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#### The United States federal government should treat any vertical restraint exercised by a firm with market power as a per se violation of its core antitrust laws.

#### The consumer welfare interpretation of antitrust encourages vertical integration in the name of efficiency. Franchise arrangements typify the power of firms to dodge labor regulations while avoiding antitrust liability. Increasing workplace hierarchy isolates workers from economic and political power.

Marshall **STEINBAUM** Economics @ Utah **’19** “ANTITRUST, THE GIG ECONOMY, AND LABOR MARKET POWER” *Law and Contemporary Problems* 82 p. 46-50

VERTICAL RESTRAINTS AND THE FISSURED WORKPLACE

David Weil’s book The Fissured Workplace describes a crucial component of the decline in labor’s bargaining power: the gradual disappearance of the traditional, and statutory, employment relationship.5 Instead of uniting workers at different levels of the labor market hierarchy (wages, skills, and social prestige), the contemporary corporation has become a mechanism for segregating low-wage (and even some middle-wage) workers from the economy’s dominant decision-makers: the executives and shareholders of the economy’s leading corporations and the financial institutions that own and control them. Although most workers remain statutory employees of some employer, they are increasingly remote from the decision-making entity that exerts power over their day-to-day lives and terms of work.6

Weil is himself a former senior official responsible for enforcing federal labor law, and he rightly points to the ease with which employers can evade that law by re-classifying workers as either independent contractors or as employees of their contractors as a crucial element in legalizing this fissured business model.7 Many other scholars and organizations, including worker organizations, have emphasized changes in labor law that are very important to understanding how these trends erode worker bargaining power in the economy and ensure that it takes the form of inter-firm wage segregation.8 Specifically, the National Labor Relations Act9 and the Fair Labor Standards Act,10 as well as numerous other state and federal labor regulations, impose tests for statutory employment as a necessary precondition for a worker to enjoy their protections. Increasingly, employers who classify their workers as exempt contractors rather than employees are able to pass these tests, thanks to deferential court rulings,11 technologies that enable employers to manage workers from afar, and industry deregulation that legalizes new, vertically dis-integrated business models in a given sector, among many other causes. These all give employers both the legal means and the pecuniary motive to push their workers outside the legal boundaries of the firm under whose effective control they remain.

Weil’s research is classified methodologically as industry case studies of what he calls the “lead firms” that direct and control a series of contractors and affiliates that actually employ the workers and do the work. His findings have been confirmed by more traditional economics studies of inter-firm earnings inequality using matched employer-employee data from a variety of sources.12 For instance, Song and others used social security records to document the rise in inter-firm inequality; increasingly, the highest-paid workers work for the firms where average pay is the highest.13 This is not because those firms are inherently more productive than other firms due to their firm-specific characteristics, but rather that they have gotten better at sorting out well-paid and highly-educated workers and excluding low- and middle-wage workers from their employment.14 A study by Abowd and others of data from state unemployment insurance records verifies these distinctions, and attaches further significance to working at a well-paid firm. Not only do workers earn more now, but they do so for the rest of their careers.15 “High-paying firms facilitate moving workers to the top of the earnings distribution and keeping them there.”16 Labor market surveys paint a similar picture.17

In a competitive labor market, the identity of a worker’s firm is irrelevant to what he or she gets paid, because if any worker were paid less than they were worth they would quickly switch to a job offering them their competitive market wage. In a competitive labor market equilibrium, all firms pay the same to all workers with similar characteristics. In reality, though, firms have considerable discretion to dictate pay, because outside job offers are sufficiently hard to obtain that it is unlikely that workers will have the option to leave.18 In other words, labor markets are not competitive, as evidenced by the increasing earnings inequality between firms. The aforementioned research on inter-firm inequality shows that workers are increasingly remote from profits and from centers of economic power.19 Anyone familiar with the history of labor organizing, worker solidarity, and the conditions for social mobility can recognize that under those conditions, it’s impossible for workers to benefit from economic growth. An article from the New York Times in 2017 made this point by contrasting the experience of janitors working at the corporate headquarters of Kodak in the early 1980s versus Apple today. The Kodak janitor was employed by the company, enjoyed a tuition subsidy as part of her benefits package, learned how to use inventory software as part of obtaining a college degree on the job, and ultimately worked her way up within Kodak to be head of IT for the whole company. 20 Meanwhile, the Apple janitor is employed by a contracted, franchised janitorial services firm, enjoys no part of the benefits package of an Apple employee, and has no chance of obtaining a promotion up the hierarchy of what is now one of the economy’s most valuable single firms.21

The antitrust side of the story of the separation of workers from lead firms is the simultaneous erosion in the jurisprudence of the Sherman Act’s prohibitions on vertical restraints. In the context of antitrust, a vertical restraint is a contractual provision or mode of operation that restricts the autonomy of the counterparty in the case where each party operates at a distinct segment of the supply chain. For example, if an automobile manufacturing company operates a network of independently owned dealerships, and its dealers are forbidden from selling within a given radius of another authorized dealer’s location, that is territorial exclusivity, a non-price vertical restraint. If such a contract imposes the final retail price of said automobiles, that is vertical price-fixing, or in antitrust lingo, resale price maintenance, which can be either a minimum or a maximum (or both, in the case of one definite price at which the car would be re-sold). Other vertical restraints include the varieties of exclusive practices that suppliers might impose on their affiliated dealers or distributors, like compulsory purchase contracts—known as full-line forcing or requirements contracts.22

Such exclusive dealing was the subject of the 1951 antitrust case United States v. Richfield Oil Co.23 The case concerned the relations between a dominant oil refiner and gasoline supplier—Richfield Oil—and its affiliated service stations, which were required to source their gasoline solely from Richfield and to carry exclusively retail auto parts, sponsored products, according to supply contracts negotiated by Richfield, rather than seeking out and negotiating their own sources of supply according to their customers’ preferences. The court ruled unequivocally for the government on the grounds that it exercised de facto control over these “independent business men,” in contravention of the antitrust laws, despite the fact that they were not employees of the company. That case created a sharp distinction and a comprehensive delineation between the realm of labor and antitrust: if subordinate entities are “independent business men” and not employees, it is illegal to exercise control. The United States Supreme Court affirmed the same basic principle against coercion of non-employees by vertical supply contract in the 1964 case Simpson v. Union Oil Co. of California.24 It is precisely through the erosion of the Richfield Oil standard that the fissured workplace has been allowed to come about. Independent business people are independent for the purposes of evading labor law, but once pushed outside the border of the firm, the restrictions antitrust places on their domination have been all but erased. As such, what Weil calls lead firms can continue to exercise control and direct their business operations by contract.25

Those contracts would once have been illegal, before antitrust jurisprudence began to search out spurious justifications for their immunity on the basis of supposed efficiency.26 For example, manufacturers would want their branded distributors to be bound by contractual provisions to ensure that dealers represent the brand effectively to customers, rather than hide their poor customer service behind the brand’s overall prestige, or that they must contribute to its marketing budget and abide by its standardized branding and pricing policies. Theoretically, this would serve the overall collective interest of the supplier-distributor network. The efficiencies to be gained by permitting franchisors to exercise overall direction and control were assumed to flow eventually to consumers in the form of increased output, enhanced variety or quality, or lower prices—all reflecting the fact that vertical control exercised this way is, in fact, pro- rather than anti-competitive and therefore ought not to be penalized by the antitrust laws.27

Brian Callaci lays out how this process occurred in one sector, so-called business-format franchising.28 As he writes, “While the economic boundaries of the firm correspond to the extent of centrally planned and hierarchically coordinated production, the legal boundaries are set in politically contested legislatures and courts. Exploiting or creating mismatches between the two has enabled corporations to enjoy economic benefits of vertical integration while avoiding many of the legal risks and costs.”29 In the case of franchising, that took the exact form that courts had ruled illegal in Richfield Oil and Simpson v. Union Oil Co. of California: franchisors licensed their trademarks and business models to an army of franchisees, who would be granted exclusive territories in exchange for agreeing to exclusive supply contracts, all enforced by the threat of dealer terminations.

Economists, particularly those operating in the Law and Economics tradition, have interpreted the rise of these hybrid structures, part firm, part market organizations, as reflecting the evolution of an efficient allocation of coordination rights and the alignment of incentives between principal and agent so as to remove the need for direct supervision and take advantage of economies of scale and specialization.30 But Callaci shows that, in fact, the advent and spread of franchising was not due to the law catching up with the natural evolution of a business model marked by superior efficiency. Rather, it is due to a concerted lobbying campaign31 to pry apart the sharp border between labor and antitrust represented by Richfield Oil and grow a whole business model in the legal gray area.32 As far as antitrust was concerned, the operation was meant to roll back the per se illegality of non-price vertical restraints that existed in antitrust following the Supreme Court’s ruling in United States v. Arnold, Schwinn & Co. in 1967, and the per se illegality for maximum resale price maintenance that existed following the Court’s ruling in Albrecht v. Herald Company in 1968.33 With the Court’s decisions in Continental Television v. GTE Sylvania in 1977 and in State Oil Co. v. Khan in 1997, antitrust immunity for vertical integration by contract was complete.34

#### Antitrust law allocates the right to coordinate economic activity. The consumer model of economic efficiency privileges allocating coordinating rights to large powerful firms.

Sanjukta **PAUL** Law @ Wayne State **’19** “Fissuring and the Firm Exemption” *Law and Contemporary Problems* 82:65 p. 68-72

A. Franchising

Franchising typifies the dynamic that has driven the expansion of large firms' coordination rights under conditions of business fissuring: an iterative interaction between shifting legal norms and affirmative decisions about structuring business arrangements. Franchisors succeeded in normalizing their business model in the eyes of the public, institutional actors, and the decisional law, relying to a large extent upon arguments that the business arrangement is efficiency-enhancing, ultimately benefiting consumers.1 2 However, aspects of the standard franchising business model still outstrip the now-permissive vertical restraints cases, and reveal tensions in the reigning consumer welfare standard.

Overall, by confining antitrust-immunized control relations largely to the space within the firm-and to a few more democratic arrangements outside the firm-mid-century antitrust had historically placed some limits on the unreciprocal control exerted by franchisors over franchisees. Mid-century antitrust took a dim view of control imposed through vertical, contractual restraints, for example by franchisors upon franchisees. Importantly, this view was motivated more by a norm of non-domination than by an idea of realizing ideal competitive prices, or of attaining the lowest possible consumer prices.13 The Borkian turn in antitrust law that took hold in the 1970s worked to remove these limits on vertical restraints.14 By doing so, it demonstrated that its fundamental preference for allocating coordination rights is not only within firms, but also by large, powerful firms (at least so long as that coordination too is in the form of control over less-powerful actors). Around the same period, the Borkian turn expanded antitrust law's concept of the firm itself, to capture parent-subsidiary relationships and other corporate groups, and thus extended antitrust immunity to any coordination between separate corporations within these relationships." The single entity doctrine, as it is called, expressly inscribes the preference for economic coordination in the form of control, preferably grounded in concentrated ownership interests." Franchisors have used and relied upon both of these changes in antitrust law to justify their control over franchisees and at times, franchisees' employees.

Fast-food franchisors coordinate their franchising families various ways. They exert control over key elements of franchisees' supply, labor, and product decisions. Notably, they even exert control over the prices of the products sold by franchisee firms, typically in the direction of driving them down. One McDonald's franchisee noted that "participation in deals and pricing is voluntary only in theory," and that on an occasion when its coffee price was a nickel over the franchisor-advertised sale price, "the head of the McDonald's region came in and he said: 'You are over. You can't do this."'17 Some other franchisors even more straightforwardly set the prices charged by franchisee firms; for example, janitorial franchisors often directly bargain contracts with customers on franchisees' behalf."s Burger King, like McDonald's, exerts the same downward pressure on its franchisees' prices through its "Value Menu."19

Franchisors have also placed limits upon worker mobility within franchise "families" through so-called no-poaching provisions placed into franchisee contracts. In the past, franchisors have successfully claimed immunity for these controls under Copperweld, or the single entity doctrine, thereby claiming that franchisees are effectively extensions of the franchisor itself.20 Such provisions have recently come in for new criticism, and have been challenged by workers in a number of pending cases. 21 In the current disputes, some franchisors have again raised the single entity defense, but thus far a judge has not ratified it. To expressly ratify this theory would be to make explicit the selective application of firm status to franchise "families" as between antitrust and labor law. Franchisees themselves are denied coordination rights by antitrust law,22 further cementing franchisors' power. Meanwhile, franchisees' employees' fight for coordination rights, for example in the form of unionization, has also been frustrated by franchisors' position that they are completely separate from franchisees, which would require workers to separately unionize numerous small franchisees. In short, franchisors have thus far been permitted to disclaim affiliation with franchisee firms altogether under labor law, even as they frequently claim that franchisees are extensions of the firm under antitrust, in both cases cementing their exclusive coordination rights in the overall arrangement.

The pending no-poach cases also illustrate the operation of the law of vertical restraints and franchisors' attempts to stretch its limits. To see this, note first that even franchisors' control over franchisee product pricing decisions ought to be uncertain territory. As noted, franchisors exert control over consumer prices charged by franchisees, in addition to aspects of their dealings with suppliers and workers. Even under the existing law's profound preference for vertical control over horizontal coordination, franchisors' control over franchisee pricing-which in turn has direct, negative implications for franchisees' labor relationships and workers' wages 2 3-does not obviously fit within the parameters of legal vertical restraints. The paradigm cases, from GTE Sylvania (geographic market allocation) to Khan (maximum prices) to Leegin (minimum prices), all deal with re-sale of a product sold by the actor seeking to impose the restraint. Franchisors do not sell hamburgers to franchisees, who then re-sell them. This problem is not necessarily resolved by extending the principles of these cases to intangible property-such as the franchise brand-which are covered.24

There is, in any event, no credible argument for extending these precedents to labor-facing restraints imposed by franchisors upon franchisees. Franchisors do not hire out workers to franchisees. No proprietary technology licensed by franchisors to franchisees is implicated in those relationships. Yet the Department of Justice chose to file a brief in these pending cases effectively supporting franchisors' position and suggesting that no-poach agreements limiting mobility among some of the lowest-wage, most vulnerable workers have legally cognizable benefits.25 This is notable in part because it dramatizes the tensions in antitrust law's current governing normative framework. The DOJ brief purports to treat labor market restraints symmetrically with product market restraints. But this is belied by their own arguments about the putative countervailing efficiencies of no-poach agreements, which are framed purely in terms of consumer benefits, namely lower prices. This points up a basic tension within the existing legal framework, which simultaneously claims to treat worker welfare equally with consumer welfare, but which only admits evidence of countervailing benefits to consumers, primarily price benefits, when evaluating forms of permitted coordination. In short, the DOJ's briefs supporting franchisors' position in the pending cases brought by fast food workers to invalidate employee no-poach agreements imposed by franchisors upon franchisees stretch existing tendencies in the law to favor control by powerful firms, which is presumed to confer consumer benefits.

In effect, the DOJ's brief seeks to enshrine in the official, surface grammar of the law what has heretofore been only a tacit expansion at the level of its deeper grammar, where the firm exemption partially resides. That tacit expansion of the borders of the firm exemption has been achieved through decades of creating facts on the ground by naturalizing franchisors' business model, and through economic arguments that these arrangements are efficiency-enhancing because of lower consumer prices.

#### We should allocate coordination rights on the basis of power rather than efficiency.

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TOWARD A RE-ALLOCATION OF COORDINATION RIGHTS

Contemporary fissured business arrangements distill the preference for topdown, hierarchical control of smaller players by more powerful firms that is already present in today’s antitrust framework, while often pushing beyond the boundaries set by the current expression of that framework in the surface structure of the law. They call out for a re-allocation of coordination rights under antitrust law. What criteria are available to effect this re-allocation, and on what basis should it be achieved?

Our current framework recognizes one other relevant source of coordination rights, beyond the firm, and that of course is based in labor law. The labor exemption to antitrust essentially permits economic coordination that antitrust would otherwise condemn where individuals engaged in the performance of labor or services are sufficiently subject to the power and control of a firm, and lack significant power and control—including relevant ownership rights—of their own.75 From this perspective, the labor exemption has always—or at least, long— been a limited qualification of the firm exemption, and it has been in a basic way dependent upon it. The limited qualification represented by the labor exemption is underlined by the fact that the collective power of labor—even if it were fully realized—cannot legally be brought to bear to contest basic firm or capital decisions, an outcome that Karl Klare and others have shown was not intrinsic to the Wagner Act itself, but was instead imposed by a contingent turn in the decisional law.76 Given this basic derivative relationship of the labor exemption to the firm exemption, it is then no wonder that the superficial undoing of the firm has further undone the labor exemption.

How might we conceive of a new allocation of economic coordination rights that would avoid some of these problems, which have undermined the New Deal order almost beyond recognition? Attempts to broaden the labor exemption or to create new worker exemptions while retaining or copying its basic structure are unlikely to be sufficient. Fissured business structures show that the firm, which was never a platonic ideal to start with, will continue to change and mutate—partly of course in response to the law’s own allocation of coordination rights. Imagine if all workers or individual service-providers currently classified as independent contractors gained coordination rights. What would stop many firms who currently use independent contractors from moving to a system of contracting with, say, two to three person “firms” of workers—firms that are conveniently incorporated by signing ready-made forms in the company’s office upon hiring? These groups of workers would of course lack coordination rights in their bargaining with the firm that retains their services, and their intra-firm coordination rights would be negligible. The law should not allocate coordination rights to working people on the condition of particular business structuring decisions made by others. But such decisions are the inevitable response to smallbore redefinitions of the labor exemption, as fissuring itself teaches us.

Instead, we might consider allocating coordination rights on the basis of power and social benefit. Importantly, to guide the application of these concepts, we must first discard the ideal-state competitive order as the default normative framework for antitrust and for economic regulation more generally. This is not to say that competition as a social process, referring to healthy business rivalry, is not important to antitrust law: it is, and ought to be balanced with appropriate and socially beneficial coordination. However, once we realize that the ideal state concept of competition that is currently presumed to form the basis for antitrust law is contributing very little—except as a smokescreen for other normative choices—then we need no longer view economic coordination as a special exception to the order of things. Thus, we need not look for conditions of deprivation, or powerlessness, as constituting the sole basis—aside from the firm exemption—for the appropriate exercise of coordination rights because they are an exception to an otherwise perfect order. That is what our current framework does, and it is also the assumption on which even the most ambitious reform proposals proceed.77

Instead, once coordination is no longer a special exception to the ideal-state competitive order, we may think of allocating coordination rights not only in order to contest existing power over someone—in other words, to contest conditions of domination—but more broadly and positively, to allocate coordination rights in order to confer a social benefit and so long as the coordination does not result in power over someone else. In this vision, power would be a constraint upon coordination rather than the criterion of its permission. So, truck drivers would be able to engage in direct price coordination among each other, so long as that coordination did not result in the undue exercise of power over some other group of people: other truck drivers or customers, for example.78 They would not have to show that someone else has power over them—whether through prices, or something else—in order to engage in coordination. Indeed, within such a framework, each of the groups discussed in Part II—franchisees, Uber drivers, and independent contractors— would quite plainly be allocated coordination rights. The precise scope of those rights should be determined in order to ensure that undue power over other groups does not result. Moreover, the availability of those rights would largely not depend upon unilateral decisions made by the lead firms in any of these arrangements in defining their relationships with workers, franchisees, or others in their orbit. Thus, small players’ coordination rights would be more secure than those allocated by a broadened labor exemption or other new exemption. Conversely, on this alternative approach to the allocation of coordination rights, antitrust law would not permit powerful firms like Uber and McDonald’s to exert control over small, less-powerful players like drivers and franchisees. However, rather than prohibiting this coordination on the ground that it facilitates horizontal coordination that is presumptively bad, antitrust law ought to take the view that it is impermissible because it unduly exacerbates power imbalances and domination, and confers no social benefit that would not be better realized through more democratic forms of coordination.

