regulative ideal via the normative perspective of the universal. This ideal serves as a standard against which we can evaluate and criticize current democratic or undemocratic arrangements. Radical democratization in the direction of cosmopolitanism thus presents itself as a central political task. Drawing on the moral resources of universalist perspectivalism, radical cosmopolitanism enjoins attention to the an ever-proliferating array of perspectives and claims, both those of a broader community and those of concrete others, in the legitimation of social arrangements and the coordination of social life. In our actual political life, this array of perspectives meets no actual limit; given the conditions of globalization, it is more imperative than ever for the radical democrat to contest the harmful effects of national boundaries, which are, on this view, morally arbitrary insofar as the effects of decisions taken within them extend far beyond them. Thus we get the political analogue of universalist perspectivalism in the form of the radical cosmopolitanism defended here.

1. Permanent Revolution and International-Mindedness: Mead

The view I have defended in this project, universalist perspectivalism, draws much of its inspiration from the work of George Herbert Mead. In this section, I return to his work in order to begin to fill out the components of the political view that I derive from universalist perspectivalism, which I call radical cosmopolitanism. As was the case in the moral sphere,

Mead precedes Habermas in putting a dialogical spin on Kantian themes; this time those Kantian themes are a conception of autonomy as self-legislation and the moral-political ideal of a cosmopolitan order.² From the Meadian perspective, this allows us to articulate a conception of democracy as the ideal of a community collectively legitimating the norms to which it will be subject in a way that answers to the needs and interests of all; Mead also puts a revolutionary spin on this ideal by describing it as a type of ‘revolution in permanence’—that is, in a democratic order, revolutionary change is written into the political order as such. Moreover, as we shall see, the increasing interconnectedness of contemporary societies and the universal nature of communication itself both call for the extension of this democratic practice, and hence this democratic conception of community, to the cosmopolitan level. Mead argues that, for the purposes of peace, we must develop a more reflective and critical attachment to our political communities, a stance he calls ‘national-mindedness.’ This stance must in turn give way to a stance oriented toward peace and justice worldwide, which he calls ‘international-mindedness.’ The concepts of international-mindedness and democracy as the fusion of self-determination and revolution in permanence, when updated to what I call ‘cosmopolitan-mindedness’ and ‘radical democratization,’ provide the resources with which I articulate my conception of radical cosmopolitanism.

In the opening lines of “Natural Rights and the Theory of the Political Institution,” Mead formulates an account of democracy that combines the Kantian ideal of autonomy with the concept of a ‘revolution in permanence.’ He writes that, in democracy, “the form of government has become such that in its own operation the people can by legislation and amendment change it into any form they desire and still will have acted in a strictly legal and constitutional fashion” (150). This is a radically democratic version of the Kantian conception of autonomy as self-

² See especially Kant, “Perpetual Peace,” for the original Kantian formulation of this ideal.

legislation articulated at the level of the community. Popular sovereignty, then, means the empowerment of the people to make and legitimate decisions, to form institutions according to their will. The malleability and revisability of democratic institutions, moreover, incorporates the spirit of political revolution into the mode of governance. This, again, suggests a particularly radical conception of democracy as a type of ‘revolution in permanence,’ the institutionalization of permanent revolutionary activity. Such activity takes place largely in the form of conversation, or democratic deliberation, ensuing in legitimate collective decisions. We can understand such conversation roughly on the model of moral conversation as discussed in Chapter IV, where participants take on one another’s perspectives and appeal to a broader generalized other for the purpose of challenging the entrenched assumptions of the community.

The legitimating power of such deliberative activity lies in its orientation toward an ideal outcome, the regulative ideal of an all-inclusive organization of perspectives. In “Scientific Method and the Moral Sciences,” this *epistemic* character of Mead’s conception of democracy—i.e. its justification of democracy on the basis of the ‘correctness’ of outcomes of democratic activity—comes to the fore in the form of an emphasis on the communal formation of an ‘intelligent’ will: “There cannot be self-government until there can be an intelligent will expressed in the community, growing out of the intelligent attitudes of the individuals and groups in whose experience the community exists” (257-58).³ While this claim has a

³ This epistemic conception of democracy, which I endorse, can be found in the work of many deliberative democrats, including Habermas and Bohman, who are discussed below. I share with these deliberativists a conception of a procedure-generating regulative ideal, as seen in my discussions of objectivity and impartiality. There is a vast literature on epistemic conceptions of democracy, the details of which I do not go into here. Bohman and Rehg, eds. *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics*, offers a good sampling of high-quality work on this issue. Bohman himself canvases a great deal of this work in both *Public Deliberation* and “The Coming of Age of Deliberative Democracy.” The following works also defend some version of an epistemic conception of deliberative democracy: Anderson, “The Epistemology of Democracy,” Bohman, “Deliberative Democracy and the Epistemic Benefits of Diversity” and “Realizing Deliberative Democracy as a Mode of Inquiry: Pragmatism, Social Facts, and Normative Theory”; Cohen, “An Epistemic Conception of Democracy”; Estlund, “Beyond Fairness and Deliberation: The Epistemic Dimension of Democratic Authority” and “Making Truth Safe

Rousseauian ring to it, I argue that we can articulate on the basis of Mead's model an account of radical democracy that is attentive to a diversity of perspectives; an ideally intelligent will, which would articulate an ideally 'correct' deliberative outcome, serves as a regulative ideal that gives this conception of democracy critical force.

Mead himself articulates this critical force by drawing attention to the gap between the theory of democracy and its actual practice, on which basis he criticizes party politics, as well as the clientelism of the city-level political 'machines' of his day. The hope for democracy, in his view, lies in the possibility of making citizens identify social problems as their own problems, to which they must respond in a responsible manner; this, in turn, is accomplished by deepened and extended networks of communication: "It is the intensive growth of social interrelations and intercommunications that alone renders possible the recognition by the individual of the import for his social life of the corporate activity of the whole community. The task of intelligence is to use this growing consciousness of interdependence to formulate the problems of all, in terms of the problems of everyone" (264).⁴ Here we see, in the interplay of 'all' (a collective notion) and 'everyone' (a distributive notion), the interplay between universality and particularity—more specifically, between the perspectives of the generalized and concrete others—discussed in the previous chapter. We also see an emphasis on the kind of interconnectedness between people that characterizes the phenomenon of globalization that has been widely theorized in recent

for Democracy"; Talisse, *A Pragmatist Philosophy of Democracy*; Young, "Difference as a Resource for Democratic Communication."

⁴ This account of the formation of political community via intercommunication and shared interest bears a similarity to Dewey's conception of a public, articulated in *The Public and Its Problems*. Publics emerge, on this model, through the response of people to problem situations—thus they develop out of concrete contexts. However, on the Meadian model at least, they are by their nature context-transcending; particularly in the context of globalization, where economic inequalities and exploitation, as well as environmental degradation, have effects beyond the bounds of any local communities, publics, to be democratic, must also be cosmopolitan. Bohman draws heavily on this Deweyan model. For a recent attempt to articulate a radical democratic view on the basis of resources from Dewey's work, see Honneth, "Democracy as Reflexive Cooperation." I am deeply sympathetic with this essay, although Honneth works to distinguish the Deweyan model of cooperation from models that focus on communication. I am not convinced that, at least in Meadian form, the communicative model is all that different from the cooperation model.

years.⁵ Of course, Mead recognizes that this ideal of perspective-sharing among everyone is, if at all possible, exceedingly difficult, and not attainable in present conditions; rather, more particularistic affects and commitments are more likely to guide our social conduct.

Nevertheless, according to Mead, we have exemplars of universal communities of the kind we are treating here as a regulative ideal, in the form of, on the one hand, the economic community, and, on the other hand, the religious community as conceived by universalistic religions. As for the first, we can point out that it is no accident that the phenomena that characterize globalization are most often found in the realm of the economy; as Mead explains, “[The economic community] includes everybody with whom one can trade in any circumstances, but it represents a whole in which it would be next to impossible for all to enter into the attitudes of others” (MSS 326-27). The economic community, while universal, is thus not adequate to the demands of the democratic ideal. Religion has also long been another realm in which the universal community of humankind has been emphasized over particularistic affections; however, the universality of the religious community is *too* strong, to the degree that it risks homogenizing the community, subordinating the unique individual rather standing in a constructive dialectical relationship with her, whereas “the implication of democracy is rather that the individual can be as highly developed as lies within the possibilities of his own inheritance, and still can enter into the attitudes of the others whom he affects” (326). The paradigmatic universal communities we have ready-to-hand, then, will not do. Nevertheless, one of the effects of globalization, in addition to many negative ones, is to establish deeper and more extensive global interrelationships and structures of communication; as such, we have in a sense

⁵ See, among many other sources, Held, *Democracy and the Global Order* (esp. 90-96); Held et al., *Global Transformations*; as well as Habermas, “Postnational Constellation and the Future of Democracy” 65-80, where he describes such phenomena and discusses the extent to which “aspects of globalization actually weaken the capacity of the nation-state to maintain its borders and to autonomously regulate exchange processes with its external environment” (67).

moved closer to Mead's "ideal of human society...which does bring people so closely together in their interrelationships, so fully develops the necessary system of communication, that the individuals who exercise their own peculiar functions can take the attitude of those whom they affect" (327). Such perspective sharing, as we have seen, is precisely the mechanism that makes communication possible; thus, increasingly global communication structures move us in the direction of a democratic cosmopolitan ideal, though for the moment this ideal remains but a vague horizon. Mead paves the way for a specification of this vague cosmopolitan moral ideal in the passages from "Philanthropy from the Point of View of Ethics" in the previous chapter. In these passages he presents us, not with a contentful utopia, but an open conception of a regulative ideal of a social order that is democratically coordinated, via collective cooperation, for the satisfaction of the interests of all. Hans Joas, in his book *G. H. Mead*, draws on his own background in critical theory to develop Mead's cosmopolitan democratic ideal in the direction of the type of radical and critical project in which I am engaged here. Joas explains that our communicative interactions in concrete contexts involve a type of utopian projection or "historical end...not as a final state, but as the opening up of a maximum of future possibilities. Human mastery of nature and human freedom from dominance, a society in which all systemically important decisions are made publically and democratically: this is the concept of historical progress that can be rationally legitimated" (211). We thus have an unattainable ideal that nevertheless plays the role of regulative ideal for our current practices of institution-building and democratic political action, motivating ongoing democratization and providing a criterion against which to judge existing arrangements.⁶

⁶ Joas describes what he sees as the fundamental concept of Mead's work as 'practical intersubjectivity,' and maintains that "The political correlate of this concept is a social order in which the atomization of individuals is eliminated, not through their subordination to a collectivity, but instead through the participation of all in reasoning discussion to determine their common future" (13). Not that this conception of democracy is without its problems, as

Mead's cosmopolitanism follows from the possibility of communication across the boundaries of existing political communities. For Mead, the fact that we can carry on international, even global, conversation opens up the potential for the formation of an international, or even global, community.⁷ The form that such conversation takes remains underdeveloped in Mead's work; in later sections I draw on Habermas's conception of the public sphere to give this idea more content. It is clear, however, that for Mead the conversation that is at stake is cooperative (or, to use his term, 'neighborly') and involves mutual perspective-taking. The cultivation of a universal community thus requires the cultivation of such open cross-cultural communication. Again, the economic and the religious provide two poles on a type of continuum of universality, each exemplary but neither entirely adequate: "From both of these standpoints there is a universal society that includes the whole human race, and into which all can so far enter into relationship with others through the medium of communication" (282). Communication among various groups—including nations—ought to be able to accomplish the universality promised by the economy and religion in a more robust, democratic, and successful manner, which it will be the task of later sections to explore. Mead articulates a set of basic rights on this basis, and defends "the League of Nations, where every community recognizes every other community in the very process of asserting itself" (287).⁸ While we do not have to accept the particular institutional prescription that Mead offers (especially one including

Joas points out: "While voicing these hopes, [Mead] does not ask whether a compromise is appropriate when two opposed positions, both demanding recognition without being equally capable of being universalized, enter into collision with one another. He does not ask whether it can become necessary to break off discussion, when discussion is only intended to be a means of offering dilatory resistance to changing the existing circumstances" (140). Joas continues by pointing out that the potentially radical implications of this formulation do not sit well with Mead's professed meliorism and rejection of the positing of revolutionary goals. I leave aside the exegetical issues here in order to develop Mead's framework in what I see as the more radical and more promising direction; I share Joas's basic commitments here.