In both directions, a conscious re-allocation of coordination rights would work toward balancing undue asymmetries of power rather than exacerbating them, as the current antitrust framework does, particularly in the context of fissured business arrangements. In order to do so, it would also recognize that the current framework makes normative choices about allocating coordination rights that cannot be derived from putatively neutral principles supplied by the competitive ideal.

#### Contesting conditions of domination should be a core political-economic value and basis for organization.

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This diagnosis of unequal economic power recasts the problem of modern capitalism as one not of income inequality but rather one of domination—the accumulation of arbitrary, unchecked power over others.38 Domination, as suggested by these Progressive Era critics, could manifest in both the concentrated form of corporate power and the diffuse form of the market system itself**.** Domination captures a wide range of the moral harms in an economically unequal society: the subjugation of workers to corporations, the subrogation of the public as a whole to monopolies and “too-big-to-fail” banks, and the ways in which diffuse patterns of discrimination or market structures might constrain individual and collective freedom. The problems of our unequal society are not just matters of distributive justice and income. To overcome these challenges we must do more to ensure that all Americans have real, meaningful freedom to shape their own lives—and that means have a real voice, a real share of power in economic, social, and political realms. The freedom that domination threatens—the freedom we must seek to realize—is not the libertarian freedom of consumer choice and market transaction; it is the richer freedom to live lives we each have reason to value—a freedom that is expanded with our capacities and capabilities to have real agency in the world. In short, it is the freedom of being an agent, capable of authoring one’s own life and coauthoring collectively our shared political, social, and economic life. This is the freedom that is constrained by the accumulation of unchecked power, whether by the state, the corporation, or the market itself.

#### Antitrust plays a key role in contesting workplace domination. The legal strategy of separating a firm from its workers means any challenge to corporate power should prevent firms from separating workers from shares in decision-making and profits.

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CONCLUSION: USING ANTITRUST TO RE-BALANCE POWER IN LABOR MARKETS

This paper sets out an important but under-appreciated aspect of the rise in labor market precarity and diminishing worker bargaining power: the erosion of antitrust laws restricting dominant firms’ ability to use vertical restraints to control and restrict both less powerful affiliates and the workers who work for them, and the concurrent use of antitrust against any attempt by those workers or independent businessmen or contractors to bargain collectively against such concentrations of power. In ascertaining the causes of contemporary inequality in wealth, income, and social status, especially with respect to the labor market, we cannot overlook the role that antitrust has played.

This contrasts with a recent Economic Policy Institute paper by Heidi Shierholz and Josh Bivens that treats the rise of employer power in labor markets, and the extent to which weakening antitrust has caused that phenomenon, as a less important cause of rising inequality and stagnant wages compared to the erosion of labor law and thus of collective bargaining.95 Their evidence for the contention that diminishing worker bargaining power matters more than concentrated employer bargaining power is that inequality within the distribution of labor income is a more significant cause of stagnating wages and the growing gap between median worker pay and average worker productivity than is the declining labor share of national income, which is of more recent vintage than either of the first two economic trends.

But we cannot map rising labor income inequality to worker bargaining power and labor law and the declining labor share of income to employer power and antitrust so neatly. As the analysis in Parts II and III show, income inequality is to a large extent caused by rising earnings inequality between firms, rather than between workers, reflecting employer power to set wages. This is the result of the legalization of business models like the fissured workplace that allow powerful employers to segregate workers from the profits they earn for their bosses. The point of Part II of this paper is that the fissured workplace is the product of both labor regulation and antitrust. Thus, increasing inequality of power between employers and workers cannot be coherently treated as two separate phenomena: rising employer power, and declining worker power. That means the solution to unequal bargaining power is not necessarily or not entirely an antitrust solution, but antitrust must play a major part, since it implicates the business models available to the economy’s dominant firms. In particular, we should seek, through revived antitrust and labor regulations that both take account of how the economy actually works, and how power is exercised within it, to re-establish the sharp distinction embodied in Richfield Oil.

Either workers are employees, in which case they can be controlled by their bosses, who in turn owe them statutory protections including the right to bargain collectively, or they are independent businesses, in which case they cannot be coerced by contract or by any other means. Proposals to extend and strengthen labor law tests for statutory employment to take account of gig economy technologies are crucial, but they will be ineffective so long as employers and lead firms retain the strong incentive to push workers outside their protection. The role of antitrust in that context is to create a significant cost to so doing: the potential for treble damages under antitrust liability should a lead firm be caught coordinating and directing the activities of its non-employee subsidiaries and contractors. That is the mechanism that would weigh against employers’ incentive to mis-classify.

Putting such an antitrust regime in place entails the abandonment of both the consumer welfare standard and, with it, the Chicago School’s jurisprudence of vertical restraints. Instead, any vertical restraint, price or non-price, should be a presumptive violation of the Sherman Act if it is imposed by a firm with market power. And antitrust’s definition of market power must, in turn, be expanded beyond the confined market-share-based Sherman Act jurisprudence to instead take account of the many ways economists have of testing for the existence of market power. Firms would be judged to have market power if they:

• Have the power to unilaterally raise prices for their customers or lower them for their suppliers, including workers;

• Wage- or price-discriminate among customers, suppliers, or workers;

• Unilaterally impose non-price, uncompensated contractual provisions on their counterparties, like non-compete agreements in labor contracts;

• Impede or control entry by would-be competitors; or

• Earn profits and/or make payments to their shareholders at a rate in excess of their market cost of capital.

All of these things are economic indicia of market power because they could not be done by any one or more firms acting in concert in the face of competition from rivals—therefore they should be legal indicia of market power as well.96

Drilling down on how the antitrust laws should target labor market monopsony in particular, not merely prohibit vertical restraints that enable fissured workplace-style business models, the antitrust authorities should bring a monopsonization suit against an online labor platform like Uber that fixes wages and imposes exclusivity on independent businesses, along the lines of Meyer v. Kalanick. If, as would be expected, that case would be adjudicated under the Rule of Reason, despite its economic equivalence to the FTC’s per se cases against professional organizations and unions of independent contractors, then Congress should streamline the Rule of Reason for labor monopsony. This should be done along the lines proposed by Ioana Marinescu and Eric Posner, setting out principles to guide market definition that are responsive to measured firm-level labor supply elasticities.97 In fact, if firms have the unilateral power to dictate wages without causing a significant share of their workforce to leave, then the proper market definition for a monopsonization case may be significantly smaller than the one those authors recommend as a baseline. The point of such a suit is to force Uber to choose one business model or another: either employ the drivers if Uber wants to fix their wages and monitor them on the job, or give up the pricesetting and market coordination power that makes the platform such a value proposition for its investors. It cannot be allowed to do both. Meanwhile, workers themselves who are not statutory employees should be protected by antitrust’s labor exemption and should be permitted to bargain collectively. However, any such extension of the labor exemption must not also immunize the powerful employer against whom they would seek to bargain. And at the very least, both no-poaching clauses in franchising contracts and non-compete clauses in employment contracts should be illegal per se.98

**The imperative of efficient firms hands despotic power to bosses. Democratizing the governance of firms is key to genuine democracy.**

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This book addresses a fundamental tension between capitalism and democracy, a tension so great that it has the potential to lead our democratic societies to the brink of collapse. It begins with the observation that life in Western democratic society has created an expectation of voice in the economy and the workplace, which cannot be fulfilled by the arbitrary way in which most firms are run. To be a citizen and to be an employee today is to live with a great contradiction between the democratic culture of our times and the reality of the work experience. Our democratic culture gives citizens a hunger for a voice in the way their lives unfold, while their experience in the workplace is one in which they are reduced to mere production factors. Capital investors truly are “more equal than others”1 within contemporary firms – specifically, more equal than the employees who invest their labor in those same firms. Capitalism grants capital investors despotic power – in the original sense of that term2 – over ­­ labor investors, who, in a capitalist economy, are considered to be elements in the means of production. This runs counter to the democracies in which capitalist firms have flourished, and this contradiction has necessarily affected contemporary workplaces: employees today struggle with a range of problems, from lack of motivation and absenteeism to depression. It affects the world outside the workplace as well: the financial, environmental, social, and political crises we now face all press us to examine the role and structure of the firm as an institution within the context of our democratic societies. This book offers such an examination, and its conclusion is unambiguous: firms are better understood as political entities, and not mere economic organizations. Economic organizations they are, but they are much more than that as well, and it is time to acknowledge this fact. If democratic societies do acknowledge this, they will be called to begin to treat firms like all of society’s other institutions: not only endowed with rights, held accountable for discharging specific responsibilities. As political entities, it is crucial that firms be made compatible with the democratic commitments of our nations – in other words, democratized.

The political project that organizes our lives inWestern democracies is driven by a democratic ideal. By this we mean “a compelling normative idea, requiring that people be treated as equals in the process of collective decision-making” (Cohen 2009: 6). This entails that the government be a government “of the people, by the people, for the people,” according to Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address in 1863. Despite the physical, material, intellectual, and cultural differences of our members, we as societies have declared all citizens to be equal, and organized our institutions in ways intended to help us perceive and treat each other as equals. As Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights affirmed in 1948, we are born “free and equal in dignity and in rights” – equal, and therefore fit to participate in choosing the collective standards that order our lives. But as this book will argue, these assertions are not taken seriously in the world of work. As the level of inequalities within and among nations reaches historic levels (Piketty 2013, Milanovic 2016), people around the world are increasingly impatient with the failings of democracy. They are aware that their life prospects and those of their children differ drastically depending on whether they are born rich or poor – and what clearer violation of the standard of equality underpinning the democratic ideal could there be? Of all aspects of contemporary life, the world of work would seem to be the last great holdover from a bygone era in which despotic and plutocratic rule was the norm. The unsettling cognitive dissonance to which this state of affairs has given rise is plain: in their everyday lives, citizens are enjoined to behave as responsible members of their democratic society. As electors, they are presumed capable of coming together to decide important political questions such as “Who should be president of this country?” or “Should this country leave the European Union?” And yet these same citizens, when they arrive at their jobs, become the subjects of a despotic corporate government in which profitability is the main criterion for all decisions. This criterion of profitability is just as ill defined: Whose profit? To what end? According to what terms? Over how long? In my work as a sociologist, I have observed that employees today live with a contradiction that I, reading it from a Marxian perspective on capitalism, have identified as the capitalism/democracy contradiction. It raises significant questions: What are the limits of the current confrontational coexistence of capitalism and democracy? And, in practical terms, how are we going to reconcile, escape, or end this confrontation? What can be done moving forward to solve the contradiction? Essentially, the road diverges ahead, and we must choose: more capitalism or more democracy. The former will grant more arbitrary power to those who own capital, giving “capitalist despotism” freer rein in our work lives and beyond. The latter leads toward a reinvigorated version of democracy, in which the political rights granted to working people are at least the same as the political rights accorded to capital owners.

To offer a concrete example – not to say an ideal type – the United States has, for the past four decades, been on the path toward capitalist despotism. Corporate money provides limitless funds to electoral candidates; the U.S. Supreme Court’s Citizens United ruling declared that corporations are to be considered as people with the right to free speech; and a significant proportion of social and cultural life has come under the influence or even the direct leadership of corporations, from prisons to sports arenas. In January 2017, as this book is being completed, Donald Trump, a billionaire corporate leader with a track record as a capitalist heir, is about to be sworn in as the country’s president, showing just how far down the path of capitalist despotism the United States has gone. For the time being, and perhaps for the foreseeable future, the United States appears to have resolved the capitalism/democracy contradiction by choosing more capitalist despotism and less democracy.

Yet, what analysts have referred to as a populist revolt against the establishment in the November 2016 election expresses nothing so much as a deep “hunger for democracy” (Ferreras 2007b). People raised as citizens in a democracy aspire to have some agency over the course of their own lives, and the past decades have shown them with aching clarity that this aspiration to agency is little more than a dream.3 It seems clear that the time to explore the alternative route is now. The path of more democracy, as a project of deepening and extending democracy (Olin Wright and Rogers 2015), is a long, historic avenue, the one down which social justice and progress have advanced. It is the long path of emancipation, distinguished by the enfranchisement of different categories of people previously considered unequal. If we are to continue down it today,we must dare to look closely at the specificities of the world around us. This book does just that, and offers a map for the next step, which is the democratization of the corporation. If we fail to take this step, we will be forced to a standstill, from which we will see capitalism eat up what is left of political democracy**.** To forge ahead – and we can – we must keep moving toward more productive4 institutional arrangements in the firm. This book, then, offers a way out of the impasse of “capitalist democracies” (Cohen and Rogers 1983) in which we now live, in which the standards organizing our – capitalist – economies are set by capital investors, while the purportedly egalitarian standards organizing the rest of our – democratic – political life are set by all.

In the West, our age-old understanding of the economy as private in nature has worn away to the point that it must be reconsidered. What should be considered private has changed considerably with time: our economy began as agrarian, became industrial, and is now service-based. More and more employees now work in full or partial view of the public, meaning that the economy, considered since antiquity to be private (the term economy being derived from the Greek oikos-nemein, or the management of the household), is now experienced by many of those contributing to it as part of the larger public space. Service employees greet their fellow citizens as customers face-to-face, over the phone, and through the tentacular world of the internet; even those not in direct contact with customers are constantly reminded of their importance and presence. Beneath the constant gaze of citizen-customers, the corporation household, once intensely private, has slowly moved into the public sphere. This is a shift the full impact of which has yet to be measured. In advanced democracies, we take as given that the public sphere should not be dominated by the power (kratein) of a single (auto-) person, nor by a small group of individuals, valiant, intelligent, or rich as they may be (aristo- or pluto-). Democratic societies have agreed that the public sphere is a space through which people – the demos, all themembers of the democracy – should express their sovereignty, both as individuals and as a society. If this is so, and if the workplace has shifted into the public sphere, then shouldn’t our reference point for its government also shift from the household (oikos) to the people – demos? Analyzing the experiences of those who invest their labor in the firm, I have found that it is impossible to ignore the ways in which they are steeped in notions of democratic justice. Work, for those who do it, is a fundamentally expressive experience. This is, in fact, one of the fundamentals of my argument, that those who invest their labor in firms are motivated by expressive rationality. By this I mean that the work experience resonates with meaning that is constructed by those doing the work, and that this meaning is derived by mobilizing concepts of what is just and unjust in the life of a community – what political philosophers generally refer to as the “political.”

Although it is hardly surprising that traces of democratic culture should be perceptible in the workplaces of democratic societies, this reality has remained strangely invisible. I will mobilize research in corporate and labor law (among other fields) to argue that this is because the idea of the corporation has managed to eclipse the idea of the firm, allowing corporate shareholders to maintain all power over it. As I will explain, the dominant economic theory of the firm reduces the firm to a mere corporation at the center of a nexus of contracts, including labor contracts. In this sense, it practices what I call a Reductio ad Corporationem: it folds the firm into the corporation, despite the fact that the latter is merely the legal vehicle that structures capital investments. It does this by pretending that the fundamental qualities of a firm are identical to those of a corporation. This occludes an immense portion of the firm’s reality. In this way, the economic theory of the firm, while claiming scientific neutrality, has in fact upheld and validated a very narrow approach to the firm (and even to the corporation, as we shall see in Part II) – one that has helped shareholders maintain an excess of power. The scientific task pursued by this book is to initiate the development of a political theory of the firm5 as an alternative to this Reductio ad Corporationem by shedding light on the dense reality of the firm not captured by the description and institutional design of the corporation. It will examine the actual relationship between the corporation and the firm, rather than ignoring or obscuring that relationship.

This alone is a vast project. This research agenda cannot possibly be addressed without a dedicated collective effort. A great deal of research into this topic already exists. Unfortunately it has so far remained isolated in different corners of the social sciences. This research needs to be drawn together – and, I believe, deployed – through the hypothesis put forth in this book: to consider firms as political entities. To do so requires addressing three dimensions of the political theory of the firm: the substantive, the descriptive, and the normative. The political theory of the firm mobilizes analytical categories coming from the body of literature in political analysis and political theory to look at the life of the firm. Its evaluative and critical aspects – the normative dimension of the theory – will flow straightforwardly from the substantive and descriptive dimensions. In the interest of giving life to this new research landscape made of the many existing, scattered contributions that the author of these lines could not possibly hope to know of, and cite, this short book contains a proposal that draws practical conclusions from the analysis it provides, as a lens for looking to the future. The imperative of efficiency conditions economic life today, and the imperative of collective freedom conditions public life inWestern democracies. The continued growth of our economy and our society demands that we identify a viable compromise between the two. As current events constantly remind us, the grave risks posed by the shock of these two imperatives are inescapably present, and the need for compromise inescapably important. We as citizens are facing big questions, and our democracies cannot afford to shy away from them. Can efficiency and justice be reconciled? How compatible are capitalism and democracy? Can capitalism be democratized? My own research into the workplace led me to these questions – and then to the observations and to the proposal put forth in this book. I have written a text intended to inject new life and new energy into an often shopworn and anxiety-inducing debate. The ideas I offer in the pages that follow are the beginnings of my own attempt, as a scholar and a citizen, to seriously and pragmatically envision a sustainable future for our democracies threatened by financial global capitalism, and more specifically by the current confusion of the corporation with the firm.

I am a labor sociologist and a political scientist, but the work I present here is strongly interdisciplinary, as is required by such vast questions. Because this is a book about the future of democracy and capitalism, I have grounded my analysis in the past, which is, after all, an indispensable reference point if we are to look ahead. Specifically, I have grounded it in political history: although the transition is arguably still in process, over the long term ourWestern societies have progressed from absolutism (in the form of autocracies or oligarchies) to democracy. For this reason, in my thinking about the government of the firm, I chose to draw inspiration from political revolutions, since the central issue that caused them is the same one now faced by the capitalist firm: how power ought to be shared. As I will explain, in the history of Western democratic revolutions the transition from absolutism to democracy occurred through a specific institutional innovation. Although it varies from country to country and from context to context, this transition has always involved what I call a bicameral moment. In modern history, England may be considered as having given birth to this compromise: faced with the prospect of losing it all, the king of England realized it was necessary to share his power. British bicameralism was his tactic for avoiding fatal revolution, a compromise with the people in the form of a partial democracy that seated landed aristocrats in the House of Lords and the representatives of the people in the House of Commons, with an executive branch accountable to both. The king’s government had to win the majority in both Houses to pass a law. Today’s workplace bears a more than passing resemblance to a pre-democratic state, with upper management holding the place of the pre-democratic executive branch of government. It is an institution governed by a property-owning minority that profits from the labor of the majority. The parallel is arresting: What would you think of an England governed by the House of Lords alone?

Bicameralism was a radical idea because it was so simple. This book seeks to inject the same radical simplicity into the debate over governing and democratizing capitalism – not to oversimplify the questions we face as societies, but rather to offer solid foundations for that debate. It begins with the observation that work has shifted from the private to the public sphere; that employees are suffering from the tension between their aspiration to greater voice in the workplace and the authoritarian power structures that continue to hold sway there; that the formerly “private household” of the economy has evaporated under customers’ gazes and left employees with a work experience that takes place in the public space of the service economy. Then, drawing inspiration from the political history of Western societies, it conveys the notion of bicameralism, the institutional innovation that spurred the process of democratization, into the government of the firm.

The point of democracy is to serve all; my proposal here is no exception. Lately, business rhetoric has become more and more imbued with the idea of corporate social and environmental responsibility, and with the questions of how to sustainably secure the innovation capacities of firms’ “human resources” while promoting efficiency and avoiding lack of motivation, depression, and, in extreme cases, job-related suicide. The proposal that follows is based on the pragmatic observation that the investment of labor in firms is at least as necessary and legitimate as the investment of capital, and that firms would be better served if all its investors were represented in their government. After all, as political history has shown, power sharing is preferable to confrontation, gridlock, or even collapse. Sharing, not relinquishing: to each set of investors its own house, bound to govern together in the interest of all through a representative government they both designate. A Capital Investors’ House of Representatives and a Labor Investors’ House of Representatives with an executive branch – or top management – whose laws must be consented by a majority in both houses; in other words, by at least 50% + 1 vote from the Representatives elected by Capital Investors and 50% + 1 vote from the Representatives elected by Labor Investors.

#### Using the prism of power instead of efficiency is part of a project of critical political economy in legal advocacy. This framework can displace the synthesis of law and economics.

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What might legal scholarship that took the political nature of the economy seriously look like? What questions would it foreground, and how would it address them? We offer a possible set of broad reorientations and questions, intended not as a last word but as invitation. They are constructed from our critique of the deficiencies of the Twentieth-Century Synthesis and in dialogue with developments across legal scholarship and grassroots movements.

A. From Efficiency to Power

By centering efficiency as a value and making key assumptions about markets and how they work, the Twentieth-Century Synthesis marginalized questions of power that had been central to legal analysis since at least the time of legal realism. Realists understood that the law generates the very order of rights that market advocates invoke to define the boundaries of "the economy." As they pointed out, when the state orders "private" rights it acts coercively, but in indirect fashion, allocating powers and immunities that authorize individuals to act on or with disregard for others.

Take as an example the thought of legal realist and institutional economist Robert Hale. Hale characterized economic life as a system of mutual coercion, with the degree of each person's coercive power arising directly from legal entitlements. "The law," Hale stressed, "confers on each person a wholly unique set of liberties with regard to the use of material goods and imposed on each person a unique set of restrictions with regard thereto."m2 Law, that is, allocates the powers and resources that are necessary to most human projects, thus defining the terrain on which people must work with others to fulfill their needs and pursue their purposes. Property law, for instance, tells you whom you must induce to give you access to what you need to meet your needs; conversely, it says which resources others can only access by winning your permission. This power to drive a (more or less hard) bargain was what Hale called coercion, and he saw it everywhere. For him, every bargain was conducted in the spirit of the strike and the lockout. (It is no coincidence that his was a theory of economic life for a time of fierce labor conflict.)

This account centers the power, rooted in state decisions and articulated through law, that constitutes the field of economic life. The Twentieth-Century Synthesis held that such power was unimportant, either by redirecting attention from it or by denying that power was stratified or structured in ways that matter. By refocusing scholarship on questions structured by transaction costs and externalities, law-and-economics analysis placed questions of distribution and coercion outside the lamplight of methodology. It thus neglected the actual social world comprised of highly disparate resource allocations that are themselves products of background legal rules: the power of the venture capitalist to bring to life or quash the plans of others; the trust beneficiary's option to refuse unwelcome offers in favor of idleness; and the acute need of the person living without any savings (as forty percent of Americans do) to find and accept an unequal bargain in order to stay alive.123 As important were a host of assumptions about markets and market subjects. Markets were typically presumed to be sufficiently competitive that concentrated power generally could not last. 124 Some suggested that politics might "clear" as markets did, so that when wealth was reallocated, when, for example, a new legal rule took from one side and gave to the other, it would be transferred back via a seamlessly adjusting market of politics.12 Under the pressure of these various conceptual moves, legal thought was effectively disabled from centering questions about power and distribution that would once obviously have been its main concerns. Who gives the orders, who dictates the plans, and who must aim to win a place as a cog in someone else's scheme? Who takes profits, who takes wages, and whose wages make for a secure life versus a precarious one? When the questions are posed in this way, it becomes clear that in the economists' standard definition of their subject matter, "choice under constraint," the emphasis should fall soundly on "constraint" and its legally constituted allocation. The study of that constraint, what Hale called the ubiquitous mutual coercion of economic relations on the basis of (almost always unequal) bargaining power, is the question that should replace the focus on the feasibility and comprehensiveness of bargains and the sum of economic activity that they make up.

What would it mean to take power once more as a central unit of analysis in law? In the broadest sense, when we teach a canonical case or encounter a legal problem, we might ask quite simply, who has power here, who should have power, and why? At least three forms of power deserve our attention: the constitutive power of law to create endowments that shape all voluntary bargains, the market power that legal structures enable, and the political power that may arise from differential endowments, market power, or ways that legal rules insulate economic power from democratic reordering. In selecting topics and framing questions, this reorientation would inquire into how law creates, reproduces, and protects political-economic power, for whom, and with what results.

Regarding constitutive power, an LPE reorientation would mean less attention to Coasean problems and what we might call (following the lead of economic sociologists) the "social geometry of bargains."126 Whom does law endow with bargaining power, and with what justification? How, if we aspired to more egalitarian distribution of power and resources, might law reconfigure these endowments- through both redistribution and "predistribution"? This way of reasoning would also invite attention to the history of state creation of systemically unequal endowments and to how legal regimes and lawyers by coding resources as capital have contributed to stratification and patterned disadvantage. 12 7 For example, we might, as some scholars of law and political economy already have, map the relations between techniques to render land a source of credit and the historical dispossession of native lands, 128 or rules of finance, property, and inheritance that have systematically undermined both black wealth and black land ownership in recent years. 2 9 Insofar as property and contract law serve as first-year allegories for economic life in general, our reorientation would also-in conjunction with attention to market and political power - redirect the pedagogical spirit of "private law" courses toward examining inequality and encasement of private power in markets as an ongoing product of law. The same reorientation would mean asking in other "economic" courses how law patterns the landscape of bargaining power: how antitrust law, for instance, has produced - but might instead restrict -new forms of enhanced bargaining power for firms, or how shifts in labor law have reduced labor's endowments but correspondingly might be revised to generate more meaningful countervailing power and negotiation over workplace governance.130

Market power, too, requires attention from a political-economy perspective. Economic power cannot be reduced to market power, as our discussions of constitutive and political power indicate. But in the presence of market power - the ability to dictate prices and the terms of market transactions due to one's dominant position as a buyer or seller - allocating decisions to markets will generate significant problems both within a conventional economic framework and beyond it. For example, where employers have pervasive monopsony power, we can expect implications for wages and working conditions that lend credence to new arguments for antitrust intervention, employment regulation, and the affirmative support of labor as countervailing power.131 Notably, a new wave of scholarship in economics argues that market power is today a pervasive rather than occasional phenomenon.132

Finally, to do justice to the conjunction that is political economy, we must also ask when and how economic power relates to political power. Political-science literature has begun to document the influence of wealth on legislation.133 We should ask about the means by which economic power translates into political power and how law structures, or could restructure, these channels of influence. 134 Of special importance here are measures that encase market power from politics, disabling ordinary democratic means of defining the place of markets in our political order. For example, investigations of where and how property or markets receive constitutional protection, as well as the limits of such regimes and their potential for reinterpretation, deserve to be central subjects of political economy.13

In a broader frame, the move to political economy requires a shift in our view of interpersonal relations - not as presumptively equal market transactions that are further legitimated by being voluntary and theoretically "making everyone better off' but rather as fundamentally power-laden bargains that require law and policy to be rendered more equal and fair. It also requires a shift in our view of inclusion from the individual to the structural level, looking not just at individualized experience but rather at how law and policy construct systematic forms of hierarchy and domination through a market that is always embedded in social relations. This is one of the key insights of critical legal thought and literature from both feminists and scholars of critical race theory. 136 Then, we may ask: how might public power be reconstituted where the market has been insulated from democratic control? Which legal tools are required? What is the proper relationship between expertise and democratic authority, and how can that be institutionalized? How might one reenvision the process of democratizing control over the economy, while recognizing the harms that governments have done - always to some more than others -in the name of the people?

#### Developing a new legal imaginary that center issues of power is necessary to displace the institutional and ideological power of the law and economics synthesis. A positive program helps us link together different areas of power inequalities in the law.

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In synthesizing these last two points, we might say that two criteria define a properly democratic political economy. First, the political community must be able to assert its collective will over the economic order, not be blocked from doing so by the antipolitics of efficiency-focused adjudication or technocracy. Second, the substance of economic life must support democratic self-rule by ensuring substantial equality, freedom from abjection and dependence, a workplace experience of dignity and self-assertion rather than vulnerability and humiliation, and the capacity to build power through institutions such as unions. A democratic political economy must be answerable to its citizens' rule, and it must produce citizens capable of ruling it.

Third, a commitment to democracy demands that we experiment with alternatives to the prevailing technologies of elite governance, particularly in the regulatory state itself. Instead of viewing state bureaucracy as a domain of apolitical expertise (or of malevolent capture and corruption), we might reconceive regulatory bodies as sites of democratic contestation.162 If purportedly neutral and technocratic visions for rationalizing governance are neither neutral nor, in practice, rationalizing, we need new conceptions of how to democratically discipline administrative decisions. What would processes of administrative accountability look like if they were wise to dynamics of power and animated by a commitment to more genuine equality? There is a dynamic scholarly agenda here, already under construction. We might explore, for example, means to bring representatives of affected communities to participate in administrative decision-making, aiming at modalities of democratic voice that could meet our needs for both (a broadened conception) of expertise and for institutionalized forms of countervailing power.163 There is a rich history of social movements engaging and seeking to remake the regulatory state in a more inclusive, but still effective, way.164 A democratic political economy compels us to revisit and build on this tradition. Like many of the cases we have advanced here, the substance of these arguments lies in political morality. A democratic political economy is a moral project, aimed at taking with full seriousness the equality of persons and our capacity to set for ourselves the terms of our collective lives, to decide how to deal out power and vulnerability, to figure out how to live together - and to defend these decisions to one another. When we follow Karl Polanyi in speaking of an economy "embedded" in society,165 we mean not just that economic ordering is always derived from legal ordering but also that an economy's ordering of power and vulnerability always bespeaks a moral vision of persons, whether egalitarian and generous or hierarchical and cramped.

Thus, scholarship should consider what moral images of social and political order are implied in a given legal patterning. What image of economic citizenship, or of a democratic economy, is embedded in a Brandeisian antitrust regime or in a labor law that assumes workers are involved in governing the workplace? In what ways is democracy or political membership hollowed out when replaced by the increasingly libertarian and wealth-maximizing premises of the Synthesis? Do "private-law" regimes here constitute citizens as market subjects who could demand a different kind of equality in these domains? What is revealed about the racialization of political membership by racial patterns of property ownership and loss, about gendered citizenship by the ways that the burdens of social reproduction interact with the wage bargain?166 Once the legal constitution of the economy is taken to be centrally about the production and enforcement of inequality, these questions present themselves naturally.

CONCLUSION

The Twentieth-Century Synthesis was a successful remaking of the legal imagination, creating a neoliberal political economy premised on concepts of efficiency, neutrality, and antipolitics. But even as this was a successful intellectual shift, manifesting in a wide range of scholarly discourses, doctrinal areas, and policy changes, it has always been a fragile configuration. As the contradictions of an increasingly unequal political economy have become painfully visible and exacerbated, the veneer of consensus around this Synthesis has fallen away. Thus, we find ourselves in a moment of political crisis and accompanying intellectual upheaval: an old order of political economy and its legitimating concepts are crumbling, but a new order has yet to emerge. The outlines of the battle for a new order have come into focus. The populisms of the far right, resurgent across the globe, point to one dark path coming out of this moment: the resurgence of reactionary political economy that marries anger at economic and political corruption with exclusionary attachment to racialized and gendered hierarchy. At the same time, centrist calls for a restoration of an imagined pre-2016 consensus on norms of good governance ignore the deeper causes of neoliberalism's crisis. But in contrast to both of these visions, the account offered here points to the beginnings of a very different, more deeply democratic and progressive political economy.

To embrace the possibility of democratic renewal requires rejecting the terms of the Twentieth-Century Synthesis. We believe that the legal realists-and thinkers in a much longer history of political thought-were right in believing that "the economy" is neither self-defining nor self-justifying. The emphasis in these traditions has been the right one: on power, distribution, and the need for legitimacy as the central themes in the organization of economic life. Moreover, precisely because economic ordering is a political and legal artifact, the idea of an "autonomous" economic domain has always been obscurantist and ideological, even when accepted in good faith. 167

Law does not and never could simply defer to such a realm. Rather, law is perennially involved in creating and enforcing the terms of economic ordering, most particularly through the creation and maintenance of markets. One of its most important roles, indeed, is determining who is subject to market ordering and on what terms and who is exempted in favor of other kinds of protection or provision. 168 Thus the program of law, politics, and institution building often called "neoliberalism" is, and can only be, a specific theory of how to use state power, to what ends, and for whose benefit. 169 The ideological work of the Twentieth-Century Synthesis has been to naturalize and embed in legal institutions from the Supreme Court to the Antitrust Office and World Trade Organization a specific disposition of power**.** This power represents a deployment of market ordering that produces intense and cross-cutting forms of inequality and democratic erosion. However, Twentieth-Century Synthesis theorists tend not to see this, precisely because the Synthesis makes it so hard to see (or at least so easy to overlook).

If it is to succeed, law and political economy will also require something beyond mere critique. It will require a positive agenda. Many new and energized voices, from the legal academy to political candidates to movement activists, are already building in this direction,170 calling for and giving shape to programs for more genuine democracy that also takes seriously questions of economic power and racial subordination;1 7 1 more equal distribution of resources and life chances;172 more public and shared resources and infrastructures; 73 the displacement of concentrated corporate power and rooting of new forms of worker power;174 the end of mass incarceration and broader contestation of the long history of the criminalization and control of poor people and people of color in building capitalism; 175 the recognition of finance and money as public infrastructures; 176 the challenges posed by emerging forms of power and control arising from new technologies;177 and the need for a radical new emphasis on ecology. 178 These are the materials from which a positive agenda, over time, will be built.

Political fights interact generatively with scholarly and policy debates in pointing the way toward a more democratic political economy. The emergence of new grassroots movements, campaigns, and proposals seeking to deepen our democracy is no guarantee of success. But their prevalence and influence make clear the dangers and opportunities of this moment of upheaval- and highlight the stakes of building a new legal imaginary.1 7 9 Neoliberal political economy, with its underlying commitments to efficiency, neutrality, and antipolitics, helped animate, shape, and legitimate a twentieth-century consensus that erased power, encased the market, and reinscribed racialized, economic, and gendered inequities. By contrast, a legal imaginary of democratic political economy, that takes seriously underlying concepts of power, equality, and democracy, can inform a wave of legal thought whose critique and policy imagination can amplify and accelerate these movements for structural reform- and, if we are lucky, help remake our polity in more deeply democratic ways. 175.

#### Legal realists see law as one arena of struggle. We all have the opportunity to take up the tools in the fight against the new Lochnerism of law and economics. Claiming the power to interpret the law connects scholarship with a publicly articulated vision for a new economic order.

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The politics of today’s post-financial-crisis era echo the concerns of the post-Gilded Age, pre-New Deal period, with the confluence of increasing economic inequality and dislocation; new forms of concentrated corporate power; a hostile Supreme Court; and a political system marked more by its dysfunction and corruption than its ability to redress these problems. Indeed, the problem of American politics today is not just one of income inequality. A growing body of empirical research highlights the toxic feedback loops between economic and social inequality on the one hand, and political inequality on the other.10 The decline of the countervailing power of unions and community-based organizations, coupled with the increased social and economic ties between policymakers and economic elites, contributes to a skewed political system, which in turn produces policies that favor elites and further exacerbate inequality.11 The citizens and communities most harmed by the modern economy are thus also increasingly unable to leverage political power to change the policies that drive those inequities.

The Supreme Court is, in one sense, an obvious front line for the battle to redress problems of economic and political inequality. To the extent that the Court’s constitutional interpretation magnifies disparities of political and economic power, it seems logical to target these decisions specifically. But the challenge of economic and political inequality today goes beyond Supreme Court doctrine and constitutional text. The charge of neo- Lochnerism on the Roberts Court opens up an important debate but leaves two critical questions unaddressed. First, what is the substantive content of an alternative, more democratic and egalitarian vision of political economy to counteract the underlying values and judgments apparent in these headline cases? And second, what is a theory of change through which this alternative can be made real, and to what extent does this project necessarily have to involve the Court at all?

This Paper addresses these questions by drawing on the political and legal thought emerging from the critique of Lochner-era political economy. During the Progressive Era, the battle against the intellectual edifice that lay behind Lochner—ideas of laissez-faire constitutionalism and political economy, which emphasized the ideal of market-based equality and expressed a hostility towards various attempts at economic regulation— catalyzed an explosion of scholarship and reform activism among a cohort of lawyers, economists, philosophers, and activists. In the legal academy, we are most familiar with the legal realist movement which emerged during this time critiquing the kind of judicial power expressed in Lochner while revealing the realities of ideology and politics operating beneath the veneer of neutral, formalist legal reasoning on the courts. This intellectual movement would go on to become a foundational shift in legal thought and scholarship going forward. But legal realism was part of a broader intellectual ecology that produced more than just this critique of judicial behavior. Within this ecology of debate, there existed a strand of more radical critique and reform politics that offers important insights for our own normative and institutional challenges today.