⁷ Mead's discussion of this issue in *MSS 270-72* presages much of the contemporary discussion of globalization in specifically Meadian terms of communication and perspective-sharing.

⁸ Mead writes this in the wake of World War I, which clearly influences the stance he takes here; here I should take note of the notoriously hawkish stance that Mead himself adopted during that war. For critiques of Mead's position during WWI, see Joas, among others.

Woodrow Wilson's foreign policy), Mead does point us here in the direction of a political order beyond the nation-state.

This model remains utopian, however, unless at least some gesture can be made toward how its realization might come about; one of the main obstacles here is the *psychological* capacity for solidarity, which does not seem amenable to a Meadian cosmopolitanism. Mead captures the difficulty that presents itself to the cosmopolitan vision from the beginning of his “National-Mindedness and International-Mindedness.” He understands that social solidarity, in which the individual puts the good of a community ahead of her own, often requires the presence of an antagonistic other—he is close to Mouffe on this point, in fact.⁹ This psychological mechanism causes the increased identification with the polity among citizens during times of war (something Americans should immediately recognize) for “The hostile attitude is peculiarly favorable to social cohesion” (356). As a result, it seems that the cosmopolitan cannot offer what William James describes as the ‘moral equivalent of war’—i.e. a mechanism for the generation of social solidarity that does not put a community in conflict with other ‘alien’ communities.

Mead acknowledges that, while it often has abhorrent effects, this ‘fighting spirit’ is not inherently bad; yet it requires a reflective attitude and critical examination in order to direct it toward positive conduct.¹⁰ Nevertheless, given Mead's deeply social account of mind and inquiry, such reflection and critique are no less social than mob mentality. This social capacity is the one that must take the place of war, for war increasingly threatens humanity as such with annihilation, and is the site of multiple morally abhorrent practices. War is thus self-

⁹ For a thought-provoking discussion of Mead's thought regarding hostility and conflict, and the relation of these to the rest of his work, see Smith, “The Social Philosophy of George Herbert Mead.”

¹⁰ Aboulafia deals with Mead's treatment of the psychological mechanisms at work here, as well as those lying behind sympathetic identification, in Chapter 4 of *Transcendence*. See also his *The Cosmopolitan Self* for extensive treatment of Mead in relation to some of the issues discussed above, including his very valuable chapter putting Mead in conversation with Hannah Arendt (28-60). As Aboulafia realizes, however, dwelling at the level of moral psychology is not adequate to articulating the institutional ramifications of Mead's view as I do here.

undermining; this can particularly be seen in vibrant pluralistic societies—it is no accident that the wars of the last fifty years have not only united, but also been the most divisive events for the American populace. From Kent State to the mosque at Ground Zero, war has led unified ‘patriots’ to attempt to eliminate the ‘enemy’ within as well as without, as Mead indicates:

It follows that if we do *think* our national and international life, we can no longer depend upon war for the fusion of disparate and opposing elements in the nation. We are compelled to reach a sense of being a nation by means of rational self-consciousness. We must *think* ourselves in terms of the great community to which we belong. We cannot depend upon feeling ourselves at one with our compatriots, because the only effective feeling of unity springs from our common response against the common enemy. No other social emotion will melt us into one. Instead of depending upon a national soul we must achieve national-mindedness. (363)

In the American context, such national-mindedness would reflect the tradition of a reflective and critical ‘civic nationalism,’ instead of the violence and xenophobia often associated with racial nationalisms as well as ‘100% Americanism.’ Critical reflection and rational deliberation involves “find[ing] what common values lie back of the divisions and competitions” (365). The threat of war makes it clear that this applies not only at the national, but at the international level, posing “the demand for international-mindedness. The moral equivalent of war is found in the intelligence and the will both to discover these common interests between contending nations and to make them the basis for the solution of the existing differences and for the common life they will make possible” (366). Mead repeatedly characterizes such a stance as a ‘unity amidst diversity,’ a solidarity that recognizes the uniqueness of the diverse interests of the parties that go into making it up.

Mead thus acknowledges the presence of conflict in society, but treats of this theme with an eye toward the cooperative discovery of common interests and the achievement of social organization at a higher level. In this way, he offers resources for conceptualizing the political as conceived by Mouffe, while at the same time situating the issue in a broader moral framework. Indeed, he offers a way of rethinking competition between societies; rather than consisting in

conflict over wealth, resources, and/or territory, such competition occurs precisely in terms of a regulative ideal of a democratic world community, where “There would not simply be a competition of different societies with each other, but competition would lie in the relationship of this or that society to the organization of a universal society” (281).

The reader may have perceived that, ironically, Mead’s general comments about democracy are in fact more cosmopolitan than his remarks about international-mindedness, for he remains committed to a type of nationalism within internationalism, and the only institutional model he has to offer is the *League of Nations*. Perhaps this is because in his day globalization had not reached a point where one could easily imagine democratic social relations beyond the nation-state; or perhaps Mead, like so many others, remains under the spell of what Ulrich Beck calls ‘methodological nationalism,’ which must be supplanted by a ‘methodological cosmopolitanism.’¹¹ For these reasons, and perhaps more, Mead cannot think of international-mindedness divorced from a national-mindedness with which it is deeply imbricated.¹² Instead of the League of Nations, we now have the United Nations (UN); while the latter seems to contain more promise than the former, it still suffers from democratic deficits that call for radical reform.¹³ The concrete political measures we can take here, then, as well as the institutional mechanisms by which we can work toward the Meadian radical democratic and cosmopolitan communicative ideal, remain unspecified in Mead’s own work. In what follows, I translate Mead’s concept of international-mindedness into the less restrictively state-bound concept of

¹¹ See esp. Beck, *The Cosmopolitan Vision*.

¹² Perhaps also this is an etymological difficulty, since the *international* seems parasitic on the *national*. Here we get one of the prime reasons for shifting our focus to *cosmopolitanism*.

¹³ For example, see Samir Amin’s package for radical reform of the UN in Chapter 6 of *Beyond US Hegemony?*. See also Boutros-Ghali “An Agenda for Democratization: Democratization at the International Level” and Archibugi, Balduino, and Donati “The United Nations as an Agency of Global Democracy” for arguments that the UN must play a leading role in the development of global democracy.

cosmopolitan-mindedness.¹⁴ Cosmopolitan-mindedness captures the ‘unity-in-diversity’ of national solidarity and international-mindedness without the commitment solely to one’s conationals; in this way it allows for a more radically diverse and truly cosmopolitan engagement with other perspectives. Coupled with the Meadian picture of democracy as self-determination fused with permanent revolution, this cosmopolitan approach offers the beginnings of a truly radical democratic cosmopolitanism. In the rest of this chapter I put these Meadian ideals in conversation with interventions in contemporary cosmopolitan political theory with the aim of articulating a feasible Meadian program for radical cosmopolitanism.

2. Abstract Universality and the Supranational Legal Order: Habermas and Held

In this section I discuss two major interventions in the current discourse surrounding the possibility of a global political order, focusing mainly on the work of Habermas and drawing further insight from a brief examination of the work of David Held, focusing on his *Democracy and the Global Order* (hereafter *DGO*). Habermas and Held both look mainly to international law for the institutionalization of the cosmopolitan project in the form of a supranational legal order—i.e., a constitutionally founded legal order that has power over individual, otherwise sovereign, states with regard to issues of peace and human rights. Habermas and Held also share fundamental commitments to democracy. However, they differ greatly in their proposals for the institutionalization of their shared commitments. Habermas institutionalizes democracy in a way that limits its effectiveness to the domain of a bounded political community; moreover, his

¹⁴ Drawing on Mead in *Transcendence*, Aboulafia also gestures toward such a stance: “We need to become ever more cosmopolitan. We need to feel and know that others are capable of suffering as we do and that suffering is typically undeserved. And we need to develop a sense of obligation toward those who suffer. We need to transcend the local; but this will not be possible if nations and peoples are themselves divided, if alienation and (economic) instability are the rule, if political and economic situations undermine self-respect” (87). One can see here the link Aboulafia draws between Mead and the Scottish sentimentalists, especially Adam Smith.

conception of the public sphere, while providing a crucial resource for the development of a Meadian account of democratic communication, further limits popular sovereignty even at this level. As such, Habermas's model of democracy is severely limited from the perspective of a Meadian radical democratic view. Held, on the other hand, maintains more robustly democratic commitments even at the supranational level, though his articulation of these commitments in the form of relatively unitary global order nevertheless limits the possibilities for radical democratization. One of the central errors that Habermas and Held share, I argue, is a commitment to a universalism that operates entirely at the abstract level, rather than being generated from concrete political communities. On this basis, I argue that the type of legal supranational cosmopolitanism favored by Habermas and Held is inadequate for the purposes of a radically democratic cosmopolitanism.

Before turning to Habermas's treatment of the possibility of a global legal order, I explore the normative underpinnings of Habermas's conception of democracy. While these underpinnings parallel my own insofar as Habermas articulates an epistemic conception of universality rooted in the fundamental normative presuppositions of communicative action, an exploration of his account of democracy already reveals its shortcomings from the perspective of radical democratization. In *Between Facts and Norms* (hereafter *BFN*) Habermas articulates 'the democratic principle,' the task of which is to institutionalize a form of practical discourse that can lead to legitimate outcomes, i.e. laws; it takes the form of an institutionalization of the discourse principle (D) that is the political analogue to the moral principle of universalizability (U): "only those statutes may claim legitimacy that can meet with the assent of all citizens in a

discursive process of legislation that in turn has been legally constituted” (110).¹⁵ The basic principle of democratic political legitimacy as construed within a Habermasian discursive framework, then, embodies a cognitivist or epistemic understanding of democratic deliberation, according to which there is in some sense a right answer to be achieved and toward which we are aiming.

Such a conception of democratic communication or deliberation also underlies Habermas’s work on the public sphere, which is a public realm of discursive or intersubjective opinion-formation that can help us to further concretize the Meadian conception of democratic communication discussed above. While his theory of the communication involved in democratic public discourse is much more worked out than Mead’s, Habermas, like Mead, worries about the development of anti-democratic social institutions that threaten to turn genuinely communicative public interaction, oriented toward mutual understanding on the basis of reasons, into merely strategic, instrumental, power-directed interaction. The counterbalance to this risk Habermas locates in the model of the bourgeois public sphere; though, of course, exclusive, it at least rests on the principles of universal access and collective critical discussion, so that it in principle has the very mechanisms for contesting and overcoming the very exclusions written into it. In Meadian terms, we might conceive of such a public sphere as a universe of discourse, a domain of symbolically mediated interaction, to which all in principle have access and that is governed by norms of equality and reciprocity.¹⁶ Since this is the sphere in which democratic communication takes place, it is here that we must look for the source of democratic legitimacy.

¹⁵ For a critical examination of the relation between these three principles (i.e. (D), (U), and the democratic principle), see Apel, “Regarding the Relationship between Morality, Law and Democracy: On Habermas’s *Philosophy of Law* (1992) from a Transcendental-Pragmatic Point of View.”

¹⁶ In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas offers a historical account of the development of the bourgeois public sphere, as well as its eclipse by technocratic administration that attempts to secure legitimacy through the strategic mechanism of ‘public relations.’ For Habermas’s most extensive recent treatment of the public sphere, see *BFN* 360-66.

In “Three Normative Models of Democracy” Habermas describes the public sphere as such as the source of democratic legitimation via “the *higher-level intersubjectivity* of communication processes that flow through both the parliamentary bodies and the informal networks of the public sphere. Within and outside the parliamentary complex, these subjectless forms of communication constitute arenas in which a more or less rational opinion- and will-formation can take place” (28).¹⁷ Publics can take various forms, and can roughly be divided into strong publics, which include formal decision-making institutions such as ‘parliamentary bodies,’ and weak publics, or informal networks for the formation of public opinion, the media and the Internet being core examples.¹⁸ Weak publics operate via the crystallization of public opinion; such opinion in turn should influence strong publics, which make decisions that serve as inputs to the administrative apparatus of the state. The measure of democratic legitimacy and popular sovereignty thus lies in how democratic the weak public is and how much influence it has.

While Habermas’s model, including the democratic principle, appears to enshrine the sovereignty of citizens at large as a criterion of legitimacy, the popular power that stands behind this sovereignty stands far removed from the actual procedures of making and enacting collectively binding decisions. Habermas locates the strength of the weak, informal public in its freedom from the necessity of making a decision; that is, deliberation in the informal public sphere does not have to come to a close in any given case. Moreover, discourse in the public sphere can be all the more productive because it is “unrestricted communication” (*BFN* 308).¹⁹ In spite of these discursive advantages, however, agents in the public sphere can only have

¹⁷ In *BFN* Habermas describes this as an account of popular sovereignty reconceived as “intersubjectively dissolved” (486).

¹⁸ The ‘strong/weak’ distinction derives from Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere.”

¹⁹ Habermas continues: “Here new problem situations can be perceived more sensitively, discourses aimed at achieving self-understanding can be conducted more widely and expressively, collective identities and need interpretations can be articulated with fewer compulsions than is the case in procedurally regulated public spheres” (308).

influence, not decision-making power. While the democratization of the informal public sphere is the regulative ideal of democratic life, any political influence this sphere has is highly mediated. The public sphere can draw attention to problematic situations and even propose solutions, but cannot “solve problems *on its own*” (359). Habermas justifies this constriction of popular sovereignty by appealing to a *social complexity* that renders the democratic principle inapplicable beyond a narrow range: he insists that there are spheres of complex contemporary social life, such as rationalized bureaucratic state administration and the market, where democratic control is just not possible. Democracy, then, does not penetrate the whole of society, but is rather “just one action system among others” (30). As such, the desire to democratize ever more sites of social interaction is a misguided manifestation of ‘sociological naïveté.’

The result is that the critical force and radical democratic potential of Habermas’s account of democracy is drastically attenuated.²⁰ Making too many concessions to social complexity as it stands, and hence to *realpolitik*, Habermas lowers the bar for democratic legitimacy while minimizing the participatory or radical democratic aspects of political action.²¹ Relaxing the normative demands of his theory of democracy in this way leads Habermas to lessen the gap between facts and norms, or between currently existing arrangements and ideally democratic ones. Undemocratic arrangements thereby become correspondingly difficult to

²⁰ For instance, Habermas lowers the bar for legitimacy, from the original formulation of the democratic principle to the following formulation later in *BFN*: “This sociological translation of the discourse theory of democracy implies that binding decisions, to be legitimate, must be steered by communication flows that start at the periphery and pass through the sluices of democratic and constitutional procedures situated at the entrance to the parliamentary complex or the courts (and, if necessary, at the exit of the implementing administration as well)” (356).

²¹ In “The Talking Cure in Habermas’s Republic,” Deborah Cook outlines the ways in which *BFN* represents a falling away from the radical critical force of Habermas’s earlier work. Cook offers a strong criticism of the waning of demands for democratization in *BFN*, where, she claims, “Habermas appears to believe not only that the ‘systems-paternalistic’ functioning of existing liberal democracies is their normal *modus operandi*, but that it ought to be... The real is already ‘more or less’ rational” (139).

criticize from a democratic perspective.²² An account of radical democratization, on the other hand, must retain precisely such critical force, for the centers of power are in fact inadequately influenced by input from the ‘periphery’ of the informal democratic public sphere, as the fact that radically democratic political actions typically take the form of disobedience (civil or otherwise) suggests.²³ The Meadian perspective on the democratic ideal as a fusion of self-determination and revolution in permanence implies flexible institutions that are subject to potential radical change in response to the demands of popular sovereignty. As such, Habermas’s model of systematically entrenched, and thus relatively inflexible, complex institutions that cannot be subjected to democratic governance does not offer a promising backdrop against which to articulate a theory of radical democratization. While Habermas is correct to draw attention to the *difficulty* of instituting means for the democratic operation of complex institutions, this difficulty does not warrant relaxing the normative demands of democracy; rather, it calls for more open democratic deliberation and institutional imagination among theorists, social scientists, and citizens. Habermas’s insistence on the fact of social complexity and the sociological naïveté of theories that try to articulate normative demands that outstrip this fact limits the possibilities for what types of democratic institutions we can imagine and hence

²² In *Public Deliberation* Bohman levels a similar critique: “The question is whether anything remains of radical democratic theory’s critical contrast between facts and norms once these realistic arguments about social complexity and the accompanying critique of ideals of participation are the descriptive starting point” (14); and later: “Habermas goes too far in reducing public deliberation to the merely informal bases of legitimacy, thereby emptying the radical democratic ideal of popular sovereignty of any substantive meaning” (172).

²³ The repression of protest movements over the course of the last century-and-a-half, as well as the more recent establishment of ‘free speech zones’ that allow power-holders to disregard the presence of dissenting voices, suggests that even peaceable assembly and free speech, supposedly constitutional rights in the US, are at least perceived as a form of disobedience. Cook makes this point an explicit challenge to the Habermasian framework, “Concerned that activists might take liberal democracy’s normative core of self-empowerment too literally, Habermas offers stern reminders that, in the final analysis, political power resides with the state; control over the economy must ultimately be left to the Invisible Hand. . . . Even in Habermas’s more ideal republic, citizens are effectively disempowered—relegated to the periphery, able to exert only indirect influence on decision-making processes, and only in extraordinary circumstances” (148-49).

pursue.²⁴ As far as the development of institutions goes, we do have to start from where we are and attend to considerations of feasibility; however, this should not be used as a way of foreclosing the possibilities that are open to us.²⁵

While Habermas's model of democracy falls far short of the Meadian ideal of radical democratization insofar as it does not allow for the extension of popular control and institutional flexibility into domains of the social that go beyond the informal public, he offers us a valuable tool for concretizing the Meadian model in the concept of the public sphere. His writings on the cosmopolitan project can also help us develop the Meadian concept of cosmopolitan-mindedness, though they too will ultimately be inadequate to the task of articulating a radically democratic cosmopolitanism. In *The Postnational Constellation* (hereafter *PC*), as well as several more recent articles, Habermas attempts to revitalize the Kantian cosmopolitan project in the form of a supranational legal order with the task of maintaining peace and protecting human rights.²⁶ Habermas's aim, following Kant, is to combat the Hobbesian (now Realist) contention that the international arena cannot be governed by norms. Rather, the most basic rights that are enshrined in the constitutions of democratic polities ought to apply across borders as well. We cannot depend on independent sovereign nation-states to regulate and enforce these rights on their own. Moreover, social complexity and globalization entail that situations beyond the nation-state level outstrip the ability of domestic polities to coordinate them in ways that take

²⁴ In *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond*, Dryzek bemoans Habermas's turn away from a robust discursive democratic approach to a position Dryzek finds indistinguishable from that of a liberal deliberative democrat: "There is no sense that the administrative state, or economy, should be democratized any further. All that matters is that they be steered by law, itself democratically influenced" (26).

²⁵ Bohman makes a similar claim; see, e.g. "Toward a Critical Theory of Globalization: Democratic Practice and Multiperspectival Inquiry," 57. He also offers a comprehensive and powerfully-stated deliberativist response to social complexity in Chapter 4 of *Public Deliberation*.

²⁶ An earlier engagement with this issue can be found in Habermas, "Kant's Idea of Perpetual Peace, with the Benefit of Two Hundred Years' Hindsight." This essay strikes a more strongly cosmopolitan note than his more recent work; on a related note, it was written prior to the crisis that beset European Unification in the middle of the last decade. For the more recent treatments, see the essays collected in *The Divided West* and *Europe: The faltering Project*, especially the former volume's extensive "Does the Constitutionalization of International Law Still Have a Chance?"

the interests of everyone affected into account: “Because nation-states must make decisions on a territorial basis, in an interdependent world society there is less and less congruence between the group of participants in a collective decision and the total of all those affected by their decision” (PC 70). Given that rights are, according to Habermas, only properly understood as legal statuses, the mechanism for such an extension of rights is an international constitution establishing a body of international law, along with supranational legal institutions that would serve to enforce the universal norms of the doctrine of human rights. To some extent, such law and such institutions already exist in the form of the UN General Assembly and the International Criminal Court (ICC), for example. The task of cosmopolitanism is to some extent, then, giving this basic institutional framework teeth. The supranational order thereby constituted would not, however, be a state or world republic; that is, the cosmopolitan order is entirely juridical, rather than political. In his preface to *The Divided West*, Ciaran Cronin describes “The institutional architecture favored by Habermas,” which “would combine an empowered United Nations responsible for securing peace and promoting human rights at the *supranational* level with governance institutions based on cooperation among the major world powers to address urgent problems of regional and global concern at the *transnational* level” (xi).