Drawing from Progressive Era political thought, this Paper makes three arguments. First, by taking its cue from the critiques developed by Progressive Era and legal realist thinkers, this Paper offers a normative framework for understanding the problems of economic inequality. The problem, I will argue, is not just about income inequality; rather it is a deeper problem of what we can understand as domination—the accumulation of unchecked, arbitrary economic or political power over others. Just as Progressive Era thinkers saw the problem of industrialization as one of concentrated economic and political power—of domination—so too can we understand the challenges of the postcrisis economy in similar moral terms. If the root problem is one of disparate power then the remedy lies in rebalancing the terms of economic and political power. This in turn suggests that the moral problem of domination requires a counteracting defense of the moral value of democracy, of the capacity for we the people to hold such exercises of economic and political power accountable through collective political action.

By placing legal realism in its political-economic context of reformers and thinkers struggling with the upheavals and inequities of industrialization, this argument also offers an important reinterpretation of legal realism as more than just a critique of judicial formalism, and instead as part of a larger effort to imagine a more egalitarian and democratic political economy. By “political economy” I mean to evoke a moral and institutional conception of how our politics and economics relate to one another, how they are structured by law and institutions, and how they ought to be structured in light of fundamental moral values. The political economy of the Roberts Court, like that of the Lochner era, evinces a particular view of markets and politics that exacerbates underlying inequities of power. In contrast, this Progressive Era-inspired view suggests an alternative account of democratic political economy. Second, I argue that this vision of democratic political economy also suggests a particular theory of social change. The moral focus on domination and democracy orients us towards reform strategies that look to the ways in which law structures economic and political processes to allocate power, capabilities, and opportunities. These underlying structures emerge as critical sites of contestation, reform, and change. Thus, we might shift the terms of economic power through legislative and regulatory moves like antitrust and public utility; and we may magnify the democratic political power of citizens by creating alternative vehicles for voice and participation at the national or local level.

Third, this vision of social change in turn suggests a very different reading of the role of constitutionalism and constitutional theory in political-economic debates. The Progressive Era thinkers discussed below were, for the most part, rabidly hostile to courts and judges. While we may not adopt the full extent of their antijudicial stance, it is nevertheless instructive for considering the role of law and constitutionalism in today’s debates over inequality and domination. I will argue below that the kind of constitutionalism we can glean from these thinkers is not the “big-C” Constitutionalism of Supreme Court doctrine, precedent, or textual interpretation. This mode of constitutionalism is indeed important, but ultimately it is responsive to longer-term trends in ideas, values, and granular, accumulated policy changes on the ground. Rather, I suggest we turn to a different, “small-c” notion of constitutionalism. This is the constitutionalism of social movements, of public philosophy**,** and of the laws and regulations that literally constitute our politics and our economics. Constitutional political economy, on this view, is the concern not just of courts but of we the people. And its primary tools for change are not just judicial decisions, but legislative, regulatory, and other forms of ordinary governance. These changes need not be small-scale or incremental; indeed they can be structural and far-reaching. But they fundamentally operate through different channels of governance outside the courts.

In so doing, this Paper offers an account of constitutionalism and social change that, on the one hand, deliberately diminishes the import of the “high politics” of constitutional theory and Court doctrine, while on the other hand, evaluates the stature and importance and moral stakes of the “vernacular politics” of regulation, legislation, movement organizing and advocacy, and day-to-day governance. Indeed, just as the legal realist movement emerged out of the political and economic pressures of the first Gilded Age, our current era of economic and political inequality, a New Gilded Age of its own, is helping drive a similar explosion of dynamic and rich legal scholarship that, from different subfields and through different methodologies, revolves around these core concerns of how law and institutions construct our modern economic, political, and social life; how they shape inequities in those arenas; and how central movements, legislation, and regulation are developing a response. This “fourth wave” of legal realism is an important development that can help deepen the diagnosis and reform agenda for a more democratic political economy—one that draws not only on the moral and structural force of constitutional theory, but also is oriented towards the concrete and granular impact of law as it functions in economic, regulatory, and other forms of governance.

#### Public/private dichotomy constructs the world in neoclassical terms. Starting with public value creation challenges the vision of the private sector as the source of value.

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2. FROM MARKET FAILURE TO MARKET SHAPING

The dominant approach to public policy is derived from neoclassical economic theory, in particular microeconomic theory and welfare economics. This approach 4 emphasizes the idea that, given certain assumptions, individuals pursuing their own self-interest in competitive markets gives rise to the most efficient outcomes (Samuelson, 1947; Mas-Colell et al., 1995: 539‒40). Efficiency is understood in a utilitarian sense, whereby an activity is efficient if it enhances someone’s welfare without making anyone else worse off (so-called Pareto efficiency). Under these conditions, the role of government intervention is in practice often limited to addressing instances where the market is unable to deliver Pareto-efficient outcomes.

These ‘market failures’ arise when there are information asymmetries, transaction costs and frictions to smooth exchange, non-competitive markets (e.g. monopolies) or externalities whereby an activity harms another agent not directly connected with the market transaction (e.g. pollution), or coordination and information failures hamper investment (Rodrik, 1996). In the 1960s, public-choice theory considered how the actions of agents (voters, bureaucrats, politicians) involved in policy could be considered from an economic efficiency perspective, as those agents, including government agents, were assumed to be self-interested (Buchanan and Tullock, 1964). While in markets the existence of competition and the profit motive tends to enforce efficient decision-making, in collective decision-making processes (i.e. politics and public administration) the same disciplining framework does not exist. Policymaking is thus subject to capture by certain interest groups, in particular those most able to influence policymakers for reasons of power or money. In public administration, the lack of competitive pressures leads to ‘bureau-maximizing’ behaviour, whereby departments and agencies look after their own survival rather than the ‘common good’.

Public-choice theory argues that even where there are clear examples of market failure, it is not always the case that government intervention would result in a more efficient outcome. Rather, there could also be ‘government failure’, whereby decisions aimed at improving welfare make things even worse than they would have been under conditions of market failure (Le Grand, 1991). For policymaking processes such an approach creates a bias towards inaction. If the default assumption is that the market will find the best outcome, even if it doesn’t the overriding concern is that government intervention may worsen existing outcomes; the default prescription for government policy is to maintain the status quo. There is a danger that analytical frameworks become focused more on justifying and measuring the non-failure of public policies than on the attainment of wider policy goals.

In development theory and practice, the market-failure-based approaches coalesced in the 1990s around the so-called Washington Consensus policies focused on deregulation, opening up domestic markets, and relying on foreign direct investments and exports to drive economic transition and growth (Williamson, 2002). The Washington Consensus main assumption was that as all development problems are of the same nature, the solutions are bound to be the same as well. This removes the question of directionality of growth away from domestic policymaking and leaves global markets in charge (Kattel et al., 2016). The market failure perspective also creates a particular orientation towards innovation, industrial policy, and structural economic change. While certain 5 elements of innovation policy, in particular early-stage R&D, can be considered to be public goods and thus a case for public policy provision can be justified, in the main it is assumed that the private sector is the more efficient innovator, possessing greater entrepreneurial capacity and better able to take risks given the pressure created by competition. In contrast, the state is viewed as risk averse and in danger of creating government failure if it becomes too involved in industrial policy by ‘picking winners’. Its role is to level the playing field for commercial actors— mostly through supply-side inputs such as better skills or the removal of market frictions— and then get out of the way. This has led to rather diverse debates and the development of policy practices aimed at finding ever more precise policy targets through better measurement of failures and of the impact of policies trying to fix those failures. Instead, policy discussions in particular should focus on ‘heterodox’ policy approaches that recognize both market and government imperfections and failures—as well as the fact that it is impossible or even undesirable to attempt to remove all of them at once—and the need for policies that support scale economies, dynamic learning effects, and cross-sectoral spillovers (Rodrik, 2009).

In order to expand such heterodox notions to grand challenges, we need a positive theory of public valuethat begins with a notion of the public good not as a correction to a failure, but as an objective in itself—an objective that can only come about if linked to a process through which value is created. In this sense a new building block is needed to guide and legitimize public policy. As indicated by Kenneth Arrow (1962), while a market failure approach can be utilized to understand why, for example, private firms underinvest in R&D, it is not so useful for guiding public investment in R&D, because of the inherent uncertainty involved in the outcomes of such investment. Indeed, Arrow called for alternative approaches to analysing public investment and policies for innovation.

Critically, the market-failure justification implies that pure private markets/private goods can exist independently of public or collective action. While the role of institutions is admitted (North, 1991), the role of different voices coming together to form the notion of the public itself is left mainly to sociology, not economics. Nelson notes that ‘there is no satisfactory normative theory regarding the appropriate roles of government in a mixed economy’ (1987: 556) and no theory that captures the complex variety of institutional arrangements that people have developed to solve collective problems. Just as pure public goods are rare, so too are pure private goods. Babysitters or sharing everyday appliances such as lawnmowers involves no government intervention or regulations, but does involve collective or ‘public’ negotiation. Hence the ‘market failure’ dichotomy is not particularly useful.

We propose an alternative approach, which begins with the notion of public value as collectively generated by a range of stakeholders including the market, the state, and civil society. Key here is the emphasis on value creation at the core: not ‘public’ value but value itself—with a clear delineation of the role of the different actors that are central to its formation. While in economics value is, in essence, created inside businesses and only facilitated by the public sector, in this view value is co-created and requires a stakeholder understanding of capitalism itself. This view draws on the work of Elinor Ostrom (2005), who shows that a radical state/private division is, to use her word, barren. In developed economies there are many types of organizations. Non-partisan government regulators, statefunded universities, and state-run research projects, for example, are quite different. Besides, the crude binary state/private division fails to capture the many ways in which all institutions create and destroy value. In addition, Ostrom’s (1990) emphasis on pooled common resources and her interest in shaping systems so that they take into account collective behaviour, can help shape new policy tools.

This more collective view also benefits from a different understanding of the market itself, with the market as an outcome of the interactions of individuals, firms, and the state, as discussed in the work of Karl Polanyi (1957), and ‘embedded economies’, as discussed by Granovetter (1985). If value is created collectively, a first question becomes: what capabilities, resources, and capacities are needed for this value to be created inside all the different organizations, including those in the public sector, private sector, and civil society? In the same way that a theory of private value creation benefits from a resource-based theory of the firm (Penrose, 1959), so does a public-value notion. Indeed, it is by sidelining the notion of value as only created in business and facilitated or redistributed by the public sector that the question of capabilities is missed. The work by Teece (1990) on the dynamic capabilities of the firm becomes equally necessary for the public sector, as we have argued elsewhere (Kattel and Mazzucato, 2018).

A collective theory of value creation requires understanding by all actors of investment and production capacity. Indeed, as discussed by Mazzucato and Sekera (2019), a theory of public value needs to also understand the productive capacity and capabilities of the state. And if the state loses that capacity it will lose its absorptive capacity—and hence be unable to understand technological and market opportunities (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990).

#### Liberalism is not a monolith – retrieving it for a radical democratic agenda challenges unjust hierarchies of domination.

Charles W. **MILLS** Professor of Philosophy @ CUNY **’12** “Occupy Liberalism,” Chapter 2 in *Black Rights/White Wrongs: The Critique of Racial Liberalism* [h](https://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190245412.001.0001/acprof-9780190245412-chapter-2)

The “Occupy Wall Street!” movement stimulated a long listing of other candidates for radical “occupation.” This chapter proposes as a target for radical occupation the somewhat unusual candidate of liberalism itself. It argues for a constructive engagement of radicals with liberalism in order to retrieve it for a radical egalitarian agenda. The premise is that the foundational values of liberalism have a radical potential that has not historically been realized, given the way the dominant varieties of liberalism have developed. Ten reasons standardly given as to why such a retrieval cannot be carried out are examined and argued to be fallacious.

The “Occupy!” movement, which has made headlines around the country, has raised the hopes of young American radicals new to political engagement and revived the hopes of an older generation of radicals still clinging to nostalgic dreams of the glorious ’60s. If the original and still most salient target was Wall Street, a long list of other candidates for “occupation” has since been put forward. In this chapter, I want to propose as a target for radical occupation the somewhat unusual candidate of liberalism itself. But contrary to the conventional wisdom prevailing within radical circles, I am going to argue for the heretical thesis that liberalism should not be contemptuously rejected by radicals but retrieved for a radical agenda. Summarized in bullet-point form, my argument is as follows:

• The “Occupy Wall Street” movement provides an opportunity unprecedented in decades to build a broad democratic movement to challenge plutocracy, patriarchy, and white supremacy in the United States.

• Such a movement is more likely to be successful if it appeals to principles and values most Americans already endorse.

• Liberalism has always been the dominant ideology in the United States.

• Liberalism in the United States has historically been complicit with plutocracy, patriarchy, and white supremacy, but this complicity is a contingent function of dominant group interests rather than the result of an immanent conceptual logic.

• Therefore, progressives in philosophy (and elsewhere) should try to retrieve liberalism for a radical democratic agenda rather than rejecting it, thereby positioning themselves in the ideological mainstream of the country and seeking its transformation.

Let me now try to make this argument plausible for an audience likely to be aprioristically convinced of its obvious unsoundness.

Preliminary Clarification of Terms

First we need to clarify the key terms of “radicalism” and “liberalism.” While of course a radicalism of the right exists, here I refer to radicals who are progressives. But “progressive” cannot just denote the left of the political spectrum, since the whole point of the “new social movements” of the 1960s onward was that the traditional left-right political spectrum, predicated on varying positions on the question of public versus private ownership of the means of production, did not exhaust the topography of the political. Issues of gender and racial domination were to a significant extent “orthogonal” to this one-dimensional trope. So I will use “radicalism” broadly, though still in the zone of progressive politics, to refer generally to ideas/concepts/principles/values endorsing pro-egalitarian structural change to reduce or eliminate unjust hierarchies of domination.

“Liberalism” may denote both a political philosophy and the institutions and practices characteristically tied to that political philosophy. My focus will be on the former. The issue of how bureaucratic logics may prove refractory to reformist agendas is undeniably an important one, but it does not really fall into the purview of philosophy proper. My aim is to challenge the radical shibboleth that radical ideas/concepts/principles/values are incompatible with liberalism. Given the deep entrenchment of this assumption in the worldview of most radicals, refuting it would still be an accomplishment, even if working out practical details of operationalization are delegated to other hands.

In the United States, of course, “liberalism” in public parlance and everyday political discourse is used in such a way that it really denotes left-liberalism specifically (“left” by the standards of a country whose political center of gravity has shifted right in recent decades). In this vocabulary, right-liberals are then categorized as “conservatives”—in the market sense, as against the Burkean sense. On the other hand, some on the right would insist that only they, the heirs to the classic liberalism of John Locke and Adam Smith, are really entitled to the “liberal” designation. Later welfarist theorists are fraudulent pretenders to be exposed as socialist intruders unworthy of the title. Rejecting both of these usages, I will be employing “liberalism” in the expanded sense typical of political philosophy, which links both ends of this spectrum. “Liberalism” then refers broadly to the (p.12) anti-feudal ideology of individualism, equal rights, and moral egalitarianism that arises in Western Europe in the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries to challenge the ideas and values inherited from the old medieval order, and which is subsequently taken up and developed by others elsewhere, including many who would have been explicitly excluded by the original conception of the ideology. Left-wing social democrats and right-wing market conservatives, fans of John Rawls on the one hand and Robert Nozick on the other, are thus both liberals.1

From this perspective, it will be appreciated that liberalism is not a monolith but an umbrella term for a variety of positions. Here are some examples—some familiar, some perhaps less so:

Varieties of Liberalism

Left-wing (social democratic) vs. Right-wing (market conservative)

Kantian vs. Lockean

Contractarian vs. Utilitarian

Corporate vs. Democratic

Social vs. Individualist

Comprehensive vs. Political

Ideal-theory vs. Non-ideal-theory

Patriarchal vs. Feminist

Imperial vs. Anti-imperial

Racial vs. Anti-racial

Color-blind vs. Color-conscious

Etc.2

It is not the case, of course, that these different species of liberalism have been equally represented in the ideational sphere or equally implemented in the institutional sphere. On the contrary, some have been dominant while others have been subordinate, and some have never, at least in the full sense, been implemented at all. But nonetheless, I suggest they all count as liberalisms and as such they are all supposed to have certain elements in common, even those characterized by gender and racial exclusions. (My motivation for making these last varieties of liberalism rather than deviations from liberalism is precisely to challenge liberalism’s self-congratulatory history, which holds an idealized liberalism aloft, untainted by its actual record of complicity with oppressive social systems.) So the initial question we should always ask people making generalizations about “liberalism” is this: What particular variety of liberalism do you mean? And are your generalizations really true about all the possible kinds of liberalism, or only a subset? (p.13)

Here is a characterization of liberalism from a very respectable source, the British political theorist, John Gray:

Common to all variants of the liberal tradition is a definite conception, distinctively modern in character, of man and society… . It is individualist, in that it asserts the moral primacy of the person against the claims of any social collectivity; egalitarian, inasmuch as it confers on all men the same moral status and denies the relevance to legal or political order of differences in moral worth among human beings; universalist, affirming the moral unity of the human species and according a secondary importance to specific historic associations and cultural forms; and meliorist in its affirmation of the corrigibility and improvability of all social institutions and political arrangements. It is this conception of man and society which gives liberalism a definite identity which transcends its vast internal variety and complexity.3

What generate the different varieties of liberalism are different concepts of individualism, different claims about how egalitarianism should be construed or realized, more or less inclusionary readings of universalism (Gray’s characterization sanitizes liberalism’s actual sexist and racist history), different views of what count as desirable improvements, conflicting normative balancings of liberal values (freedom, equality) and competing theoretical prognoses about how best they can be realized in the light of (contested) socio-historical facts. The huge potential for disagreement about all of these explains how a common liberal core can produce such a wide range of variants. Moreover, we need to take into account not merely the spectrum of actual liberalisms but also hypothetical liberalisms that could be generated through novel framings of some or all of the above. So one would need to differentiate dominant versions of liberalism from oppositional versions, and actual from possible variants.

Once the breadth of the range of liberalisms is appreciated—dominant and subordinate, actual and potential—the obvious question then raised is this: even if actual dominant liberalisms have been conservative in various ways (corporate, patriarchal, racist) why does this rule out the development of emancipatory, radical liberalisms?

One kind of answer is the following (call this the internalist answer): because there is an immanent conceptual/normative logic to liberalism as a political ideology that precludes any emancipatory development of it.