A similar, though more developed and extensive, legal framework for supranational institutions comes from the work of David Held, one of the leading voices in the argument for global democracy and the argument that changing conditions due to globalization necessitate thinking democratic politics beyond the nation-state.²⁷ In *Democracy and the Global Order* (DGO), Held lays out an extensive reconception of the political order of states at both the domestic and international levels. He encourages a complex array of interlocking and

²⁷ Held has been a leading voice in marshalling empirical evidence and theoretical argument in support of the globalization thesis and its importance to democracy. An early formulation here is “Democracy, the Nation-State and the Global System,” some of which is included in Part II of *DGO*.

overlapping institutions at local, national, and supranational levels, with the aim of rendering the global order more amenable to democratic governance via a stronger supranational order put in place to oversee this democratization and the protection of human rights worldwide.²⁸

While Held's view is more institutionally robust than Habermas's, both put forth a hierarchy of institutions with a single, supranational, sovereign legal power at its head; moreover, the central tasks of this power are peace-keeping and the protection of a legally instituted order of universal human rights. From the perspective of a democratic theory, the difficulty that emerges for such a model is that of the democratic legitimation of that sovereign power. Held in particular is sensitive to this problem, and proposes that the sovereign's legitimacy derives only from the legitimacy of international law, which in turn derives *its* legitimacy from the network of local, national, and transnational democratic institutions. Nevertheless, he describes this sovereign both in terms of an 'artificial person' and an 'impersonal structure of public power.'²⁹ Such an account is problematic from the point of view of a cosmopolitan-mindedness that is attuned to diverse particular perspectives and contexts. The language of impersonality or artificial personality tends to suggest a type of universalism that takes itself to transcend particular perspectives altogether, resulting in what Benhabib calls a 'substitutionalist' universalism in which a dominant perspective is taken to be the universal, 'impersonal' one, thereby quashing dissent and relegating difference to the realm of the 'personal.' In *Democracy across Borders*, Bohman suggests that the democratic difficulty that Held's model runs into here results from the purely legal and abstract universalist conception of rights that he shares with Habermas. For Held, the enforcement of such rights entails the need for a global sovereign legitimated by a global *dêmos*, or political community, such that the will of

²⁸ The details of this account are beyond our scope here; Held offers a chart of short-term and long-term objectives of his cosmopolitan model at *DGO* 279-80.

²⁹ See, for instance, *DGO* 234 and 14 for these respective formulations.

more particular *dêmoi* are subordinated to it.³⁰ From the perspective of democratic cosmopolitan-mindedness, public power ought rather to be characterized by an ‘interactive’ universalism that emerges from the interplay of particular perspectives, including those of diverse *dêmoi*, in concrete contexts of democratic communication. On this view, the model of a polity working purely at the level of abstract universality cannot clearly be robustly democratic in the way demanded by our account.

Habermas’s attempt to grapple with the question of the democratic legitimacy of his supranational arrangement runs along different lines, but encounters similar difficulties. He proposes that those who hope for the democratic legitimation of the type of framework for international law that he proposes must propose a concomitant framework for the democratization of its legitimation, both feeding off of the legitimation mechanisms of the nation-state and “*supplementing* them with its own contributions to legitimation” (PC 111). These latter contributions can only rely on human rights norms in their most abstract form. This organization thus operates on the principle of a duality between the national and the cosmopolitan, which constitute two halves of a citizen-identity: a citizen is simultaneously a citizen of her nation-state and of the world. Given the global reach of the universal rights of the world citizen, however, their legitimation is detached from the only context in which democratic legitimation can occur—concrete bounded political communities. The rights that apply to the world citizen are universal, but must be interpreted within the framework of her political community for the sake of their enforcement and legitimation.

³⁰ While this should lead us to be suspicious of such a sovereign global order, it should not lead us to skeptically reject supranational institutions altogether; this, according to Bohman, is Dryzek’s mistake. Given that, for Dryzek, democratic self-determination can only take place in the informal sphere of civil society, Dryzek’s account of democratic activity is limited to contestation and, Bohman argues in *Democracy across Borders*, his “bottom-up version does not provide any basis for an institutional elaboration of transnational citizenship” (44). What we require instead is a rich interaction between institutions and the informal sphere. This will be filled out in the discussion of Bohman below.

Habermas *does*, however, allow for the possibility of such legitimation at a supranational level, at least to a degree, via his concept of constitutional patriotism.³¹ Constitutional patriotism grounds solidarity at a level of abstraction that outstrips particularistic commitments to communities defined by ethnicity, language, religion, or shared history in favor of identification with a community defined by a given constitution and set of legal norms—i.e. by a shared *political* culture. Constitutional patriotism thus allows for a critical and reflective stance toward one’s political community that accommodates pluralism; it thus resembles civic nationalism or Mead’s national-mindedness. Habermas makes it clear that this stance is achieved via ‘learning processes’ involving abstraction from particularistic commitments, and this abstraction can even be extended to a *postnational* level—i.e. one that extends beyond the bounds of the nation-state. Given this conception, Habermas views the European Union as an experiment in both postnationalism and a supranational order. A European constitution, of which Habermas has long been a proponent, alongside a continent-wide public sphere, should allow Europeans to unite behind the type of democratic norms and human rights ideals that would be enshrined in the constitution: “The form of civil solidarity that has been limited to the nation-state until now has to expand to include all citizens of the union, so that, for example, Swedes and Portuguese are willing to take responsibility for one another” (99).³² Habermas here suggests a kind of national-

³¹ The status, nature, and effectiveness of Habermas’s concept of constitutional patriotism has given rise to a lively and wide-ranging debate that I cannot go into detail about here. For a critical examination of constitutional patriotism and its relation to cosmopolitanism, see Fine and Smith, “Jürgen Habermas’s Theory of Cosmopolitanism.” For a robust defense of constitutional patriotism, see Cronin, “Democracy and Collective Identity: In Defense of Constitutional Patriotism.” For discussion of the possibility of grounding transnational solidarity in the discourse of human rights itself, see Flynn, “Human Rights, Transnational Solidarity, and Duties to the Global Poor” and Føllesdal, “Universal Human Rights as a Shared Political Identity: Impossible? Necessary? Sufficient?” In both cases the author defends an even weaker base for solidarity than Habermas does, such that global solidarity is even more accessible; I am sympathetic to both accounts. For arguments that Habermas’s constitutional patriotism is not strong enough, see Calhoun, “Constitutional Patriotism and the Public Sphere” and Eckersley, “From Cosmopolitan Nationalism to Cosmopolitan Democracy.”

³² For a set of recent interventions in issues regarding European unification under a constitution, see *Europe: The Faltering Project*. This focus, of course, makes Habermas easy prey for charges of Eurocentrism; while these are justified to an extent, it is important to point out that the EU is in fact a unique political experiment that many

mindedness at the postnational level, a potential contender for the Meadian ideal of cosmopolitan-mindedness that requires an abstractive ‘learning process’ and transcends any type of more particularistic cultural attachments, such that individuals from a diverse array of backgrounds and perspectives can participate in democratic conversation.

However, from the perspective of democratic legitimation, Habermas’s constitutional patriotism has two crucial limitations. First, constitutional patriotism, as the name suggests, can only operate at the level of a single political community united by a shared just and democratic constitutional order. Even if that order can, like the EU, transcend *national* boundaries, it *cannot*, Habermas proclaims, transcend all boundaries whatsoever, for “Any political community that wants to understand itself as a democracy must at least distinguish between members and non-members” (107). Constitutional patriotism thus does not accommodate the kind of self-transcending political community that cosmopolitan-mindedness requires. Put more concretely: while an Italian may be able to identify a German as a fellow citizen with whom to engage in perspective-sharing and democratic cooperation, she has no reason to identify a Libyan that way, as the Libyan does not share her democratic political community (or, indeed, a democratic political community at all). This leaves cosmopolitan-mindedness with nothing to work with other than the purely abstract (moral) universalism of human rights. On such a view, a democratic universalism is, in a sense, bound to fail, since it cannot reach beyond the bounds of a specific *dêmos*: the “ethical-political self-understanding of citizens of a particular democratic life is missing in the inclusive community of world citizens” (107). As a result, supranational institutions can only garner legitimacy from an abstract legal order, and “cosmopolitan solidarity has to support itself on the moral universalism of human rights alone” (108). Without being able

cosmopolitan thinkers draw insights from; moreover elements of Habermas’s account here can be detached for deployment on behalf of a more genuinely global cosmopolitanism.

to connect this universalism with concrete interactions across political communities, however, it cannot offer us a substantive basis for cosmopolitan-mindedness.

Second, the limitations of Habermas's theory from the perspective of the Meadian ideal of radical democratization, as described above, are only exacerbated at the global or transnational level. Habermas again lightens the load on legitimation at the supranational level, where, as long as we have a constitution, "it might be acceptable that the remaining need for legitimation would be met by an informal public opinion" (125). Further, popular sovereignty is further attenuated with the emergence of the dominance of genuinely multinational corporations which operate within an action system that, due to its complexity, cannot be subjected to democratization: "Power can be democratized; money cannot. Thus the possibilities for a democratic self-steering of society slip away as the regulation of social spheres is transferred from one medium to another" (PN 78). We have already seen that the claim of Habermas's account to democratic credentials is questionable at the domestic level; combined with the claim that democracy is *limited* to the domestic level, we can conclude that Habermas's model holds little promise for a radically democratic cosmopolitanism.

The abstract universalism that both Habermas and Held deploy in promoting their supranational frameworks falls short of the type of universalism suggested by a Meadian cosmopolitan-mindedness. In contrast, I contend that the type of transnational solidarity that Habermas describes should be sought in processes of increasing interconnection and intercommunication, particularly those oriented toward contestation of social arrangements for the sake of the pursuit of new, more just, arrangements—in other words, processes of democratization themselves should provide the basis for this type of thin solidarity or cosmopolitan-mindedness. Moreover, such an approach allows for the emergence of a genuinely

democratic global public sphere, or network of such spheres, that would allow for the type of genuinely radical democratization that is disallowed in Habermas's framework. Such a network is precisely what begins to emerge when, in Mead's terms, communication begins to occur across boundaries and universes of discourse begin to expand, overlapping with and interpenetrating other universes of discourse, in an indefinite proliferation of perspectival communicative exchange. Concrete sociality is the source to which we should turn in the search for a universalism that will underwrite both the radical democratization and cosmopolitan-mindedness that we cannot find in the models of Habermas and Held. For this reason, I turn in the next section to the work of Carol Gould, who shares with me a focus on sociality, universality, and radical democratization.

3. Concrete Universality and Radical Democratization: Gould

In *Globalizing Democracy and Human Rights* (hereafter *GDHR*), Carol Gould elaborates a defense of her conceptions of justice, rights, and democracy as derived from her social ontology. Given her commitment to a fairly radical conception of democratic self-determination and to a non-abstract conception of universality that allows for cosmopolitan solidarity, the upshot of her overall account resembles the type of radical cosmopolitanism I articulate here much more closely than the accounts of Habermas and Held discussed above. My difference with Gould operates at a deeper level; in short, we diverge on the matter of what aspects of sociality are important to democratic theory, and this divergence has substantive implications for our views of democracy, including different conceptions of the relationship between democracy and justice as well as different modes of delineating the political community. In what follows I draw out the resources that Gould's account provides for my own concepts of radical

democratization and cosmopolitan-mindedness. I also discuss the philosophical account of sociality from which Gould draws her political conclusions; understanding the differences between her account and mine allows for the further clarification of the basic commitments of my own Meadian framework, which will be further developed in the following section.

Gould's starting point in *GDHR* is an exploration of the relation between democracy and justice. She canvases several positions here, but favors the primacy of justice to democracy on the basis of the worry that democratic outcomes may be radically unjust, such that we need basic standards of justice, or basic rights, enshrined in the constitution of the democratic community itself. Unless such standards are seen as normatively prior to democracy, according to Gould, there is no way to account for their legitimation, as well as no way to stave off majority tyranny. She derives the standard of justice from a social ontology according to which the basic value is freedom, conceived positively as "an activity of self-development or self-transformation as a process over time" (33). The principle of justice, on this view, is equality of freedom so conceived, which requires a conception of rights as the necessary conditions for free choice and self-development. These conditions serve as constraints on actual democratic outcomes. Gould thus counters the risk of majority tyranny by making justice and rights normatively prior to democracy: "the exercise of democracy deserves to remain ineffective when its outcome is such that it violates the very rights and liberties for the sake of which democracy itself has been instituted" (197).

While democracy is only of instrumental value on this view, Gould does treat it as one of the prerequisites for justice, insofar as individuals have the right to participate in decisions that relevantly concern them. Gould thus derives a fairly robust, self-determination-based conception of democracy on the basis of her social ontology. For instance, in "Diversity and Democracy,"

she expresses the worry, which I share, that Habermas's model of the relation between the political and economic systems, on the one hand, and popular sovereignty or public collective legitimation, on the other, "does not do justice either to joint goal-setting as practical social activity or to the possibilities of democratic participation and control in the domains of state and economy" (173). In response she calls for the re-embedding of the political and economic orders in practices of collective social decision-making via a plurality of venues for democratic participation at multiple levels. This account thereby moves us in the direction of radical democratization by extending democratic self-determination and institutional transformation into what are, for Habermas, autonomous, non-democratically-governed spheres of action.

Moreover, Gould situates such democratic activity in what she calls 'intersociation,' a model of sociality based on concrete, embodied, empathic interpersonal relations. She finds a substantive democratic view on this conception, 'intersociative democracy,' which is "based on reciprocal and empathic personal relations and extends through plural social and cultural contexts to a transnational and indeed global level" (2). Gould's emphasis on relations of care and empathy resonates with my own emphasis on the attention to concrete perspectives; moreover, since she extrapolates such relations to the level of cosmopolitan relationships, her model of intersociative democracy dovetails well with my account of cosmopolitan-mindedness. Gould describes this extrapolation via her concept of concrete universality, which bears a close affinity to my perspectival universal insofar as it emerges from concrete contexts and generates 'intersociative norms' via interaction or conversation that transcends given communities or contexts. These intersociative norms, furthermore, are the source of "a new cosmopolitanism of human rights, in which everyone worldwide is regarded as a global citizen and bearer of a wide range of human rights" (189). Gould thereby avoids situating human rights entirely in the realm

of abstract universality via the concept of concrete universality, which furthers the potential fruitfulness of her framework for my understanding of cosmopolitan-mindedness by highlighting the centrality of attentiveness, rooted in concrete interactive contexts, to an indefinitely proliferating range of particular perspectives.

Nevertheless, Gould's account diverges from mine at a fundamental level that prevents me from being able to take on her framework wholesale. This difference between our accounts may seem to be a philosophical quibble, especially if it does not lead to substantive differences in practical implications. Nevertheless, a discussion of this divergence serves to further clarify the normative underpinnings of my account, thereby paving the way for a stronger articulation of a radical cosmopolitanism rooted in my Meadian communicative framework.

As we have seen, Gould normatively grounds the procedures of democratic decision-making via the appeal to the procedure-independent standard of justice. In previous chapters, I too have called for the appeal to procedure-independent standards for the legitimation and motivation of democratic procedures. However, the procedure-independent standards that I defend stem from the implicit claim to universality in the communicative dimension of sociality. This universal appeal finds a limit concept in the regulative ideal of an ideal outcome of communicative procedure, and it is this regulative ideal, in turn, that serves as the procedure-independent standard that motivates the democratic organization of the communicative procedure itself, whether it be inquiry, moral conversation, or, for the purposes of this chapter, political discourse. I thus follow Mead and Habermas in rooting the normative force of democracy in the normative presuppositions of communication, such that my procedure-independent standards are still, in a sense, bound up with the communicative procedures that

they legitimate. While they are procedure-independent, then, they are not *radically* procedure-independent.

Gould and I thus agree on the need for a procedure-independent standard for the evaluation of the results of the procedure. Gould, however, eschews a Meadian or Habermasian approach that focuses on communication in favor of a more expansive social ontology; she cannot legitimate democracy via appeal to the normative presuppositions of communication. Rather, she offers a *radically* procedure-independent standard of justice that is entirely normatively prior to democracy; democracy in turn is only of value insofar as it is instrumental to justice. I, on the other hand, start with the communicative dimension of sociality and locate the implicit democratic demands in it. While I do not defend a conception of justice here, for the purposes of this project we can describe justice in a Habermasian mode as the set of normative presuppositions of the ideal democratic procedure, or as the conditions for the possibility of an ideally democratic social system; as such, the normative force of justice and that of democracy are mutually constitutive—we cannot understand one without the other. On this view, given collective decisions can indeed be overridden by considerations of justice or rights; however, decisions that are thus overridden can be accurately described as democratic failures, i.e. as insufficiently democratic insofar as they failed to accommodate the perspectives and interests of individuals who were affected by them. We require constitutionally protected rights, as well as institutions to protect these rights; but these should be seen as modes of protecting rather than limiting democracy, for collective decisions cannot undermine the necessary conditions for democracy itself—democracy cannot in principle undermine its own foundation. Gould's conceptions of rights and justice, by contrast, are *too radically* divorced from procedures of communication, and hence from democratic considerations.

My radically communicatively-based approach further diverges from Gould's justice-based approach with regard to the question of the limits of the *dêmos*. While she argues for an unrestrictedly universal conception of human rights, Gould argues that the all-affected criterion for the delimitation of the *dêmos*—that is, the claim that all affected by a given decision have an equal right to participate in the democratic deliberation over, and legitimation of, that decision—is so broad and vague as to be impracticable. Given her focus on free self-development and intersociation, Gould promotes the freedom of individuals to set the terms of cooperation in *joint activities*, which require some degree of sharedness, such as common goals. A 'joint activity' criterion for delimiting the *dêmos* provides a much narrower and more concrete way of determining who has the right to equal participation than the all-affected principle. This common activity criterion, however, is, as Gould recognizes, *overly* restrictive; moreover, it has communitarian implications that imply a type of solidarity that is much thicker than that called for by cosmopolitan-mindedness. As such, it would close us off from distant concrete others who might be affected by our activities even though they are not direct participants. We are all passive in the face of many global processes (especially economic ones) that importantly affect us, to the degree that Gould and I would both argue that such processes should be placed under more democratic control. The common activity principle thus seems a weak basis for enabling processes of *democratization*.

On the other hand, specifying the all-affected principle to those who are 'importantly' or 'relevantly' affected itself begs the question of how such importance or relevance is to be determined.³³ Gould also suggests expanding the common activity criterion to include "a

³³Gould makes essentially the same point against Pogge's account of the 'legitimately affected' (177). She ultimately suggests tying the all-affected criterion to the concept of human rights; however, unless the issue of rights is itself closed to deliberation, it is not clear how this solves the problem. Gould develops this suggestion further in

conception of common interests and shared needs” (178). Again, however, it is not clear how these are more determinate than the all-affected principle; moreover, rendering them more determinate would itself need to be subject to debate and contestation. For the purposes of a radical cosmopolitanism, the all-affected principle seems inescapable. The only solution to this difficulty is to recognize, indeed to embrace, its open-endedness. Indeed, the indeterminacy of ‘all affected’ is what gives universalism its prescriptive force when it comes to the design of democratic institutions. This allows democratic deliberation to potentially take account of precisely the difficulties that Gould presents as problems for the all-affected principle. For instance, the unintended consequences and impact on future generations can be made the subject of democratic inquiry and debate, even though they cannot be completely determined. The fact that such a model of democracy will not, due to epistemic limitations, hand down decisively correct answers based on full information in every case does not constitute an objection to such a model. Nevertheless, Gould maintains that this makes such an open-ended model impracticable for actual democratic decision-making. She is right to draw attention to the practical difficulty here, but this should not make us jettison the normative ideal; rather, it should call upon our institutional imagination and an appreciation of the indefinite possibilities for further radical democratization and cosmopolitan-mindedness.

In spite of our philosophical differences, however, Gould’s version of a cosmopolitan account of radical democracy remains a valuable resource for the articulation of my own account. Indeed, despite her normative prioritization of justice to democracy, Gould ultimately defends a dialectical approach regarding the connection between struggles for democracy and justice that, from my view, highlights their normative interdependence:

“Structuring Global Democracy: Political Communities, Universal Human Rights, and Transnational Representation.”

[I]njustice and the lack of economic and social human rights needs to be rectified in order to make real progress in facilitating the globalization of democratic decision making. Conversely...the creation of new democratic networks and the implementation of greater democratic participation by those affected is one of the main ways to ensure the realization of economic and social rights. (215)

Here again we see the radical potential of Gould's approach, and its fruitfulness from the perspective of the articulation of a radical cosmopolitanism. The question then becomes whether such an outcome can be maintained from the perspective of my Meadian communicative framework. To argue for this possibility, I turn in the next section to an exploration of the work of James Bohman and Nancy Fraser, whose basic philosophical commitments are closer to mine than Gould's are, and who also provide conceptual resources for the articulation of the Meadian concepts of radical democratization and cosmopolitan-mindedness.

4. Transnationalizing and Radicalizing Deliberativism: Bohman and Fraser

For James Bohman and Nancy Fraser, democracy is not merely instrumental to, but is constitutive of, just social relations. This commitment on both parts stems from a view of the normative implications of the communicative dimension of sociality that dovetails with my own Meadian project. Both likewise articulate a perspectivalism that accommodates a conception of universality that approaches my concept of the normative perspective of the universal, such that their accounts provide promising grounds for an understanding of cosmopolitan-mindedness. In this section I focus largely on Bohman's work, particularly *Public Deliberation* and *Democracy across Borders*, where he articulates a defense of deliberative democracy that maintains its normative force in the face of obstacles to its realization, as well as a conception of transnational democracy that, while rooted in a communicative framework, allows for a much more pluralistic and democratic cosmopolitan order than that of Habermas. I begin by articulating the basic commitments and normative underpinnings of his account of democracy, with the aim of

showing the affinities between his framework and mine. These affinities, combined with an articulation of his conceptions of the institutionalization of popular sovereignty and the articulation of a global political community, allow me to articulate my own conceptions of radical democratization and cosmopolitan-mindedness more sharply and in terms of a normative framework that, unlike Gould's, is consistent with my own. I then encourage the further development of the radical side of this project via an engagement with the work of Nancy Fraser, who provides us with the remaining conceptual equipment needed to fully develop a view of political activity that is both radically democratic and robustly cosmopolitan.

Public Deliberation (hereafter *PD*) presents Bohman's ambitious attempt to counter skeptical challenges to deliberativism that draw on social facts such as pluralism and complexity and present them as insurmountable obstacles to the practical realization of the fairly radical and participatory ideals that motivate deliberativism. Bohman's strategy is to meet these challenges head-on, emphasizing the interplay and tension between social facts and normative ideals, and hence focusing on the potential institutional realizations of radical democratic ideals. In doing so he attempts to navigate between the extremes of, on one side, an 'accommodationalist' approach, where we tone down our norms until they fit given social facts more easily; and, on the other side, an 'idealist' approach that hangs on to normative ideals without regard to the constraints that social facts place on their realization. The first extreme, which Habermas arguably approaches in *BFN*, runs the risk of relinquishing too much of democratic theory's critical capacity; while the latter gives us an ideal so robust and detached from political reality that we cannot discern ways to link it to current political practice or to realize it in institutional form. Rather than starting from an abstractive conception of an ideal deliberation scenario, then, Bohman begins with actual deliberation, delineating its character and drawing from it the

implicit norms that govern it for the purpose of beginning to articulate at least a minimal set of normative constraints. Despite the apparent modesty of this goal, Bohman actually goes beyond the brands of deliberativism that have come to terms with the intractability of existing structures of liberal democracy, ending up with an even more robustly democratic theory where “pluralism checks the coercive qualities of the general will, political equality answers the charge of elitism, and the sovereignty of the public preserves self-rule without excessive rationalism or over-complexity” (18). Pursuing a line of argument that resonates with that of this project, Bohman derives this democratic conception from an account of the communicative activity involved in deliberation.