Another kind of answer is the following (call this the externalist answer): it doesn’t. The historic domination of conservative exclusionary liberalisms is the result of group interests, group power, and successful group political projects. Apparent internal conceptual/normative barriers to an emancipatory liberalism can be successfully negotiated by drawing (p.14) on the conceptual/normative resources of liberalism itself, in conjunction with a revisionist socio-historical picture of modernity.

Most self-described radicals would endorse—indeed, reflexively, as an obvious truth—the first answer. But as indicated from the beginning, I think the second answer is actually the correct one. The obstacles to developing a “radical liberalism” are, in my opinion, primarily externalist in nature: material group interests, and the way they have shaped hegemonic varieties of liberalism. So I think we need to try to justify a radical agenda with the normative resources of liberalism rather than writing off liberalism. Since liberalism has always been the dominant ideology in the United States and is now globally hegemonic, such a project would have the great ideological advantage of appealing to values and principles that most people already endorse. All projects of egalitarian social transformation are going to face a combination of material, political, and ideological obstacles, but this strategy would at least reduce somewhat the dimensions of the last. One would be trying to win mass support for policies that—and the challenge will, of course, be to demonstrate this—are justifiable by majoritarian norms, once reconceived and put in conjunction with facts not always familiar to the majority. Material barriers (vested group interests) and political barriers (organizational difficulties) will of course remain. But they will constitute a general obstacle for all egalitarian political programs, and as such cannot be claimed to be peculiar problems for an emancipatory liberalism.

But the contention will be that such a liberalism cannot be developed. Why? Here are ten familiar objections, variants of internalism, and my replies to them.

Ten Reasons Why Liberalism Cannot Be Radicalized (And My Replies)

1. Liberalism Has an Asocial, Atomic Individualist Ontology

This is one of the oldest radical critiques of liberalism; it can be found in Marx’s derisive comments—for example, in the Grundrisse—about the “Robinsonades” of the social contract theory whose “golden age” (1650–1800) had long passed by the time he began his intellectual and political career:

The individual and isolated hunter or fisher who forms the starting-point with Smith and Ricardo belongs to the insipid illusions of the eighteenth century. They are Robinson Crusoe stories … no more based on such a naturalism than is Rousseau’s contrat social which makes naturally independent individuals come in contact and have (p.15) mutual intercourse by contract… . Man is in the most literal sense of the word a zoon politikon, not only a social animal, but an animal which can develop into an individual only in society. Production by individuals outside society … is as great an absurdity as the idea of the development of language without individuals living together and talking to one another.4

But several replies can be made to this indictment. To begin with, even if the accusation is true of contractarian liberalism, not all liberalisms are contractarian. Utilitarian liberalism rests on different theoretical foundations, as does the late nineteenth-century British liberalism of T. H. Green and his colleagues: a Hegelian, social liberalism.5 Closer to home, of course, we have John Dewey’s brand of liberalism. Moreover, even within the social contract tradition, resources exist for contesting the assumptions of the Hobbesian/Lockean version of the contract. Rousseau’s Discourse on the Origins of Inequality (1755) (nowhere cited by Marx) rethinks the “contract” to make it a contract entered into after the formation of society, and thus the creation of socialized human beings. So the ontology presupposed is explicitly a social one. In any case, the contemporary revival of contractarianism initiated by John Rawls’s 1971 A Theory of Justice makes the contract a thought-experiment, a “device of representation,” rather than a literal or even metaphorical anthropological account.6 The communitarian/contractarian debates of the 1980s onward recapitulated much of the “asocial” critique of contractarian liberalism (though usually without a radical edge). But as Rawls pointed out against Michael Sandel, for example, one needs to distinguish the figures in the thought-experiment from real human beings.7 And radicals should be wary about accepting a communitarian ontology and claims about the general good that deny or marginalize the dynamics of group domination in actual societies represented as “communities.” The great virtue of contractarian liberal individualism is the conceptual room it provides for hegemonic norms to be critically evaluated through the epistemic and moral distancing from Sittlichkeit that the contract, as an intellectual device, provides.

2. Liberalism Cannot Recognize Groups and Group Oppression in Its Ontology—I (Macro)

The second point needs to be logically distinguished from the first, since a theory could acknowledge the social shaping of individuals while denying that group oppression is central to that shaping. (So #1 is necessary, but not sufficient, for #2.) The Marxist critique, of course, was supposed to encapsulate both points: people were shaped by society and society (post-“primitive (p.16) communism”) was class dominated. The ontology was social and it was an ontology of class. Today radicals would demand a richer ontology that can accommodate the realities of gender and racial oppression also. But whatever candidates are put forward, the key claim is that a liberal framework cannot accommodate an ontology of groups in relations of domination and subordination. To the extent that liberalism recognizes social groups, these are basically conceived of as voluntary associations that one chooses to join or not join, which is obviously very different from, say, class, race, and gender memberships.

But this evasive ontology, which obfuscates the most central and obvious fact about all societies since humanity exited the hunting-and-gathering stage—that is, that they are characterized by oppressions of one kind or another—is not a definitional constituent of liberalism. Liberalism has certainly recognized some kinds of oppression: the absolutism it opposed from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, the Nazism and Stalinism it opposed in the twentieth century. Liberalism’s failure to systematically address structural oppression in supposedly liberal-democratic societies is a contingent artifact of the group perspectives and group interests privileged by those structures, not an intrinsic feature of liberalism’s conceptual apparatus.

In the preface to her recent Analyzing Oppression, Ann Cudd makes a striking point: that hers is the first book-length treatment of the subject in the analytic tradition.8 Philosophy, the discipline whose special mandate it is to illuminate justice and injustice for us, has had very little to say about injustice and oppression because of the social background of the majority of its thinkers. In political theory and political philosophy, the theorists who developed the dominant varieties of liberalism have come overwhelmingly from the hegemonic groups of the liberal social order (bourgeois white males). So it is really not surprising that, given this background, their socio-political and epistemic standpoint has tended to reproduce rather than challenge group privilege.

Consider Rawls, famously weak on gender and with next to nothing to say about race. Rawlsian “ideal theory,” which has dominated mainstream political philosophy for the last four decades, marginalizes such concerns not contingently but structurally. If your focus from the start is principles of distributive justice for a “well-ordered society,” then social oppression cannot be part of the picture, since by definition an oppressive society is not a well-ordered one. As Cudd points out, A Theory of Justice “leaves injustice virtually untheorized,” operating on the assumption “that injustice is merely the negation of justice.”9 But radically unjust societies—those characterized by major rather than minor deviations from ideality—will be different from just societies not merely morally but (p.17) also metaphysically. What Cudd calls “nonvoluntary social groups” will be central to their makeup.

Accordingly, Cudd contends that a conceptualization of “nonvoluntary social groups” must be central to any adequate account of social oppression: “without positing social groups as causally efficacious entities, we cannot explain oppression.” Contra the conventional wisdom in radical circles, however, she is insistent that the ontology of such groups can be explained “[using] current social science, in the form of cognitive psychology and modern economic theory, and situat[ing] itself in the Anglo-American tradition of liberal political philosophy.”10 Identifying “intentionalist” and “structuralist” approaches as the two broad categories of competing theorizations of social groups, she recommends as the best option a compatibilist position, holding that while all action is intentionally guided, many of the constraints within which we act are socially determined and beyond the control of the currently acting individual; to put a slogan on it, intentions dynamically interact within social structures… . My theory of nonvoluntary social groups fits the description of what Philip Pettit calls “holistic individualism,” which means that the social regularities associated with nonvoluntary social groups supervene on intentional states, and at the same time, group membership in these and voluntary social groups partly constitutes the intentional states of individuals.11

If Cudd is right, then, such a theorization can indeed be developed within a liberal framework, using the resources of analytic social and normative theory. But such a development of the theory is not merely permissible but should be seen as mandatory, given liberalism’s nominal commitment to individualism, egalitarianism, universalism, and meliorism. These values simply cannot be achieved unless the obstacles to their realization are identified and theorized. Social-democratic (left) liberalism, feminist liberalism, black liberalism all historically represent attempts to take these structural realities into account for the purposes of rethinking dominant liberalism.12 They are attempts to get right, to map accurately, the actual ontology of the societies for which liberalism is prescribing principles of justice. What Cudd’s book demonstrates is that it is the ignoring of this ontology of group domination that is the real betrayal of the liberal project. A well-ordered society will not have nonvoluntary social groups as part of its ontology. So the path to the “realistic utopia” Rawls is supposedly outlining would crucially require normative prescriptions for eliminating such groups. That no such guidelines are offered is undeniably an indictment of ideal-theory liberalism, which is thereby exposed as both epistemologically and ontologically inadequate. But that does not rule out a reconceptualized (p.18) liberalism, a non-ideal-theory liberalism that, starting from a different social metaphysic, requires a different normative strategy for theorizing justice.

3. Liberalism Cannot Recognize Groups and Group Oppression in Its Ontology—II (Micro)

But (it will be replied) liberalism suffers from a deeper theoretical inadequacy. Even if it may be conceded that liberal theory can recognize oppression at the macro-level, it will be argued that its individualism prevents it from recognizing how profoundly, at the micro-level, individuals are shaped by structures of social oppression. Class, race, and gender belongings penetrate deeply into the ontology of the individual in ways rendered opaque (it will be claimed) by liberalism’s foundational individualism.

But what those seeking to retrieve liberalism would point out is that we need to distinguish different senses of “individualism.” The individualism that is foundational to liberalism is a normative individualism (as in the Gray quote above), which makes individuals rather than social collectivities the locus of value. But that does not require any denial that individuals are shaped in their character (the “second nature” famously highlighted by left theory) by oppressive social forces and related group memberships. Once the first two criticisms have been refuted—that liberal individuals cannot be “social,” and that the involuntary group memberships central to the social in oppressive societies cannot be accommodated within a liberal framework—then this third criticism collapses also. One can without inconsistency affirm both the value of the individual and the importance of recognizing how the individual is socially molded, especially when the environing social structures are oppressive ones. As already noted, dominant liberalism tends to ignore or marginalize such constraints, assuming as its representative figures individuals not merely morally equal, but socially recognized as morally equal, and equi-powerful rather than group-differentiated into the privileged and the subordinated. But this misleading normative and descriptive picture is a function of a political agenda complicit with the status quo, not a necessary implication of liberalism’s core assumptions. A revisionist, radical liberalism would make the analysis of group oppression, the denial of equal standing to the majority of the population, and their impact on the individual’s ontology, a theoretical priority. Thus Cudd’s book, after explicating the ontology of involuntary groups, goes on to detail the various different ways—through violence, economic constraint, discrimination, group harassment, and the internalization of psychological oppression—that the subordinated are shaped by group domination.13 But nothing in her account is meant to imply either that they (p.19) thereby cease to be individuals or that their involuntary group memberships preclude a normative liberal condemnation of the injustice of their treatment.

4. Liberal Humanist Individualism Is Naïve about the Subject

A different kind of challenge is mounted by Foucault (though arguably originating in such earlier sources as the “anti-humanism” of Althusserian Marxism).14 Here, as John Christman points out, in contrast to the “thick” conception of the person advocated by communitarianism, in critique of liberalism, we get the theoretical recommendation that “the notion of a singular unified subject of any sort, however thin the conception, [must be] abandoned.”15 As Foucault writes:

How, under what conditions, and in what forms can something like a subject appear in the order of discourse? What place can it occupy in each type of discourse, what functions can it assume, and by obeying what rules? In short, it is a matter of depriving the subject (or its substitute) of its role as originator, and of analyzing the subject as a variable and complex function of discourse.16

The subject is not merely molded by power, but produced by power, and, in effect, vanishes.

I agree that liberalism cannot meet such a challenge, but I think the premise of the challenge should be rejected. Here I am in sympathy with Christman, who, reviewing various critiques of the classic liberal humanist conception of the self, argues for a socio-historical conception that concedes the absurdity of the notion of people springing from their own brow (“originators”) while nonetheless making a case for “degrees” of self-creation:

Selves should be seen as to a large extent formed by factors not under the control of those reflective agents themselves… . This will help accomplish two things: to provide grounds for the rejection of models of agency and citizenship that assume Herculean abilities to fashion ourselves out of whole cloth; and to force us to focus more carefully on what powers of self-shaping we therefore are left with… . The point must be that the role of the self’s control of the self (and the attendant social elements of both ‘selves’) will be circumscribed by the ways in which our lives are shaped for us and not by us.17

A commitment to humanism does not, as pointed out above, require the denial of the obvious fact that human beings—especially the (p.20) oppressed—are constrained by material structures and social restrictions in what they can accomplish, nor that, as products of particular epochs and group memberships, their consciousness will have been shaped by dominant concepts and norms. Marx emphasized long ago that though people make history, they do not make it under conditions of their own choosing, that agency is constrained by structure and circumstance. But, contra Althusser, this was never intended as a rejection of the claim that it is still people who ultimately assert their personhood in struggle.

And in my opinion, the retort applies to the Foucauldian version of the thesis also. To make the familiar left critiques: such an analysis not only deprives us of a normative basis for indicting structures of oppression, not only deprives the subject of agency, but is flagrantly inconsistent with the actual history of people’s resistance to the systems that have supposedly “produced” them as subjects. The anti-colonial struggle, the anti-Fascist and anti-Stalinist struggles, the civil rights struggles of white women, people of color, gays, the recent “Arab spring” all give the lie to such a diagnosis. Radical liberalism is capable of recognizing both the extent of our socialization by the existing oppressive social order and the ways in which, nonetheless, many people resist and struggle against this oppressive social order.

5. Liberalism’s Values (Independently of the Ontology Question) Are Themselves Problematic

Even if the ontological challenge can be beaten back, though, another front remains open. It will be argued that liberal humanist values are themselves problematic in nature and incapable of advancing a radical agenda. But the obvious reply is, Which values? And what exactly is the problem supposed to be: (a) that the values are intrinsically problematic? (b) that the values involved have historically been extended in an exclusionary discriminatory way? (c) that the values have been developed in a fashion that is predicated on the experience of the privileged? These are all different claims.

Start with the first. Admittedly, some values associated with the liberal tradition could be judged to be intrinsically problematic, such as the “possessive individualism” C. B. Macpherson famously attributed to Hobbes and Locke.18 But this is a value specific to right-wing liberalism, not liberalism in general (it does not appear on Gray’s list), and would be opposed by left-wing/social democratic liberalism. Such values as “freedom,” “equality” (moral egalitarianism), and “fraternity/sorority” classically emblematic of the liberal tradition have not usually been seen as problematic by radicals and have indeed been emblazoned on radical banners. Freedom from oppression, equal rights/equal pay/equal citizenship (“I AM A MAN”), (p.21) fraternity/sorority with the subordinated (“Am I not a man and a brother? Am I not a woman and a sister?”) have all served as values for progressive movements seeking social emancipation.

To be sure, it is a familiar point to radicals, if somewhat less so to the non-radical majority, that the population as a whole has not historically been recognized as deserving the protections of these norms, so that the opponents of emancipation have all too often themselves been liberals. Freedom has been construed as justifiably resting on the enslavement of some; equality has been restricted to those deemed worthy of it (i.e., those more equal than others); fraternity has been literal, an all-boys’ club. Domenico Losurdo’s recently translated Liberalism: A Counter-History provides a devastating exposé of “liberal thought [not] in its abstract purity, but liberalism, and hence the liberal movement and liberal society, in their concrete reality.” It is an illuminatingly sordid history of the ideology’s complicity with racial slavery, white working-class indentureship, colonialism and imperialism (“A ‘Master-Race Democracy’ on a Planetary Scale,” in one chapter’s title), and the conceptual connection between the Nazi “final solution” and Europe’s earlier extermination programs against indigenous peoples.19

Yet it is noteworthy that in his concluding pages, Losurdo still affirms the “merits and strong points of the intellectual tradition under examination.” His “counter-history” has been aimed at dispelling the “habitual hagiography” that surrounds liberalism, and the related “myth of the gradual, peaceful transition, on the basis of purely internal motivations and impulses, from liberalism to democracy, or from general enjoyment of negative liberty to an ever wider recognition of political rights.”20 In reality, he emphasizes, “the classics of the liberal tradition” were generally hostile to democracy; the “exclusion clauses” required “violent upheavals” to be overcome; progress was not linear but a matter of advances and retreats; external crisis often played a crucial role; and white working-class and black inclusion in the polity came at the cost of their participation in colonial wars against native peoples.21 Nonetheless, his final paragraph insists:

However difficult such an operation might be for those committed to overcoming liberalism’s exclusion clauses, to take up the legacy of this intellectual tradition is an absolutely unavoidable task… . [L]‌iberalism’s merits are too significant and too evident for it to be necessary to credit it with other, completely imaginary ones. Among the latter is the alleged spontaneous capacity for self-correction often attributed to it… . Only in opposition to [such] pervasive repressions and transfigurations is the book now ending presented as a “counter-history”: bidding farewell to hagiography is the precondition for landing on the firm ground of history.22

So for Losurdo one can accept the indictment of actual historic liberalism, and its failure to live up to its putative universalism, without going on to conclude either that liberalism must therefore be abandoned or that liberalism’s own internal dynamic will naturally correct itself. Rather, the appropriate conclusion is that liberalism can be retrieved, but that it will take political struggle to do so.

Finally, even when the “exclusion clauses” are formally overcome, their legacy may well remain in the form of values now nominally extended to everybody, but in reality articulated in such a fashion as to continue to reproduce group privilege—for example, a “freedom” that repudiates caste status but does not recognize illicit economic constraint as unfairly limiting liberty, or an “autonomy” that does not acknowledge the role of female caregiving in enabling human development, or a “justice” resolutely forward-looking that blocks issues of rectification of past injustices. But what such tendentious conceptual framings arguably call for is a critique and a rethinking of these values and principles in the light of these exclusions (as with left, feminist, and black liberalism). That does not refute their normative worth; it just underlines the necessity for taking the whole population into account in revising them and developing a blueprint of their internal architecture adequately sensitized to the differential social location and social history of such groups, particularly those traditionally oppressed.