The key element of deliberation, for Bohman, is its epistemic character—i.e. its orientation toward the achievement of the epistemically best outcome on the basis of the exchange of reasoned argumentation. Bohman casts deliberation as “a dialogical process of exchanging reasons for the purpose of resolving problematic situations that cannot be settled without interpersonal coordination and cooperation” (27). Bohman thus adopts a pragmatist, quasi-Deweyan approach in which deliberation involves reasoned perspective-sharing for the purpose of articulating a response to a problem-situation. In “Realizing Deliberative Democracy as a Mode of Inquiry,” Bohman brings this dimension of his epistemic conception of deliberation to the fore, situating it specifically in terms of the sharing and coordination of perspectives; drawing on Dewey, he defines deliberative democracy as “a particular way of organizing multiperspectival inquiry, for which social facts are descriptions of problematic situations” (24).³⁴ Bohman’s epistemic conception and multiperspectival focus both dovetail with my account of democratic communication oriented toward the regulative ideal of an organization of

³⁴ Bohman further develops his ‘multiperspectivalism’ in “Toward a Critical Theory of Globalization” and “How to Make a Social Science Practical.” For some of the conceptual roots of Bohman’s multiperspectivalism, see Ruggie, *Constructing the World Polity*.

perspectives that accommodates all relevant perspectives, including those of generalized and concrete others.

The regulative ideal toward which such an epistemic conception of democracy is oriented is often cast in terms of *consensus*. The difficulty thus emerges of understanding the concept of consensus in a way that will neither be impossibly demanding, on the one hand, nor fail to give us reasons to contest a status quo consensus, on the other. Bohman opts for loosening the epistemic demands on deliberation by requiring, not that participants fully agree on an outcome, but that they *sufficiently* agree for the purposes of the continuation of deliberation and cooperation: “An outcome of an actual decision is acceptable when the reasons behind it are sufficient to motivate the cooperation of all those deliberating” (*PD* 33). The motivation of such cooperation can only exist in the absence of agreement on an outcome if the dissenting party is able to recognize that, in spite of her disapproval of the outcome itself, the procedure that led to that outcome sufficiently incorporated her input such that her input did play some positive causal role in achieving the outcome.³⁵ In my terms, we can say that her perspective was taken into account; even if an outcome that all could wholeheartedly endorse as in full accordance with their needs and interests may be the ideal, the requirement that such an outcome is the only legitimate outcome would in fact make democratic decision-making impossible. The robust demand for attentiveness to indefinite concrete perspectives thus does not demand that all collective outcomes fulfill the demands and interests of all parties involved, but embodies the more modest (though still demanding) requirement that such outcomes can be seen as taking the

³⁵ The need to qualify the causal role as *positive* emerges from what would be the undemocratic situation of a polity where the majority did not *ignore* the needs and interests of the minority, but willfully and consciously voted *against* those interests. In this scenario, the minority and its claims played a causal role in the outcome, but it was an entirely *negative* one.

perspectives of all concerned parties into account—that is, allowing them to have a formative influence on the deliberative process that shapes the decision.

In *Democracy across Borders* (hereafter *DaB*) Bohman situates this conception of democracy more firmly within a republican framework that maintains a conception of freedom as nondomination, developing a participatory conception of democracy and a basically federalist system of governance on that basis.³⁶ At first glance this appears to situate Bohman’s approach near that of Gould, insofar as he starts from freedom and elaborates a conception of justice and rights on this basis, a conception which includes robust democratic commitments. However, Bohman’s conception of freedom is not detachable from democratic considerations in the way that Gould’s is, precisely because one of the core components of nondomination is ‘communicative freedom,’ or “the freedom to address others and be addressed as members of publics” (8). In other words, nondomination is, among other things, the freedom to contribute to the collective negotiation of the terms of social cooperation. Justice, the achievement of a social order in which individuals are free in the sense of not being dominated, is indeed a *telos* of democracy, such that democracy has instrumental value; however, this *telos* is precisely not conceivable apart from its status as the *telos of democratic institutions*, such that democracy is conceptually intrinsic to the ideal to which it is instrumental. The value, and hence the normative force, of democracy, thus has a dual instrumental/intrinsic structure. On this basis, Bohman articulates the most fundamental right in his framework as “the right to initiate deliberation,” further bolstering the co-constitutive nature of democracy and justice (5).

From Gould’s perspective this approach gives rise to a dangerous circularity in which unjust situations preclude genuinely democratic decision-making altogether, while justice

³⁶ For the conceptual roots of this conception of freedom, see Pettit, “Freedom as Antipower.” For Bohman’s own conception of nondomination, including critical response to Pettit, see *DaB* 94-97.

likewise becomes impossible in undemocratic polities. Gould and Bohman may agree that such situations must be faced by collective struggle for both justice and democracy; however, Gould maintains that Bohman's approach cannot legitimate either of these types of struggle, for the circularity seeps into the normative structure of the account as well. That is, if justice claims cannot be legitimated independently of democratic collective decisions, then those who are faced with injustice enforced by a tyrannical majority cannot legitimate claims on behalf of their own interests. She also contends that legitimating rights insofar as they are the conditions for democratic participation is a flimsy foundation for rights claims, in contrast to her independent standard of justice.

Such charges underestimate the potential force of a communicatively-based approach that ties justice and rights-claims to the preconditions for democratic participation. Just as the basic right in Bohman's framework, for instance, is the 'right to initiate deliberation,' the fundamental claim to justice, as oriented toward democratic participation, should allow for the contestation of given collective decisions on the basis of being unjust *precisely due to being undemocratic*. To play the role of such a basic norm of justice, Bohman offers up the concept of a 'democratic minimum': "the achievement of a normative status sufficient for citizens to exercise their creative powers to reshape democracy itself according to the demands of justice" (28). The democratic minimum thus provides a tool with which marginalized or disenfranchised individuals can challenge the ordering of the relevant democratic community itself. With regard to rights, Bohman correctly insists, *contra* Gould, that it is a virtue of his approach that rights are not conceived as radically independent of democracy, for "the redefinition of rights in the course of deliberation has been part of any historical process of democratization and indeed is the means by which democracy has historically been used as a means to justice" (160-61). Bohman thus

shares my general approach to the relationship between democracy and justice, and shows that such an approach does not fall prey to Gould's charges; indeed, this approach likewise allows for a robust conception of radical democratization.

Bohman recognizes, however, that for radical democratization to fulfill the demands of popular sovereignty or democracy as collective-self-determination, it requires some form of institutional mediation or instantiation. Again drawing on Dewey, as well as Habermas, Bohman turns to the exploration of publics or public spheres as venues for such democratization.

Opposing Habermas, Bohman avoids relegating deliberation and democratic activity entirely to the informal public sphere in order to prevent the isolation of decision-making institutions from those of public opinion-formation. Bohman thus operates constantly with an eye toward the institutional mediation of deliberation and the manifestation of popular sovereignty in binding collective decisions. In order to become sites that can generate democratic deliberation and begin to institute popular sovereignty, Bohman argues, the plural and dispersed field of publics must be 'embedded' within an institutional context (81). The democratization of these spheres consists partly in connecting up the communicative freedom of citizens with their 'normative powers' to "shape the conditions of communication" (81). The normative powers in turn must themselves receive institutional recognition. As such, publics must be able to reconstructively react back upon the institutions in which they are embedded. This moves us in the direction of the institutional responsiveness to public power required by radical democratization; the kind of attention that Bohman gives to institutions and their democratization is central to any Meadian radical project.

Furthermore, given the increasingly transnational character of publics, this account of the democratization of publics leads directly to the demand that we think of democracy beyond

nation-state bounds, as embodied in transnational and even supranational institutions; moreover, given the interconnectedness to which globalization gives rise, obligations to individuals beyond the bounds of our political communities are inescapable. Since, as Bohman points out, “the sort of social activities in question affect an *indefinite* number of people,” we must be prepared to extend the political community to include an indefinite array of perspectives (24).³⁷ Here again, however, the problem of political community emerges. Bohman himself claims that the *dêmos* does require a member/non-member distinction, such that positing the *dêmos* as the unit of democratic self-determination at the transnational level cannot accommodate the radical universalist demands of the all-affected principle. Viewed from the other side, this radical universalism seems incompatible with the demand for democratic legitimation—this problem emerged for Habermas, as discussed above.

Gould has already suggested that a democratic universalism need not appeal to an abstract conception of universality, but this led her into difficulties formulating a criterion by which to delineate the political community. Bohman’s response to this difficulty is to uncouple the concept of a cosmopolitan political community from the concept of a global *demos*, thereby allowing for the compatibility of a global community with an indefinite number of diverse *dêmoi*. In this way, we can jettison the idea of a global *dêmos* as an impossible demand given both the plurality of *dêmoi* and the conception of *dêmoi* as inherently bounded, while retaining the possibility of articulating a conception of cosmopolitan political community precisely on the basis of these plural *dêmoi*, operating as overlapping, interpenetrating, and intercommunicating publics. This picture of the possibility of shared political *community* that stretches beyond the bounds of communities with diverse political *cultures* brings us close to a contemporary

³⁷ Here we see Bohman invoke the all-affected principle; his interpretation is thus closer to my open-ended discursive interpretation that it is to Gould’s.

formulation of Mead's ideal of an increasing intercommunication, based on mutual perspective-sharing across the bounds of *dêmoi* with the aim of democratically coordinating the social order, that moves us in the direction of an ideal community. This view also highlights the dialectical interplay between the universality of the regulative idea of a global political community, on the one side, and the particularity of concrete *dêmoi* and their democratically related interactions, on the other. In this way, Bohman's conceptual innovation here offers our most promising resource thus far for developing a workable view of cosmopolitan-mindedness.

The transnational politics derived from this conception of political community, Bohman explains, would challenge the sovereignty of states in defense of the sovereignty of citizens as citizens of the world. Bohman is attuned to the fact that such an order would require institutional mediation, and proposes that democratic power ought to be dispersed to many different levels, some more and some less expansive than the nation-state.³⁸ Due to the wide-ranging effects of local activities resulting from conditions of globalization, democratization in many cases will require supranational institutions that will allow those affected by such activities to make their needs and interests heard; only such institutions will be able to incorporate their perspectives as inputs to deliberation oriented toward making democratically-informed decisions. Bohman thus suggests that the empowerment of "higher level institutions" in some cases also "enhances the normative powers of citizens" (156). Like Habermas, for example, he sees the EU as potentially exemplary for his conception of transnational order; however, his vision of a democratized EU differs from Habermas's in two crucial respects that can moreover be extrapolated to highlight

³⁸ For an extensive and detailed treatment of the formation of transnational public spheres and the ways they interact with formal institutions, see especially Chapter 2 of *DaB*, 59-99. While Bohman focuses on modes of making publics effective in formal decision-making institutions, he acknowledges that—given the lack of institutionalized responsiveness to popular will on the part of transnational institutions like the WTO, IMF, and multinational corporations—contestation is often the appropriate tactic at this level, and is carried out by surrogates for popular will that coalesce in NGOs. Even this situation, however, as Bohman rightly points out, is insufficiently democratic, as such organizations will often lack accountability in precisely the same way the transnational institutions they are policing and contesting do.

their opposing conceptions of a genuinely cosmopolitan order. First, Bohman sees the juridical approach of a constitutionally legitimated supranational legal order, rooted in an abstract universalist doctrine of human rights, as insufficient for the success of the EU's project, and for the task of transnational democracy in general: "In order to be successful [the EU] must move beyond the current juridical conception of rights toward a political conception that sees them as rights of membership in the human political community" (9). Second, this political community, even in the context of the EU, need not constitute a *dêmos* with a unified general will, but can remain a pluralistic, decentered field of overlapping *dêmoi*, which themselves operate in accordance with democratic norms governing relations between such *dêmoi*.