6. Liberalism’s Enlightenment Origins Commit It to Seeing Moral Suasion and Rational Discourse as the Societal Prime Movers

Liberalism is often associated with a historical progressivism, but a belief in the possibility and desirability of meliorism (see Gray) certainly does not commit one to Whiggish teleologies. One can oppose conservative fatalism and pessimism in its different versions—Christian claims about original sin, Burkean distrust of abstract reason, biological determinism in its ever-changing and ever-renewed incarnations—without thinking that there is any inevitability about the triumph of progress and reason. A liberalism that is “radical” will necessarily need to draw on the left tradition’s demystified analysis of the centrality of group domination to the workings of the social order.23 As earlier noted (sections 2 and 3 above), a revisionist ontology that recognizes as key social players nonvoluntary social groups in structural relations of domination and subordination will perforce have a more realistic view of the (in)efficacy of moral suasion than an ontology of atomic individuals. (p.23)

Such a revisionist liberalism will acknowledge the role of hegemonic ideologies and vested group interests in the preservation of the status quo, and their refractoriness to appeals to reason and justice. Indeed, it will often be precisely in the names of a “reason” and “justice” shaped by the norms and perspectives of group privilege—of class, gender, and race—that egalitarian social change is resisted. As Losurdo makes clear, no immanent developmentalist moral dynamic drives liberalism’s evolution. It is not at all the case that an endorsement of democratized liberal norms implies any corollary belief that the democratic struggle for a more egalitarian social order is guaranteed to be successful. Progress is possible; defeat and rollback are also possible. In general, a radical liberalism should, in some sense, be “materialist,” recognizing the extent to which both people and the social dynamic are shaped by material forces and not over-estimating the causal role of rational argumentation and moral suasion on their own. Radical liberalism takes for granted that political and ideological struggle will be necessary to realize liberal values against the opposition of those who all too frequently think of themselves as the real liberals. Radical liberalism can be descriptively realist (realizing the centrality of interest-based politics) without being normatively realist (abandoning morality for realpolitik).

7. Liberalism Is Naïve in Assuming the Neutrality of the State and the Juridical System

Again, while such a claim may be true of dominant varieties of liberalism, it need not be true of all. (Note that nowhere in Gray’s characterization is any such assumption made.)

The neutrality of the juridico-political system is a liberal ideal, a norm to be striven for to reflect citizens’ equal moral status before the law and entitlement to equal protection of their legitimate interests. To represent it as a sociological generalization of liberal theory about actual political systems, including systems self-designated as liberal, would be to confuse the normative with the descriptive. Liberalism has certainly historically had no trouble in seeing the illicit influence of concentrated group power in the socio-political systems it opposed (see section #2). The original critique of “feudal” absolutism, the twentieth-century critique of “totalitarianism,” relied in part on the documentation and condemnation of the extent of legally backed state repression in curbing individual freedom. Liberalism’s blind spot has been its failure to document and condemn the enormity of the historic denial of equal rights to the majority of the population ruled by self-styled “liberal” states: the “absolutism” and “totalitarianism” directed against white women and white workers, and the nonwhite enslaved (p.24) and colonized. Patriarchal democracy, bourgeois democracy, Herrenvolk democracy have all been represented as “democracy” simpliciter, with no analysis of the mechanisms of structural subordination that have characterized such polities, or the ideological sleights-of-hand that have rationalized them. But to claim a necessary conceptual connection between such evasions and liberal assumptions is to confuse the contingent necessities of the discourse of hegemonic liberalism—aimed at preserving, whether by justifying or obfuscating, patriarchal, bourgeois, and racial power—with what is taken to be some kind of transworld essence of liberalism. In recent decades, a large body of literature has developed that investigates the impact of class, race, and gender dynamics in the actual functioning of the state and the legal system.24 Radical liberalism would draw on this body of literature in seeking to put in place the safeguards necessary for guaranteeing equal protection not merely on paper but in reality.

8. Liberalism Is Necessarily Anti-Socialist, So How “Radical” Could It Be?

“Socialism” is used in different senses. Assuming that a romanticized return to pre-industrial communal systems is not in the cards for a globalized world of seven-plus billion people, there are three main alternatives so far (two tried, one theorized about): state-commandist socialism, social democracy, market socialism. State-commandist socialism (a.k.a. “communism”) is indeed incompatible with liberalism but would seem to have been refuted as an attractive ideal by the history of the twentieth century.25 Social democracy is just left-liberalism, whether in Rawls’s version or in versions further left, like Brian Barry’s, more worried about the inequalities Rawls’s two principles of justice leave intact.26 Market socialism is yet to be implemented on a national level, but many of the hypothetical accounts of how it would work emphasize the importance of respecting liberal norms.27 In other words, market socialism’s putative superiority to capitalism is not defended by invoking distinctively socialist values but by showing how such uncontroversial and traditional liberal values as democracy, freedom, and self-realization are not going to be achievable for the majority under the present system (or through the appeal to more recent values like sustainability, generated by awareness of the impending ecological disaster, which the present order will make achievable for nobody!)28 Other possibilities are not ruled out, but their proponents would have to explain how their models have learned the lessons of the past in both (a) being economically viable and (b) respecting human rights, the common global moral currency of the postwar epoch, which is best developed in the liberal tradition. Criticism (p.25) of the existing order is not enough; one has to show how one’s proposed “socialist” alternative will be superior (and in more than a vague hand-waving kind of way).

9. The Discourse of Liberal Rights Cannot Accommodate Radical Redistribution and Structural Change

Marxism’s original critique of liberalism, apart from deriding its (imputed) social ontology, represented liberal rights—for example, in “On the Jewish Question”29—as a bourgeois concept. But that was more than a century and a half ago. Lockean rights-of-non-interference centered on private property, “negative” rights, are indeed deficient as an exclusivist characterization of people’s normative entitlements, but such a minimalist view has been contested by social democrats (some self-identifying as liberal) for more than a century. A significant literature now exists on “welfare” rights, “positive” rights, “social” rights, whose implementation would indeed require radical structural change. The legitimacy of these rights as “liberal” rights is, of course, denied by the political right. But that’s the whole point, with which I began—that liberalism is not a monolith but a set of competing interpretations and theorizations, fighting it out in a common arena.30 The US hostility to such rights is a manifestation of the historic success of conservatives in framing the normative agenda in this country, not a necessary corollary of liberalism as such. As earlier emphasized, liberalism must not be collapsed into neo-liberalism. Nor is it a refutation to point out that having such rights on paper does not guarantee their implementation, since this is just a variation of the already discussed imputation to liberalism of a necessarily idealist conception of the social dynamic (section #6), in which morality is a prime mover. But such a sociological claim is neither a foundational nor a derivative assumption of liberalism.

Moreover, in the specific case of the redress of racial injustice, one does not even need to appeal to such rights, since the situation of, for example, blacks in the United States is arguably the result of the historic and current violation of traditional negative rights (life, liberty, property), which are supposed to be the uncontroversial ones in the liberal tradition, as well as the legacy of such practices as manifest in illicitly accumulated wealth and opportunities. Here again the hegemony of Rawlsian “ideal theory” over the development of the mainstream political philosophy of the last forty years has had pernicious consequences, marginalizing such issues and putting the focus instead on principles of distributive justice for an ideal “well-ordered” society. But an emancipatory liberalism would be reoriented from (p.26) the start toward non-ideal theory and would correspondingly make rectificatory justice and the ending of social oppression its priority.31

10. American Liberalism in Particular Has Been so Shaped in Its Development by Race that Any Emancipatory Possibilities Have Been Foreclosed

Liberalism in general (both nationally and internationally) has been shaped by race, but that does not preclude reclaiming it.32 Moreover, it is precisely such shaping that motivates the imperative of recognizing the multiplicity of liberalisms, not merely for cataloging purposes but in order to frame them as theoretical objects whose dynamic requires investigation. The conflation of all liberalisms with their racialized versions obstructs seeing these ideologies as historically contingent varieties of liberalism, which could have developed otherwise. A Brechtian “defamiliarization” is necessary, a cognitive distancing that “denaturalizes” what is prone to appear as the essence of liberalism. Jennifer Pitts’s A Turn to Empire, for example, which is subtitled The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France, and Sankar Muthu’s Enlightenment against Empire, both seek to demarcate within liberalism the existence of anti- as well as pro-imperialist strains, thereby demonstrating that liberalism is not a monolith.33 Admittedly, other scholars have been more ambivalent about some of their supposed exemplars; see, for example, Losurdo, already cited, and John Hobson’s recent The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics, which develops a detailed and sophisticated taxonomy of varieties of Eurocentrism and imperialism that demonstrates the compatibility of racism, Eurocentrism, and anti-imperialism.34 (For instance, many European liberal theorists were anti-imperialist precisely because of their racism—their fears that the white race would degenerate as a result of miscegenation with inferior races and the deleterious consequences of prolonged residence in the unsuitable tropical climates of colonial outposts.) But the mere fact of such a range of positions illustrates that a liberalism neither Eurocentric nor imperialist is not a contradiction in terms.

In the United States in particular, as Rogers Smith has demonstrated, liberalism and racism have been intricately involved with one another from the nation’s inception, a relationship Smith conceptualizes in terms of conflicting “multiple traditions,” racism versus liberal universalism, and which I see as a conflict between “racial liberalism” and non-racial liberalism.35 My belief is that formally identifying “racial liberalism” as a particular evolutionary (and always evolving) ideological phenomenon better enables us to understand the role of race in writing and rewriting the most important political philosophy in the nation’s history, from the overtly racist liberalism (p.27) of the past to the nominally color-blind liberalism of the present. From the eighteenth- to nineteenth-century accommodation to racial slavery and aboriginal expropriation to the twentieth-century tainting of welfare and social democracy on this side of the Atlantic,36 race has refracted crucial terms, concepts, and values in liberal theory so as to remove any cognitive dissonance between the privileging of whites and the subordination of people of color. Correspondingly, the shaping of white moral psychology by race and the distinctive patterns of uptake of abstract liberal values (“equality,” “individualism”) in such a psychology then become legitimate objects of investigation for us.37 One begins from the assumption that these norms will be color-coded in their actual operationalization, so that any efficacious framing of an interracial political project will need to anticipate and correct for this differential understanding rather than being naively surprised by it. But such racialization (as popular interpretation and reception) is going to be a common problem for any American ideology with emancipatory pretensions. Liberalism is certainly not unique in that respect, as the history of the white American left and socialist movements illustrates. As Jack London famously put it at a meeting of the Socialist Party in San Francisco “when challenged by various members concerning his emphasis on the yellow peril”: “What the devil! I am first of all a white man and only then a Socialist!”38 Herrenvolk socialism existed no less than Herrenvolk liberalism.

#### Controls on markets extend the franchise of global democracy. Inside/outside binaries deny transnational solidarities and valorize authoritarian projects.

Christopher **MURRAY** PhD Candidate IR LSE **’20** *Anti-imperial world politics: race, class, and internationalism in the making of post-colonial order* p. 42-46

Hierarchy is obscured a third way through an analytical bias which privileges ethnic and cultural political leaders over forms of racial, class, and gender hierarchy internal to groups. The sole focus on elite representatives can reproduce a civilisationist ontology, and can lead to self-orientalism, or the appropriation and inversion of stereotypes about ‘non-Western’ civilisations in order to carve out autonomous space for ethnicised authority (Said, 1979). Against the claim that non-Western civilisations cannot order because of inferior values, comes the counter-claim that they can, and that those values will make them just as good ‘orderers’ – if not better – than the West. This can lead to the inclusion of non-Western values which are seen to be more amenable to hegemonic international order, and the marginalisation of other non-Western values deemed destabilising.86

Even recent scholarship which has attempted to nuance and pluralise the historiography of anticolonial nationalism remains stuck in this way. For example, Getachew (2019) presents a convincing and welcome argument that the anticolonial nationalisms of Caribbean and African thinkers were not inert and narrow, but should be judged as attempts at worldmaking. She correctly argues that activist theorists like Du Bois, Padmore, Nkrumah, and Eric Williams were not building nations as ends in themselves, but were initiating international projects meant to address the disparities within international society.

However, against her own intentions, Getachew ends up valorising the democracy-undermining projects of elite worldmakers by focussing entirely on the activities of racial – i.e. civilisational -- representatives. Instead of opening possibilities for a truly transnational approach to the problems of post-colonial politics, Getachew reinscribes R.B.J. Walker’s (1993) ‘inside/outside’ divide between ‘the international problem of hierarchy’ and ‘the internal question of pluralism and diversity.’87 Critiques of elite nationalism, such as those by Fanon, James, Lorde, Glissant, or even Du Bois in his later years, are mostly missing from Getachew’s analysis. These writers did not accept that hierarchy was simply an inter-governmental problem which was separate from ‘internal’ problems of pluralism and diversity. Getachew is correct that worldmakers like Kwame Nkrumah or Norman Manley were concerned with establishing an international norm of non-domination. However, her framing does not sufficiently address the problem that international non-domination built on ‘domestic’ domination of cultural minorities not only reproduced the logics of empire, but it also undermined the moral upper hand and strategic alliances between oppressed groups represented by the transnational solidarity of radical activists pushing for greater democratic controls on global capitalism. The democratic scale required to address problems of international hierarchy was, and is, transnational, making pluralism and diversity not just the province of national elites, but the concern of any group attempting to build solidarities and alliances to address global ills.

In agreement with the view that anti-imperialism is worldmaking, but against civilisational ordering, I argue that a major animating impetus of anti-imperialism was the desire to remake the world in order to enable the continual formation of pro-democratic alliances beyond national or civilisational boundaries. As a broader discourse, anti-imperialism was not just about negative right to freedom from alien rule, but about democratic access to the international realm of politics and the global economy.88 Within the anti-imperial discourses which began in the interwar period, there was a fundamental tension over where the authorisation of democratic right would come from: post-colonial states or the international proletariat. While worldmakers like Nkrumah or Manley wished to build the capacity of post-colonial nation-states, critics like Fanon or James also wished to radically extend the franchise of global democracy.

As C.L.R. James argued in a lecture series in August, 1960, the increasingly global penetration of capital gave rise to a need for new forms of political and economic unification beyond the national state. ‘National capitalistic states’ were already in the process of unification, with new states in the formerly colonised world in danger of simply replicating a political form which was quickly becoming subordinate to the demands of the world market.89 Presaging Quinn Slobodian’s (2018) recent argument about the symbiosis of free market ideologues and nation-states, James saw that

[A]t a certain stage capitalism begins to run to the government for salvation. Government also begins to enclose its production within the national boundaries because of war and tariffs. The capitalist, as soon as he gets into trouble, runs to the government and says, “Look how many people I am feeding, and look at the value of the production that I am producing for the benefit of the country. I am in a crisis. I am in difficulties owing to no fault of my own, but these miserable people in the other countries are under-selling me. They are paying their workers very little. Look how much I am paying mine. I would be glad if you could give me a subsidy of some kind.” And as he has helped to put the government into power, the government looks into the matter and appoints a commission and tells the commission to examine the industry rigorously and give him the subsidy he wants. He takes hold of the subsidy and, especially if an election is near, he goes to his political party, passes a little bit to them, and tells them to be careful to say how government interference is ruining capitalist production all over the world.90

For James, the unification of states into larger federations was a particular means to a more important end: the creation of radical democratic controls on the world market and the global promotion of egalitarianism as justice. The most important question of the post-colonial world was not which civilization should have the right to impose order, but ‘who’ – as in which class – ‘will control the world market?’91 Because the national state’s democratic accountability was compromised by capital, James believed that a progressive form of unification could only be achieved ‘by a social class which, from its very position in industry and the structure of society, can reach out to others of the same class in other countries.’ As I discuss further in Chapters 4 and 5, James was not of the opinion that states could be abandoned entirely, but it was a necessity that ‘[m]ankind… leave behind the outmoded bourgeois class and all the obstacles which the national state now places in the way of an international socialist order.’92

#### The political is a discursive assembly, not top-down power. Dissensus exerts leverage over government policy.

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Reconfiguring the topography of the common