The picture of a cosmopolitan order of overlapping and intercommunicating *dêmoi* allows us to conceive of a mode of cosmopolitan-mindedness that accommodates the normative perspective of the universal—i.e. that appeals to both a broader perspective than that of the given community and the perspective of concrete others not included in the community. Bohman casts this normative horizon of world citizenship as the perspective of *humanity*, on the basis of the claim that "being a member of humanity brings with it certain normative statuses and powers that are themselves conditions for democratization" (99). Such a perspective provides the normative basis for universal human rights conceived, not in abstractly universal juridical terms, but as rights to participation on the basis of membership in a community—in this case, the human community. This community is not an abstract universal for the reason that it is not conceived in terms of a unified global *dêmos*, but rather in terms of decentered, concrete *dêmoi* or publics; such an account thus does not give us Held's 'impersonal power,' but rather a "differentiated polity of *dêmoi* [that] is multiperspectival" and that translates the communicative

freedom of citizens into democratic political decisions (123).³⁹ Such a multiperspectival political community that accommodates *all* perspectives presents the regulative ideal of democratic political activity.⁴⁰ Like the normative perspective of the universal, the regulative ideal of the perspective of humanity works against a normative majoritarianism that accords legitimacy to *de facto* social and political arrangements on the basis of their widespread acceptance, for “those suffering injustice at the hands of a democratic majority can appeal to the possibility of constitutional revision, based on an inclusive ideal of humanity forming the core of democratic commitments” (105). Bohman emphasizes that the perspective of humanity must incorporate the duality of collectiveness and distributiveness one finds in such universal categories—i.e. attentiveness to the perspectives of both a broader generalized other and an indefinitely expanding array of concrete others. Bohman’s model translates readily into the Meadian communicative framework in the form of what I have been calling the normative perspective of the universal, insofar as openness to the perspective of humanity is openness to the perspectives, not of only of a broader generalized other, but of concrete others that communicate their claims to us. Such communication becomes possible precisely via the increased interactions between publics and *dêmoi* that characterize the Meadian framework of global interconnection and intercommunication. The normative perspective of the universal, then, filled out with the help of

³⁹ Bohman spells out the radical, transnational political consequences of the strong normative demand articulated here as follows: “If they seek not to be dominators, democracies have obligations to create a republic of humanity for two main reasons. First, they cannot ignore these claims to common liberty without becoming dominators and thereby undermining the conditions for democracy. Second, democratic communities that honor the democratic minimum must at least be open to claims of other communities and thus be willing to extend that minimum to all bearers of human rights. In this way, democracies would not merely act on behalf of humanity, but would *constitute* the human community... In terms of a republican conception of nondomination, human rights and the democratic minimum are two sides of the same coin: the political obligation to realize the civil conditions necessary for the common liberty of humanity, a republic of humanity” (130).

⁴⁰ The ideal is, of course, constitutively unattainable, for the reasons that Gould points out: e.g. unintended consequences or past and future generations. *Contra* Gould, this does not make democracy on the basis of such an ideal impracticable, but provides precisely the normative motivation for processes of further democratization. It also does not threaten a closure to new perspectives, but is precisely what makes the demand for attention to new perspectives intelligible.

Bohman's concept of the perspective of humanity, provides the ideal of cosmopolitan-mindedness that a Meadian radical cosmopolitanism requires.

Bohman likewise, as mentioned, provides resources for conceiving radical democratization in the form of the dialectical interplay between informal publics and formal institutions, cast as the manifestation of the communicative freedom of citizens as normative powers that act as inputs to formal decision-making processes. In more Meadian terms, radical democratization consists in institutionalizing the possibility of arrival at decisions regarding the coordination of social action via the open communicative exchange of perspectives. For Bohman, his account in *PD* constitutes a rethinking of radical democracy, not as "the total transformation of society...[but as] a piecemeal project of reform that builds upon the constitutional and institutional achievements of the past" (20). The reformism implicit in this claim may seem to belie the revolutionary ideals embodied in the Mead's formulation of democracy as 'revolution in permanence.' Bohman recognizes that democratic institutions need to "remain flexible and open to change," but his model for this remains just this side of "constant revolutionary activity" (202). Mead's formulation, however, suggests that radical democratization should at least blur, if not erase, the line between reform and revolution, insofar as democracy, for Mead, consists in continuous social transformation that draws on, rather than attempts to undermine, the resources of currently existing democratic constitutions and institutions. In the remainder of this section, I turn to the work of Fraser to push the account of democracy found in Bohman's work still further in the direction of radical democratization.

In my view, Fraser's work provides the conceptual ingredients to finally articulate my radical cosmopolitanism in a way that fully does justice to the Meadian inheritances of both radical democratization and cosmopolitan-mindedness. First, she has made major contributions

to conceptualizing the public sphere, which must play a central role in any concretization of a radical democratic project, especially at the transnational level. In her seminal article on “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” Fraser takes on the basics of Habermas’s conception of the public sphere as described in *Structural Transformation*, supplementing it with the concept of the ‘counterpublic,’ as well as the distinction between strong and weak publics (which, as we saw above, Habermas incorporates into his own subsequent work on the public sphere). She calls into question four assumptions undergirding that Habermasian conception: the bracketing of social inequality, democratization through unification of public spheres, the orientation toward a common good, and the sharp state/civil society distinction.

Her critique of these assumptions rests upon a basic commitment to ‘participatory parity,’ a basic criterion of justice that links justice to democracy in a strong manner that reflects my own account. Each of the four Habermasian assumptions, argues Fraser, presents an obstacle to participatory parity. With regard to the first assumption, then, she encourages the explicit discursive thematization of social inequality—i.e. the politicization of that which had previously been treated as outside the political realm. Much the same goes for the third assumption, where Fraser’s account resonates with the previous chapter’s rejection of the moral/ethical distinction for the sake of accommodating the perspectives of both the generalized and concrete others. Neglecting to do so, as Fraser rightly points out, can serve to reinforce hidden or ideologically-masked structures of domination and oppression. Against the claim that democratization must work through unifying public spheres, Fraser argues that competing publics and counterpublics are necessary for the achievement of parity, particularly in societies characterized by inequality. Without such separate spheres, she argues, the subordinated would be “less able than otherwise

to articulate and defend their interests in the comprehensive public sphere” (123). The spaces within which this can take place she calls ‘subaltern counterpublics.’ She is well aware of the self-transcending nature of these counterpublics, however, insofar as they are a subset of a wider ‘public at large’ toward which their demands are directed. She casts this character of counterpublics dialectically:

On the one hand, they function as spaces of withdrawal and regroupment; on the other hand, they also function as bases and training grounds for agitational activities directed toward wider publics. It is precisely in the dialectic between these two functions that their emancipatory potential resides. This dialectic enables subaltern counterpublics partially to offset, although not wholly to eradicate, the unjust participatory privileges enjoyed by members of dominant social groups in stratified societies. (124)

This account of counterpublics provides a particularly powerful model for working toward democratization at the transnational level, where vast inequality of resources and the subordination of the interests of disadvantaged *dêmoi* to the demands of wealthier and more powerful *dêmoi* present the major obstacles to democratic justice.

Finally, Fraser argues for a tighter ‘interimbrication’ of civil society and the state, instead of, as Habermas encourages, a separation of public opinion from decision-making. This picture is complicated by the emergence of parliaments, formal deliberative bodies, which play the role of strong publics, or publics with decision-making power. The problem for democracy, then, is how to make these strong publics accountable to weak publics. Such accountability becomes a central focus of Fraser’s theory of justice in her more recent work on the concept of *representation*. I focus here on her essay on “Reframing Justice in a Globalizing World,” where she thematizes representation as a crucial aspect of *global* justice alongside the other two aspects with which her work is associated, namely redistribution and recognition.⁴¹ Here again she draws on parity of participation as her foundational principle of justice, such that democracy and justice are co-

⁴¹ On the latter two principles of justice, see her dialogue with Honneth in *Redistribution or Recognition?*. The essay discussed here, originally published in *New Left Review*, was printed in revised form as a chapter of her *Scales of Justice*, which should be consulted for her recent work on these questions. The text above cites the *NLR* version.

constitutive: “Overcoming injustice means dismantling institutionalized obstacles that prevent some people from participating on a par with others, as full partners in social interaction” (73). The political issue of representation, then, concerns the struggle over the boundaries to the political communities within which other democratic struggles are carried out, as well as the procedural structure that undergirds the political activity of those communities. The injustices that occur with regard to these issues are thus *misrepresentations*. The radical cosmopolitan perspective focuses on the issue of the boundaries of political communities, asking the question, “do the boundaries of the political community wrongly exclude some who are actually entitled to representation?” (75). Fraser offers the concept ‘misframing’ as a way to conceptualize the injustice, or violation of democratic principles, of delimiting the political community in a way that does not represent (or actively *misrepresents*) those affected by the decisions of that community. Misframing, Fraser explains, is “a special kind of meta-injustice, in which one is denied the chance to press first-order justice claims in a given political community” (77). Both stateless persons (those who, in Arendtian terms, are denied the ‘right to have rights’) and citizens of a political community who are affected by the decisions of a different political community to which they do not have access suffer from the injustice of misframing.