Agamben is the one who best describes how the conversion of political authority into a superpower is brought about by those who see the problem of political power from the vantage point of an opposition between law and bare life. He makes use of Foucault’s early distinction between sovereignty and biopower, turning what Foucault describes – first as an opposition in Abnormal (A: 2003), and later on in Security, Territory, Population (STP: 2007) as a difference between sovereignty and security – into an identity, correlating the exceptionality of sovereignty with the exception of bare life. Hence, Agamben can translate the radical suspension of politics in the exception of bare life into the law of modern democracy, as defined by both Arendt and Kant. Biopolitics becomes democracy’s accomplice as a bare life between life and death. Hegemony becomes a mediation of Foucault’s notion of biopower as control over life and Schmitt’s notion of sovereignty as the power to decide on the state in which normal legality is suspended. The signature of hegemony shifts to one which positively intervenes between human and natural life as a new, more liberating form of domination for governing, neither the subject nor the enemy, but the sacred life of the people as a population. Or, as Rancière synthesizes Agamben’s attempt to overcome the opposition between absolute power and human rights (2010: 65–66), Democracy’s secret – the secret of modern power – can then emerge into full view. State power, now, is concretely concerned with bare life, itself no longer the life of the subject that the power wants to repress, nor the life of the enemy that it has to kill, but, Agamben says, a ‘sacred’ life – a life taken within a state of exception, a life ‘beyond oppression’. This signature of hegemony ‘beyond oppression’ presents itself as a command from above to show duty to otherness in political communities. Democracy as obedience to the rights of the Other in the res publica sweeps aside the heterogeneity of political dissensus in the name of a more radical heterogeneity. According to Rancière, this is to neglect how ‘dissensus is not a conflict of interests, opinions or values; it is a division inserted in “common sense” ’ (2010: 69). Dissensus is an ongoing dispute over what is given, and the frames in which we perceive and understand things as given. This is also how Foucault interprets politeia : democracy is not a matter of human rights; it is about the capability and knowledgeability of political subjects to place the scenes of dissensus in time and space. Rancière illustrates this point with the political struggles of women in Western history (2010: 69, emphasis in original): Women, as political subjects, set out to make a twofold statement. They demonstrated that they were deprived of the rights that theyhad thanks to the Declaration of Rights and that through their public action that they had the rights denied to them by the constitution, that they could enact those rights. They acted as subjects of the Rights of Man in the precise sense that I have mentioned. They acted as subjects that did not have the rights that they had and that had the rights they had not. This is what I call a dissensus: the putting of two worlds in one and the same world. Expressing political subjectivity in a political community is not a matter of being liberated from something or someone by something or someone. It is to reject, in one’s actual practice of freedom, being subjected to any political institution or human being. It is to deny that there is a superpower living in a sphere not only different from but also superior to the political community of free and equal subjects. It is to dismiss any categorizing of political actors by a Herrschaft making distinctions between superiors and subordinates, rulers and ruled, strong and weak, and so on. In a way, Foucault is pursuing exactly the same dual tactics as does Rancière above when he states that ‘nowadays, the struggles are against the forms of subjection – against the submission of subjectivity – is becoming more and more important’ (EW3: 351). He denies that mechanisms of subjection ‘merely constitute the “terminal” of more fundamental relations’ (EW3: 352), such as ideological or economic structures. Furthermore, like Rancière, Foucault is skeptical toward those who reduce subjectivation to a matter of ‘unfolding’ the program for a universal reason freed from domination in history, as if it were ‘possible to say that one thing is of the order of “deliberation” and another is of the order of “oppression” ’ (EW3: 354, emphasis in original): I do not think that there is anything that is functionally – by its very nature – absolutely liberating. Liberty is a practice . So there may, in fact, always be a certain number of projects whose aim is to modify some constraints, to loosen, or even to break them, but none of these projects can simply by its nature, assure that people will have freedom automatically, that it will be established by the project itself. Finally, like Rancière, Foucault denies that the exercise of hegemony in, and through, discursively structured and institutionalized asymmetries of power and signification is at the core of politics (FL: 444): It is within the field of the obligation of truth that it is possible to move about in one way or another, sometimes against effects of domination that may be linked to structures of truth or institutions entrusted with truth. It is a shame Rancière never sees this affinity between Foucault and himself when it comes to identifying how a political subject combines power, self-governance and knowledge as one who ‘can’, ‘will’ and ‘understands how to’ practice her freedoms inside a political community. Rather, he believes that ‘Foucault ... was never interested in this question, not at a theoretical level in any case. He was concerned with power’ (2010: 93). But he was interested. Unlike Mouffe and Rancière, Foucault does not analyze agonistic democracy in the shadow of antagonism and dissensus; nor does he reduce it to a manifestation of either hegemony or the popular will (EW3 1994c : 342): Rather than speaking of an essential antagonism, it would be better to speak of an ‘agonism’ – of a relationship that is at the same time mutual incitement and struggle; less of a face-to-face confrontation that paralyzes both sides than a permanent provocation. To Foucault, agonistic democracy does not derive from any exception but from the unceasing tension between freedom and truth, politeia and parrhesia in ongoing processes of authorization and normalization. Problematization is at the core of these processes as chronic two-way contestations of the discursive practices of authority and community inside political systems: the problematization of how people are governed (govermentality) depends on the ethical elaborations of the subject (knowledge) for making a difference (power), whether acting as an incumbent of political authority or as a lay member of a political community. Therefore, rather than speaking of authorization and normalization as opposed to practices of subjectivation and intersubjectivation in political communities, and vice versa, we should consider their mutual autonomy and dependence (EW3: 343): The analysis, elaboration, and bringing into question of power relations and the ‘agonism’ between power relations and the intransitivity of freedom is an increasingly political task – even, the political task that is inherent in all social existence. The relation of political authority as power-knowledge to governing, subjectivation and the practice of freedom is the basis of recurrently problematizing and criticizing any claim to political primacy in history. If Rancière had delved deeper into Foucault’s analyses of government by truth, he would surely have seen that Foucault’s critique of the sovereign state and the security state grows out of his conception of the political as an ensemble of discursive practices of power and freedom. 11 The state is not identical with the political, but one of its emergent properties. The duality of political authority and community It is easy to understand how Foucault could become identified with both the state of exception and the political community of exception. If one, for example, reads only Foucault’s early work on madness and discipline, the power/resistance dichotomy is the first that leaps out at one, as an indication of ‘the necessity of combat and the rules of strategy’ (DP: 308). The same holds good for his later lectures in STP (204), in which he speaks of ‘the coup d’Etat [as] the irruptive assertionof raison d’Etat ’. Statements like these cannot but leave the impression that Foucault’s politics is about sovereignty vs. law, power vs. resistance, hierarchy vs. anarchy, police vs. laypeople and so on. However, when Foucault focuses so much on statism and power/resistance in modernity, it is not because he thinks that hegemony and antagonism are at the core of the political, but precisely in order to problematize them both. To him, problematizing conflict means showing how things could be different (PK: 64): If one is interested in doing historical work that has political meaning, utility and effectiveness, then this is possible only if one has some kind of involvement with the struggles taking place in the area in question. I tried first to do a genealogy of psychiatry because I had had a certain amount of practical experience in psychiatric hospitals and was aware of the combats, the lines of force, tensions and points of collision which existed there. My historical work was undertaken only as a function of those conflicts. Foucault was from his young days actively engaged, practically as well as analytically, in problematizing how modern science and society continuously and systematically seek to cover up their exclusions behind a veil of rationality and legitimacy. To him, critique is not primarily to ‘scrutinise and restrain arbitrary power’ (Keane 2013: 245). It is, more than anything else, to problematize how, the more undistorted and thickly legitimated political decisions and actions appear and are believed to be, the better, more smoothly and unproblematically hierarchization, disciplinary subjection and policing function. In presupposing that political domination presents no special problems to democracy when first proved to be effective and legitimate for protecting and serving ‘We, the People’, modern reason turns a blind eye to its exclusions of otherness as ‘anomalies’ in or ‘deviations’ from the existing order. Authentic otherness is excluded from view a priori by reference to the necessity for removing any temporal or arbitrary disorder from society’s underlying general or necessary order. This is also Agamben’s and Rancière’s critique of modernity and the very reason why they both argue that the political is prior to law, just as dissensus is prior to consensus. But to Foucault it is the existence of the political authority relationship between political authorities and laypeople in their political communities that makes it all possible. It is not the state, whether as a sovereign state or as a security state, that identifies the political. Nor is it the democratic political community, which, as Rancière puts it (2010: 213, emphasis in original), breaks with consensus [in its] abolition of every form of arkhe , of every way of producing a correspondence between the places of governing and a ‘disposition’ to occupy these places. The politics of hegemony and dissensus are but two examples of the selftransforming capacity of political authority as a relationship involving freedom and power in both directions which could be balanced through the good parrhesia of freedom and truth. Foucault illustrates the fundamental duality of political authority and political community in his lectures from 1977 until he dies in 1984. He sets out by problematizing the conception of sovereignty as a unified entity, making up the space of the political as a coercive superpower over subjects within the prince’s or king’s territory. He shows how the original dilemma of sovereignty is its neglect of the facts that: ● one cannot govern a population as one governs a territory; ● g overning the construction of space is not the same as protecting and serving a home or place; ● t he functional delimitation of the political from all other necessary aspects of group life is a condition of demarcating the political territorially. The political is a general societal condition like those of the economic, the cultural and the religious; it is a constitutive aspect of all social and human relations, from the local to the global. Furthermore, its generality lies in its transformative capacity to do what could not be done without it: authorizing and normalizing the way policies are articulated, performed, delivered and evaluated**.** The fulfilment of these tasks does not depend on the maintenance of a centralized form of legitimate domination for acquiring effective control over subjects and society. It is necessary to accomplish them, however small the actual degree and extent of control the political authority may possess in relation to other political and nonpolitical forces, such as an informal ruling elite or an economic class. In this way, it is the notions of function, space, population and, most of all, the power-knowledge of subjectivation that show why Foucault wants to ‘decapitate the king’ and connect the politics of exception to the policy of cooperation for handling or solving common concerns. The analysis of political authority and democracy as revealing the identity of opposites does not only block a problematization of the juridical–statist identification of the political with an overarching norm that needs a hegemonic superpower to assert itself in the validation, rather than in the suspension, of this norm (Agamben 2005: 86). It also hinders the recoding of the political as a complex or ensemble of discursive practices for deciding on and doing policies in an acceptable manner, which is distinctly open to the possibility of self-governance and co-governance from below. Finally, to make the quest for social control within one’s territory the primary task of democratic government is not merely to reduce the common interest to a superpower’s national interest; it is also to disregard how a central political authority, in the long run, can only become stronger by enabling and empowering the population to get better at governing and taking care of itself as a community of equal subjects. Beyond opposition to difference Inside the political, democracy and parrhesia could be made to work together as the simultaneous manifestation of contingency and necessity; but only if we can transcend the mal adjustment of the democracy of equals and the ascendancy of parrhesia that the politics of exception expresses. This either turns the citizens into a superpower of dissensus and rupture or includes the parrhesiast as one more alterity in the community of equals ‘constituted through polemicizing over the common’ (Rancière 2010: 104). In any case, the result is that ‘the game of democracy and of truth-telling, do not manage to combine and suitably adjust to each other in a way which will enable this democracy to survive’ (GSO: 181). Rather, it insulates the political authorities from the political community with which they are endogenously connected as parties to a political authority relationship that requires the commons’ acceptance and recognition in order for it to continue in, and through, history. Political authority is constitutively open to exception made by political authorities or laypeople in their political communities. However, a minimal degree of cooperation between them is required for their continuous restructuring of their political regime and their relevant nonpolitical contexts – sometimes in the face of violent ruptures, difficult struggles and high-consequence risks (Bang 2009a, b, 2014). Obviously, if self-governance and co-governance are to become the basis of political community, then parrhesiast political authorities are required who can see the truth, are capable of telling it, are devoted to the pursuit of common concerns, and are generally reliable, honest and incorruptible. However, this is not the signature of hegemony, but the sign of a political authority with integrity that decides and acts (GSO: 178) on the basis of a democratic structure, a legitimate ascendancy exercised through a true discourse, and [as someone] with the courage to assert this true discourse. Thus, Foucault’s political analysis of government by truth is not founded on any claim to the primacy of either conflict or consensus, and does not give priority to either the political authority or the political community. In fact, the conception of the good political parrhesia moves political analysis beyond all rulers–ruled oppositions. It compels political researchers to conduct their analysis in light of the possibility that a good cooperative circle of political communication and interaction between political authorities and laypeople could be made to occur, if only both parties to the authority relationship would accept and recognize the real and necessary political difference between the interdependent logics of politeia and parrhesia . Hence, to critique modernity in Foucault’s manner is not equivalent to identifying the political with an extraordinary decision, which then is coercively imposed on people. Nor does it compel us to conclude that the circle of political authority and political community merely expresses the political construction of ‘a paradoxical world that puts together two separable worlds’ (Rancière 2010: 39). That only becomes the case if acceptance and recognition of political authority is equated with a forced compliance induced through disciplinary subjection and policing. Then, evidently, the ethical life among equals inside political communities will appear as always and intrinsically opposed to political authorities’ world of lived necessity. The virtue of being a political lay actor in a democratic political community is not just that one can act without a command, ‘ as if a command was not needed’ (Bauman 1995: 59, my italics). It is, rather, to know that a command/obedience relation is not necessary for cooperating with political authorities in the articulation and performance of common concerns. What is needed is merely the acceptance and recognition of the difference between being a political authority and a lay member of a political community. Placing political cooperation before consensus and dissensus The duality of political authority and political community comes out clearly in Foucault’s specification of the difference between parrhesia and democracy (GSO: 183–184): Not everybody can tell the truth just because everybody may speak. True discourse introduces a difference or rather is linked, both in its conditions and its effects, to a difference: only a few can tell the truth. And once only a few can tell the truth, once this truth-telling has emerged into the field of democracy, a difference is produced which is that of the ascendancy exercised by some over others. True discourse and the emergence of true discourse underpins the process of governmentality. If democracy can be governed, it is because there is a true discourse. Does this signify that Foucault, after all, is speaking of parrhesia as power over others? Well, some would probably say he is, but I think he is not, at least not in the normal sense of domination as class power or symbolic violence, manifesting a conflict of interest or meaning in which resistance is repressed and wills are subdued by the stronger class or superior will to knowledge (Bourdieu 1992, Devine and Savage 2005, Lukes 2005, Poulantzas 1975). We must remember that the good parrhesia grows out of democracy in the authority relationship, and, therefore, that the authority relationship between authorities and laypeople, in the ‘original position’, must be functional before it can, for example, take shape as a command/obedience relationship. To stress the importance of ascendancy for the good political parrhesia is not the same as claiming that politics will always be dominated by circulating power elites or classes. As distinct from elitists like Michels, Mosca and Pareto, Foucault does not classify people inside the political according to the power and control they actually hold. He merely wishes to point out the difference between those few who are the occupants of the political authority roles and the many ‘ordinary’ members who are not. This may also be why he himself, in the end, felt compelled to make an explicit distinction between power and domination, as in this interview from 1982 (FL 1996 : 417): Domination is a particular case within the different possibility of power relations. You can have a power relation without this type of domination. But what makes me uncomfortable with these analyses – at least those by Habermas – is the fact that when he speaks about power, he always understands it as domination. And he translates ‘power’ by ‘domination.’ To exercise political ascendancy is not the same as exercising command and control over others. Political authorities need not be coextensive with the politically relevant members; nor do they have to be driven by the goal of appropriating power above all else (cf. Easton 1965b: 214–215). Furthermore, however little actual control laypeople may possess under given circumstances, it is still necessary for them to systematically articulate and perform policies that most people will accept and recognize as binding, at least most of the time. However, the point is that some basic faculties are required to be in a position to exercise good political parrhesia . You cannot just walk in from the street and do so. Special political competences are required, developed from day-to-day experiences with the risks, problems and challenges that have to be dealt with in, and through, systematic political decision and action. Political authorities may sometimes function as puppets for certain dominant socioeconomic interests or identities. Yet, no matter how little actual control they possess, they are still directly and immediately responsible for how policies are authoritatively formulated, programmed, ‘packaged’ and carried out for society and the population in day-to-day political life. Likewise, laypeople in their political communities may be downtrodden by a totalitarian or authoritarian regime and hindered in all ways from exercising their creative political capacity to affect the production of political outcomes. Nevertheless, not even the most totalitarian regime can afford to ignore the political fact that it could not exist for a moment if laypeople suddenly refused to accept and recognize themselves as bound by authority, for whatever combination of reasons. The Eastern European and Chinese revolutions should at least have taught us that much. What we should emphasize much more today is the possibility of introducing the model of good parrhesia as an alternative to the models of the extraordinary decision-maker and the ordinary exception. What laypeople do in their political communities is not reducible to a matter of repoliticizing what has been depoliticized by the police. It is not merely this notion of democracy as dispute and struggle that is intrinsic to understanding what political community is all about. It is, more than anything else, the ability of laypeople to continuously problematize how policies are articulated and performed in time-space. Whereas politicization is tied to the logic of dissensus and consensus, problematization is connected with the logic of accepting and rejecting. Where problematization is continuous, politicization is discontinuous. Thus, problematization provides ‘ordinary people’ inside their political communities with a much more long-lasting and general political significance and relevance than is possible in politicization. It makes the never-ceasing spontaneity and creativity of ordinary citizens the ground for developing the politics of truth of the parrhesiast, by igniting and keeping the political authority responsive to conducting the circle of the good parrhesia.

# 2ac round the fifth

## case

### overview – 2ac

#### Vote aff to endorse prohibition of vertical restraints as a method of reorienting economic thinking from efficiency to power. Two impacts –

#### Exploitation – firms who “independently contract” all of their workers like Uber intentionally dodge labor protections for those workers – the design of fissured workplaces is so that exploitation of and stripping power from countless people becomes easy.

#### Rethinking economic intervention – retooling antitrust to focus on distributing power instead of economic efficiency understands legal, state-centric tools NOT as correcting market failures but as ensuring equity of workers in a marketplace that is increasingly seeping into every part of life.

### AT: slavery/labor division – 2ac

#### Recognizing linkages instead of trying to identify a unique form is key to transform conditions of work.

Nikhil Pal **SINGH** Social and Cultural Analysis & Education @ NYU; Director NYU Prison Education Program **’17** in *Futures of Black Radicalism* eds. Gaye Theresa Johnson & Alex Lubin p. 54-55

Civil society, as both Foucault and Marx argue in different ways, is the perfect site for capitalism, as a realm of economic freedom that fundamentally modifies the terms of political authority. While Marx attempted to demystify this process by describing the actual subordination of sovereign political status to forceful economic tyranny, Foucault at times emphasizes the real limitations placed by market freedom on the political life of the state. “The condition of governing well,” he writes, “is that freedom, or certain forms of freedom are really respected.”54 The idea of a totalizing police power gives way to a police force focused upon the prevention and management of the probability of “disorders” and “disasters.” At the same time, both Marx and even Foucault exception- alize the phenomenon that at different points preoccupies both of them: the bloody, annihilating violence that haunts modern social existence. In an echo of Marx’s account of the decreasing frequency in use of overt force, Foucault, for example, calls Nazi genocide an “eruption of racism,” an expression of the outdated right of a sovereign to kill that is retained alongside normative governmental imperatives of population management and biopolitical growth. But like Marx, he ultimately begs the question of how to account for the enduring nature of this always waning, quasi-hallucinatory genocidal force.55

It is not, moreover, only spectacular violence, but the slow, repetitive, incremental, often concealed violence of appropriation that needs to be considered here. If socially necessary labor time constitutes value for capital, as Jason Moore writes, such value is embedded in a “web of life” that capital uses to exploit formally free wage labor. Marxist theory that considers the most distinct undertakings of capitalism to be economic exploitation and the production of surplus value separating economic compulsion from direct domination fails to recognize what may be an even greater capitalist novelty: the dynamic by which capital is able to “identify, secure and channel unpaid work outside the commodity system into the circuit of capital.” As Marxist-feminists have long noted, “The appropriation of accumulated unpaid work in human form,” including the labors of biological and social reproduction undertaken the world over by women, provides the real historical conditions for “socially necessary labor time.” A “narrow sphere” of productive relations, in this view, depends upon a “more expansive sphere of appropriation” in which cheap human and extrahuman nature “are taken up by commodity production.”56

Embodied in the figures of the slave, the migrant worker, the household worker, the chronically unemployed, and others like them, appropriation encompasses both privatized and publically sanctioned coercion and ethico- political devaluation inseparable from capitalist processes of assigning value. Thus, rather than opposing notions of absolute sovereignty and its power of life over death with a biopolitically, productive materialist history, we might instead recognize how the two are inextricably linked through the conquest/commodification of Black bodies (as well as in the conquest/commodification of indigenous lands) that for Marx comprises the moment of “so-called primitive accumulation.” This connection extends to the ongoing unpaid work of women the world over, accumulated unpaid work represented by labor migration, and war capitalisms differentiation between internally ordered, rule-bound spaces of production and market exchange and exceptional zones of armed appropriation. The latter are not only domains for enacting “plunder”—that is, primitive accumulation (or accumulation by dispossession)—but also for developing cutting-edge procedures, calculations, and fungible systems of commercial and military infrastructure—the slaver s management of human cargo, railways of extraction and settlement, coerced urbanisms, strategic hamlets and forward military bases—that are able to proceed insofar as they are unfettered by legally protected human beings, thus advancing new prejudices that build upon the old.