The concept of the injustice of misframing supplies a powerful motivation to the type of appeal to context-transcendent perspectives that characterizes Meadian cosmopolitan-mindedness. From the Meadian perspective, misframing represents a foreclosure of access to democratic decision-making on the part of relevant perspectives that not only ought to be attended to for their own sake, but also can improve the epistemic quality of democratic outcomes; hence the obligation, from a democratic point of view, to pursue a stance of cosmopolitan-mindedness. Fraser gestures toward such a stance by arguing that combating

misframing requires a ‘post-Westphalian’ mode of framing, for the sake of which she appeals explicitly to the all-affected principle. In a lengthy footnote, Fraser (responding partly to Gould) endorses an understanding of the all-affected principle that is almost identical to the one I defend above:

My own view is that the all-affected principle is open to a plurality of reasonable interpretations. As a result, its interpretation cannot be determined monologically, by philosophical fiat. Rather, philosophical analyses of affectedness should be understood as contributions to a broader public debate about the principle’s meaning....In general, the all-affected principle must be interpreted dialogically, through the give-and-take of argument in democratic deliberation. (83 n. 15)

This approach to interpreting the basic principle of the delineation of a just democratic community calls for a new form of radical, ‘transformative’ political action that pursues new institutionalizations (including formal institutionalizations, i.e. strong as well as weak publics) of the all-affected principle for the sake of a reframed conception of transnational justice that she calls, again directly connecting justice and democracy, ‘post-Westphalian democratic justice.’⁴² Such a political program, which recognizes the interconnectedness of struggles for justice and struggles for democracy, provides the strongest articulation of the Meadian ideals of both radical democratization and cosmopolitan-mindedness. The centrality of participatory parity as the fundamental commitment of justice, combined with the commitment to transformative political action, captures the Meadian fusion of self-determination and permanent revolution that crystallize in the concept of radical democratization; while the emphasis on a post-Westphalian democratic framing, which dovetails with Bohman’s account of the political community of humanity, reflects the stance of critical openness to an indefinite proliferation of perspectives that I have described as the normative perspective of the universal and thematize here as

⁴² In “Transnationalizing the Public Sphere,” Fraser enacts a further reconceptualization of the public sphere in light of globalization and the need to think democracy beyond the nation-state context. Here she makes the further point that democratic movements cannot remain confined to social movements insofar as these are counterpowers, which presuppose a center of power that they are trying to influence; they are thus constitutively weak publics. This calls for institutional imagination guided toward the aim of achieving the emancipatory end of democratic control of political power over decision-making itself.

cosmopolitan-mindedness. I contend, then, that the work of Bohman and Fraser provides the richest set of conceptual resources for showing how a radical cosmopolitanism can flourish from its roots in the Meadian communicative framework of sociality.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to develop the implications of the Meadian communicative framework and its concomitant normative view, universalist perspectivalism, for normative questions in the political realm. I suggested that the way to accommodate both poles of universalist perspectivalism in the political sphere was to explore ways of joining universalist cosmopolitanism with a perspectivally-focused radical democracy. Beginning with a discussion of both of these themes as they occur in Mead's own work, I embarked on an exploration of more recent cosmopolitan democratic theory with the aim of rooting out a more developed form of the political approach that was nascent in the work of Mead. I discussed the fate of the Meadian concepts of radical democratization and cosmopolitan-mindedness in the works of Habermas, Held, Gould, Bohman, and Fraser, ultimately arguing that we could mine resources from these thinkers for a robust radical cosmopolitanism.

Now that we have filled in the sketch of the normative underpinnings and political implications of radical cosmopolitanism, the questions that emerge are what its most direct concrete practical implications are and how to go about institutionalizing such a political vision. Much of the work of answering these questions lies far beyond the scope of this project, insofar as it demands the input, not only of philosophers, but also of social scientists, historians, educators, activists, social workers, government officials, and citizens at large. Nonetheless, a growing body of literature provides us with suggestions that should stimulate the institutional

imagination. To take but one example: in his “Recipes for Public Spheres” Archon Fung focuses, in a pragmatist manner, on experimentation in the political realm via the construction of ‘mini-publics,’ self-consciously organized public sphere groups that aim to promote deliberative democratic activity, the exchange of perspectives oriented toward mutual understanding or agreement, surrounding a particular issue.⁴³ Fung lays out design questions for the establishment of minipublics and examines five case studies. This approach, designed for the self-empowerment of both designers and members of minipublics, can recouple deliberative democracy with its more radical participatory roots, insofar as it makes participation and popular sovereignty feasible even in the face of social complexity.⁴⁴ The minipublic model is arguably particularly promising in light of what Fung calls “the fragmentation of cultural and political life,” due to which “effective large-scale public sphere reforms may consist largely in the proliferation of better minipublics rather than improving the one big public” (339). As such, this model could be particularly effective in promoting open discussion and perspective sharing within publics. One might also point out that, alongside fragmentation, we are experiencing deeper and more extensive interconnection and intercommunication, including communication between publics, across borders, and among diverse *dêmoi*; as such, the minipublic model—by promoting radical democratization in the form of the institution of decision-making deliberative minipublics and cosmopolitan-mindedness and cosmopolitan-mindedness in the form of

⁴³ I am indebted to James Bohman for pointing me in the direction of Fung’s work (both in email correspondence and in his own work). The sample I cite here is in turn only a small corner of Fung’s work, which deals largely with questions of how to enhance citizen participation in democratic politics; see especially his *Empowered Participation: Reinventing Urban Democracy*. He has also co-written and co-edited volumes with other pioneers in the area of radical institutional imaginings such as Charles Sabel, Joshua Cohen, and Erik Olin Wright; see especially Fung and Wright, eds. *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance*. This last volume is part of Wright’s valuable Real Utopias Project Series.

⁴⁴ See also Fung, “Deliberation before the Revolution,” for a powerful reminder that deliberativism at its best is a revolutionary democratic ideal.

intercommunication between minipublics and global citizens more broadly, may also provide resources for building movements (and models) for transnational democracy.

Fung's work also allows us to imagine radical transformation without proposing the reconstitution of society from the ground up. Indeed, we already have social networks and political institutions that embody at least the potentials of perspectival universalism, from the Internet to the ICC, such that the task of radical cosmopolitan democratization requires mobilizing such already-existing resources for democratic ends. The aim of this chapter has been to give some specificity and concreteness to the democratic ends for which radical cosmopolitan democrats—indeed, world citizens at large—ought to be striving.

CONCLUSION

With this project, I have drawn a radical and cosmopolitan conception of democracy out of the normative ramifications of an account of the communicative dimension of human sociality. By integrating two models of democracy, radicalism and cosmopolitanism, which present powerful ways of rethinking democratic politics and institutions, I offer a unique articulation that retains the potential of both of these models and has implications for the ways in which we engage in political activity. Both of these models are crucial to my account as a theory of democracy, for the ever-increasing proliferation of perspectives that must be accounted for in order for social relations to be democratic unlocks the potential for radical change in these relations and at the same time undoes the bounds of every specific and potentially provincial community. In other words, a rootedness in the primacy of plural communicative perspectives leads to a radical conception of democracy, while universality on my account outstrips every bounded political community, thus leading us in the direction of a cosmopolitan democratic account. This understanding of democracy provides a framework applicable to many levels of political practice, from the mobilization of grassroots activism, to the rethinking of forms of political order beyond the nation-state. My project thus aims to maintain normative and critical force as well as transformative political promise.

Democracy as I depict it here is precisely the mode of social practice that struggles to break down the boundaries between communities in favor of openness to broader contexts and a greater number of perspectives. Democracy in this sense is motivated by the normative demands of a regulative democratic ideal, from which the various struggles against exclusion and oppression that emerge within the social realm can draw normative and critical force. The ever-

receding horizon of this ideal prevents it from being homogenizing or totalizing; rather, it constitutes a demand for social change in light of our obligation to heed the claims of others. From this point of view, struggle ought not simply take place within and between discourses and social orders, but in their relation to a regulative ideal that allows for criticism of its current state.

I have argued that the need to conceive democracy as necessarily both radical and cosmopolitan stems from the normative ramifications of an examination of the communicative dimension of human sociality. Specifically, the structures of intersubjectivity that emerge from communication as the exchange of perspectives generate a conception of universality as the open-ended accountability of communicative claims to any and all perspectives. A large part of my project, then, has been the elaboration of the deep link between intersubjectivity and universality as principles generative of a democratic normativity. In what follows, I point to some of the conceptual resources my project provides in light of the issues discussed in the chapters above.

I begin with an explicit discussion of the advantages of my radical cosmopolitanism over the competing conception of radical democracy found in Chantal Mouffe's work, which I discussed in Chapter I. Given its internal relation to the particularity of concrete perspectives, my conception of universality does not fall prey to, and indeed incorporates, Mouffe's radical critique of universalism. With Mouffe, I am able to give an account of conflict and struggle on the political terrain; however, I also argue that the social, particularly its communicative dimension, constitutes an underlying and constraining normative framework for such conflict and struggle, such that we can articulate critical standards against which we can measure outcomes in the political sphere. Thus, *contra* Mouffe, the recognition of antagonism in the political realm does not require the relinquishing of conflict-transcendent normative standards,

an agreement-oriented regulative ideal, or a reconceived notion of universality. In insisting on relinquishing these conceptual resources, which I maintain are central to the critical project of radical democracy, Mouffe falsely dichotomizes universality and particularity such that, if one rejects an abstract universalism or absolutism, one must accept its opposite: relativism. My project overcomes this false dichotomy by articulating a perspectivalism—that is, a view that insists on the primacy of perspectives and the impossibility of getting beyond all perspectives to a transcendent God’s-eye-view—that allows for the articulation of a normatively forceful conception of universality. This *universalist perspectivalism* thus accommodates the universalism of cosmopolitan theories while also allowing for the articulation of the radical critique of the democratic deficits of both abstract universalism, at the conceptual level, and supranational institutions, at the institutional level.

Beyond its significance for political philosophy, the universalist perspectivalism developed in this project offers a resource for undermining false dichotomizations of absolutism and relativism in other fields dealing with questions of normativity. Drawing on Mead, universalist perspectivalism offers an account of normativity as deeply *social*. To those who hope to defend traditional accounts of normative concepts from the insidious projects of skeptics and relativists, social construals of such concepts are typically seen as a threat. However, as I demonstrated above, my framework allows for precisely the depiction of normativity as *both* deeply social and perspectival, on the one hand, *and* universalist and normatively constraining, on the other. In this way, as we saw in Chapter III, universalist perspectivalism offers a view according to which we can construe 1) meaning ascriptions as socially constituted without falling into a Kripkean skepticism, as well as 2) objectivity and scientific knowledge as inherently social without falling prey to a relativist brand of social constructionism. The device through which this

is accomplished is the normative perspective of the universal, a regulative ideal that enjoins the attentiveness to ever more concrete perspectives and the transcendence of the limitations and prejudices of given communities via the appeal to a broader, more inclusive community. Also, in Chapter IV, I argued that, by construing impartiality along the lines of the normative perspective of the universal, my account can contribute to carrying out a more situated, radical, and contextually-sensitive program within discourse ethics.

I brought forth the political ramifications of universalist perspectivalism in Chapter V, where I delineated the contours of a notion of democratic social and political practice that is both radical and cosmopolitan. Radical cosmopolitanism is a robust democratic ideal that poses a demand for the development of social and political arrangements in the direction of radical democratization and cosmopolitan-mindedness. This brings us back to the main goal of the project as a whole, which is motivated by the need for a critical evaluation of the prospects for a radical and normatively forceful model of democracy that is adequate to the demands of an era in which economic and political globalization requires a rethinking of political institutions and practices. My account offers a powerful tool for the critique and transformation of institutions and regimes characterized by anti-democratic conditions such as corruption, inequality, and economic oligarchy, encouraging their replacement with institutions that actually take the interests of those affected by their decisions into account. It thus serves a potential role as a normative resource for movements for democratization and the greater social justice that goes along with it.

Acknowledging the gap between ideals and facts should lead us not to give up the ideals but to work to change the facts; ideals should not be foreclosed by a horizon that limits the possible to the actual. Hence the conception of democracy here is inherently critical and

insurgent, as well as potentially constructive under conditions that meet standards of democratic legitimacy more closely than existing conditions. While theorizing an ideal does not directly enable us to implement the institution of democratic society in practice, establishing this demand to pursue this ideal affords us firmer ground on which to stand in creating the kind of social and cultural conditions suitable for promoting democracy; the two projects must go hand in hand to be successful.

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