#### Divisions of violence as analytically distinct are a trick of the colonial archive.

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I wish to emphasize, finally, an emergent meaning of the "intimacies of four continents:' An emergent social or cultural formation does not necessarily require completely "new" subjectivities or constituencies but can comprise elements of residual ongoing conditions like settler colonialism, colonial slavery, and trade, yet rearticulated in other ways through new practices. In this sense, we could consider one emergent formation of the intimacies of four continents as the variety of contacts among slaves, indentured, and mixed peoples living, working, and surviving together in the Americas. In the British colonial archive, such intimacies between contracted emigrants, indigenous people, slaves, and slave-descendant peoples are referenced by negative means, in cautionary rhetorics and statements of prohibition with respect to possible contacts between colonized groups, all implying the fear and anxiety of racial proximity in a context of mixture and unstable boundaries. For example, White's 1851 letter to the Governor of British Guiana warned: "The Chinese are essentially a social and a gregarious people and must be located in masses together, not scattered throughout the colony. They must be kept in the first instance distant and separate from the Negroes, not only at their work, but also in their dwellings:'110

The repeated injunctions that different groups must be divided and boundaries kept distinct indicate that colonial administrators imagined as dangerous the sexual, laboring, and intellectual contacts among enslaved and indentured nonwhite peoples. The racial classifications in the archive arise, thus, in this context of the colonial need to prevent these unspoken "intimacies" among the colonized. m Reading the archive, one notes explicit descriptions and enumerations, as well as the rhetorical peculiarities of the documents, the places where particular figures, tropes, or circumlocutions are repeated to cover gaps or tensions; these rhetorical ellipses point to illogic in the archive, as well. So, while this emergent sense of intimacies-the varieties of contacts between laboring peoples-is not explicitly named in the documents, it is, paradoxically, everywhere present in the archive in the presence of such detours. This emergent idea of "intimacies;' then, can be said to include the range of laboring contacts that are necessary for the production of bourgeois domesticity, as well as the intimacies of captured workers surviving together, the proximity and affinity that gives rise to political, sexual, intellectual collaborations, subaltern revolts and uprisings, such as the Haitian Revolution, the

Louisiana cane workers strike of 1887, or the cross-racial alliances that underlay the Cuban struggles for independence in 1895-98.'12

These imminent, potential alliances among subjugated people are referenced negatively in policies and prohibitions against contacts, and are legible as apprehension and anxiety in the unwritten, blank spaces of the colonial archive. These alliances appear later, in the work of twentiethcentury anticolonial and antislavery thinkers such as Frederick Douglass, W. E. B. Du Bois, C. L. R. James, Walter Rodney, Fernando Ortiz, Cedric Robinson, Sylvia Wynter, and others, who allude to connections between slavery-based settler colonies, Chinese and Indian labor, and the prosperity of Europe. Douglass, for example, linked African slavery to a global system that used Chinese and Indian "coolie" labor and wrote in 1871: "the rights of the coolie in California, in Peru, in Jamaica, in Trinidad, and on board the vessels bearing them to these countries are scarcely more guarded than were those of the Negro slaves brought to our shores a century ago:' 113 Du Bois described "that dark and vast sea of human labor in China and India, the South Seas and all Africa, in the West Indies and Central America and in the United States" and called for "the emancipation of that basic majority of workers who are yellow, brown, and black:'114 In his history of the colonial division of labor in Guyana that separated Blacks and Asians and permitted the postemandpation exploitation of those divisions, Walter Rodney imagined the "definite historical achievement" that would have been possible if Black and Asian workers, the descendants of slaves and indentured laborers, could have forged solidarity across the residues of colonial division.U5 These "flashes" of the intimacies of four continents critically frame the more restricted dominant meaning of intimacy as the interiority and private property of the European and North American individual.

Interpreting the multivalence of "intimacy" is a means to understand the process through which the "intimacies of four continents" were rationalized and sublated by a more restricted notion of "intimacy" as the property of the possessive individual. Reading the colonial archive, I observe how colonized populations were differentially racialized through their proximities from normative ideas of family reproduction that became central to early nineteenth-century liberalism. Reading literature, autobiography, political philosophy, political economy, and cultural genres of liberalism, I observe likewise how the racialized distributions of freedom and humanity were equally a part of this legacy. Modern hierarchies of race appear to have emerged in the contradiction between liberal aspirations to universality and the needs of modern colonial regimes to manage work, reproduction, and the social organization of the colonized. Racial governance was underwritten by liberal philosophies that at once disavowed the violence of settler colonialism and narrated modernity as the progress from slavery to freedom. The "intimacies of four continents" may be the "political unconscious" of this modern fiction of progress and redemption. However, these "intimacies" remain almost entirely illegible in the historiography of modern freedom, making the naming and interpretation of this global conjunction a problem of knowledge itself. It has been estimated that between 1451 and 1870, 11,569,000 African slaves were brought to the "new world;'116 and that after the sixteenth century, out of eighty million native peoples in the Americas, there remained ten.117 Between 1834 and the end of the century, a reported half a million Asian immigrants made their way to the British West Indies, in the context of tens of millions more going to Latin America, North America, Australia, New Zealand, and Southeast Asia.U8 But, while these numbers powerfully convey the labor of working peoples in the building of the "new world;' I am less concerned to pursue the significance ih demographic terms, and more concerned to inquire into the politics of knowledge with respect to connections between Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas that were critical to the imbrication of liberal freedom with the rise of a global capitalist system. We still seek new methods, not only to understand settler colonialism as the condition for African slavery in the Americas, but also to examine how the liberal narratives that symbolize freedom in the abolition of that slavery erase this connection and further impede our access to indigenous and slave histories. We require new archives and readings to link the introduction of Chinese and Indian indentured laborers to the Americas with the abolition of the slave trade, and moreover, to reckon with how the figure of Asian labor was used to buttress promises of freedom that remained out of reach for enslaved and indentured peoples alike, even following abolition. We require new ways to interpret India Office, Colonial Office, Foreign Office, and Parliamentary Papers together with literature and culture, as we elaborate the convergence of liberal abolition with new imperial experiments, linking older methods of territorial colonialism with new forms of sovereignty enacted through the governance of trade and movement, in treaty ports and across the seas.

### AT: cruel optimism – 2ac

#### Cruel pessimism is a greater problem than cruel optimism. The possibility of a decolonized world is worth our efforts. Even as spectators and critics, we can shape the discourse of anticolonial activity.

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Optimism: Duty or Cruelty?

More recently, further objections have been made within queer and affect theory in particular to the normativizing tendencies inherent in politics in general: perhaps political optimism or revolutionary hope are simply ways of interpellating queer subjects into compulsory affective circuits in which "negative" feelings and emotions must be renounced in the name of "positive" ones, or into certain hetero- or homonormative visions of the "good life" that is to be sought in revolutionary movements. Such a process, according to some queer theorists, thus installs a form of affective normativity into politics, which demands certain investments and obscures the distribution of "positive" and "negative" feelings across gender, sexual, racial, class, and national axes (see Duggan and Munoz 2009 and Berlant 2011). As such, much recent queer theory has drawn on certain forms of psychoanalysis to advocate the political use-value of precisely these "negative" and "non-normative" affects and feelings including hopelessness, melancholia, shame, unhappiness-in the name of queer resistance (see Eng and Kazanjian 2002, Duggan and Munoz 2009, Ahmed 2010, Halperin and Traub 2010). In its most extreme form (which we take up extensively in Chapter 3 ), queer theorist Lee Edelman (2004) has argued that any politics whatsoever is always already both heteronormative and conservative insofar as it imagines "the Child" as the horizon and beneficiary of any political action. The focus on the future inherent to any political agenda, according to Edelman,jnvolves a compulsory renunciation of the present in the name of the children who will inherit that "better" future. Queers are, according to Edelman, those not fighting for the children and are thus figured as the death drive of the social order-a status Edelman forcefully exhorts queers to actively take up in the "insist[ence] that the future stop here" (2004: 31).

So does all of this mean that we are, to use Lauren Berlant's (2011) term, "cruel optimists" ?3 We would answer this simply: there is surely nothing crueler than to say that there is no way out of the horrific and brutal exploitation of advanced capitalism that leaves the majority of the world's population in conditions of dire poverty and targeted for extinction. Embracing the death drive, or what amounts to the same thing, abandoning oneself to the impending doom of the species and the planet when you have no possibility of life is not such a big deal, and is certainly not an act of "queer" or "posthumanist" resistance. Centuries ago, Immanuel Kant argued that we have a duty to be optimistic, not because things are necessarily going to get better, but because they might. For Kant, we are not obligated to believe in any particular vision of the future or its possibility, but the fact that ideals such as perpetual peace (and we would add: the end of capitalism) cannot be proven impossible obliges us to live as if (not necessarily believe) they were. To quote Kant:

for there can be no obligation ... to believe something [i.e., a specific end]. What is incumbent upon us as a duty is to act in conformity with the idea of that end, even if there is not the slightest theoretical likelihood that it can be realized, as long as its impossibility cannot be demonstrated either. Now morally practical reason pronounces in us its irresistible veto: there is to be no war ... So the question is no longer whether perpetual peace is something real or a fiction, and whether we are not deceiving ourselves in our theoretical judgment when we assume that it is real. Instead we must act as if it is something real, though perhaps it is not ... and even if the complete realization of this objective always remains a pious wish, still we are certainly not deceiving ourselves in adopting the maxim of working incessantly toward it. For this is our duty .. . (1996: 490-1, emphasis added)

And, moreover, as spectators (if not participants) in revolutionary struggle, we actually shape the way those struggles will be read. So for Kant, the spectators who cheered on the French Revolution played a role in history in that the significance they gave to that revolution became part of the new reality that that revolution constituted. And cannot the same be said for those who cheered on the "Arab Spring," as well as those who heroically participated in it? Can it not be said of those who stayed up all night watching the votes be counted in recent elections in Greece, Spain, and South Africa to see if new socialist parties would be voted in? The deep irony of much recent feminist and queer theory is that it effectively tells us that, in the name of "queerness" and "posthumanism," everything must ultimately remain exactly as it is, given that the hope for a different future is heteronormative and any idea of transforming the world is humanist delirium; that we should instead embrace ephemerality, extinction, and the death drive (all of which capitalism has conveniently made readily available); and that anyone who writes or claims otherwise is nothing but a nostalgic, humanist fool providing deluded idiots with cruel optimism. How do these thinkers know that we are fated to fragility, death, extinction, poverty, war, capitalism, depression, melancholia, and unbearable sex?

In this book, we want to show that the "truth" they tell us about the ultimate impossibility of a more just future can, and should, be deconstructed in the name of a queer-feminist future beyond Man, a future that by the very appropriation of the word "queer" tells us that nothing is ever what it seems and that the psychic and bodily prisons that we live in are always in the process of being undone by collective revolutionary processes. Indeed, as the late queer theorist Jose Esteban Munoz insisted in his disagreements with much recent queer theory, queerness is itself a form of utopianism or "revolutionary consciousness." As he put it: It is difficult to hold onto a phrase like "revolutionary consciousness." It seems stark, out-moded, universalizing, and prescriptive. Yet I nonetheless deploy it because I want to link it specifically to the world of affect and feeling ... It is not about announcing the way things ought to be, but, instead, imagining what things could be. (Duggan and Muiioz 2009: 278) We do not wish to rehearse here the hope versus hopelessness, future versus anti-future debates that have dominated queer theory over the past decade. We do, however, want to point out the resonances of Munoz's contention that "queerness is an ideality" (2009: 1) with the Kantian duty of optimism, explicitly putting queer politics on the side of revolution: that we can imagine beyond what we can know both enables and obligates us to live according to ideals of freedom as we also struggle to bring such a world into existence. Certainly, Kant's point is that as we put ourselves into the story, we are part of it and thus pessimism becomes just as much a part of that story as optimism. And moreover, as we will discuss in Chapter 4, these stories have a profound power to materialize and rematerialize the world that we live in together. Thus, if what many contemporary theorists tell us is not truth, then it is just their own conviction-itself a form of political faith. And why have the faith that we are thoroughly fucked if there is any way for us to queer ourselves out of it? It would thus seem that many theorists have their .own form of cruel attachment-a cruel pessimism?-to the idea that revolution is something we (can) no longer desire. Perhaps this is a form of immunity to the inevitable disappointments of political struggle: we can no longer be disappointed if we no longer hope for a more just future or believe it is possible. And yet, as political theorist Jane Anna Gordon eloquently said at a recent event in New York City, "Political theory is incoherent if we accept that we are in a post-revolutionary time. All we can do then is poetically discuss resignation and impossibility. " 4 The philosophy of the limit means that the very limit to any idea of "the impossible," that is, to any metanarrative of postrevolutionary doom, leaves us with the responsibility to fight for a politics that is both revolutionary and that is constantly challenging the reign of Man in the form of colonialism, capitalism, racism, phallocentrism, and heterosexism (see Cornell 1992). As we have suggested, and will argue throughout this book, thinkers in the global South have been engaged in precisely this project for centuries. These thinkers, however, have been too involved in revolutionary struggles themselves to spend too much time hand-wringing about the humanistic arrogance of politics and the failures of feminism and socialism, or debating the value of hope versus pessimism, because there is simply too much work to be done in the struggle for total decolonization. They, in a deep and profound sense, are on the side of life, understood not as abstract "life itself," but as part of political spirituality: the struggle for different ways of living individually, collectively, and with the other beings with which we share the planet. And perhaps it is precisely to these thinkers that we must now look for the spirit of revolution and for a new practice of the human beyond Man. We close this introduction and open our book with the words of Gilles Deleuze castigating the so-called "New Philosophers" of the 1970s who critiqued Marxism and socialism for manipulating the supposedly ignorant masses:

What I find really disgusting is that the New Philosophers are writing a martyrology: the Gulag and the victims of history. They live off corpses ... But there never would have been any victims if the victims had thought or spoken like our New Philosophers. The victims had to live and think in a totally different way to provide the material that so moves the New Philosophers, who weep in their name, think in their name, and give us moral lessons in their name. Those who risk their life most often think in terms of life, not death, not bitterness, and not morbid vanity. Resistance fighters are usually in love with life. No one was ever put in prison for powerlessness and pessimism-on the contrary! From the perspective of the New Philosophers, the victims were duped, because they didn't yet grasp what the New Philosophers have grasped. If I belonged to an association, I would bring a complaint against the New Philosophers: they show just a little too much contempt for the inmates of the Gulag. (2007: 144-5) With very little adjustment, could these same words not be said of our new prophets of queer hopelessness, posthumanist renunciation, and postrevolutionary pessimism?

## k

### framework – 2ac

#### Framework. Adopt the plan for the justificationspresented in the 1AC.

#### Empowering political community. Separating the plan from its justifications denies the constitutive connective between politics and discourse. Politics is authorized by laypeople circulating, discussing and normalizing policy. The 1AC revitalizes antitrust law’s origins of combatting concentration of power.

#### Inside/outside and public/private dichotomy bad. No “spillover” and “in here” v “out there” relies on the anti democratic boundaries of elite worldmakers and endorses flawed neoclassical economics. Transnational solidarities rather than separation defines global life – that’s Murray

#### Evaluate the potential consequences of affirmative advocacy. Thinking and judging what is beyond our individual capacity is a vital political activity. Thinking imaginatively makes political change possible.

Daniel **CHERNILO** Social and Political Thought @ Loughborough University **’17** *Debating Humanity: towards a philosophical sociology* p. 77-79

III

We have said that, In Life of the Mind, Arendt’s argument on thinking, willing and judging is construed in a similar way to how, in The Human Condition, she had introduced labour, work and action. In the case of our mental faculties, it is the temporal dimension that organises Arendt’s triadic structure: thinking belongs to the present, judging belongs to the past and willing to the future (1978 I: 191). Thinking plays a major role in the argument on the vita contemplativa because it is the skill that actually makes willing and judging possible. Thinking alone allows for the withdrawal that is necessary for the activation of the life of the mind as a whole; thinking implies a temporary yet essential withdrawal from the world, it requires the suspension of our relationship with the world and comes to an end as soon as ‘the real world asserts itself again’ (1978 I: 75).18

The thinking ego is neither an empirical self nor the soul in so far as they are concerned with our feelings and bodily experiences. The thinking ego has the ability to offer a critique of that which appears as given and thus involves a ‘radical’ break from what becomes available to the senses; the thinking ego is therefore ‘ageless, sexless, without qualities, and without a life story’ (1978 I: 43). What makes the thinking ego radical is the fact that it takes objects as they are given in the world and then attributes to them a new, general, meaning through this mental ‘experiment of the self with itself’ (1978 I: 74). Pure thinking is constituted in this fashion: ‘it is this duality of myself with myself that makes thinking a true activity, in which I am both the one who asks and the one who answers’ (1978 I: 185).19 The thinking ego, then, is unconditioned, invisible, reflexive and self-contained. But given the fact of human plurality, Arendt argues that the thinking ego, while it lives in solitude, it is never lonely; it is soundless though not silent, it needs words but has not listeners (1978 I: 32, 47, 71–5, 98–9). The thinking ego is singular but is never only one: the thinking ego is ‘the two-in-one of soundless dialogue . . . while engaged in the dialogue of solitude, in which I am strictly by myself, I am not altogether separated from that plurality which is the world of men and which we call, in its most general sense, humanity’ (2005: 22).

This intrinsic unworldliness of thinking makes it hardly surprising that it has traditionally appeared as the opposite of the active life. The same unworldliness, moreover, prevents us from turning thinking into the key or essential marker of the shared humanity of human beings. Through its rejection of appearances, the thinking ego possesses an intrinsic reflexive ability that is fundamentally ‘self-destructive’ with regard to ‘its own results . . . thinking itself can never be solidly established as one and even the highest property of the human species’ (1978 I: 88). Yet at the same time, as a purely contemplative life is not wholly human, Arendt equally contends that a life fully devoid of thinking also ‘fails to develop its own essence – it is not merely meaningless; it is not fully alive. Unthinking men are like sleepwalkers’ (1978 I: 191). Thinking as the possibility of self-transcendence, connects rather than separates the vita activa and the vita contemplativa: ‘whenever I transcend the limits of my own life span and begin to reflect on this past, judging it, and this future, forming projects of the will, thinking ceases to be a politically marginal activity’ (1978 I: 192). Because thinking is another particular expression of human plurality, it is also deeply connected to politics.

#### Permutation do both. Only the aff’s embrace of non-domination eliminates algorithmic efficiency in the workplace. The most egregious form of domination is data-driven – i.e. Amazon using AI to detect when workers go to the bathroom. Uber is dataifying bodies, reducing them to pins on a map. BUT, their rejection of antitrust as a tool of antidomination prevents using it to globally shape economic power. Retooling antitrust law toward political and social ends and away from competitive efficiency forwards a positive vision for economic freedom that remedies structural inequality.

K Sabeel **RAHMAN** Law @ Brooklyn **’18** “Constructing and Contesting Structural Inequality” *Critical Analysis of Law* 5:1 p. 101-109

This paper draws on several areas of contemporary and historical legal scholarship to draw out some common methodological elements to clarify, first, the ways in which we might conceptualize and diagnose structural inequalities, and second, how we might counteract these inequalities. Law features prominently in both parts of this framework. As this paper will suggest below, structural inequality operates in large part by concentrating economic, social, and political power through softened legal constraints on the one hand, and imbalanced background legal rules on the other. Furthermore, legal rules often operate to fragment and diminish the capacity of affected constituencies— such as workers, consumers, urban residents, and minority groups, to name a few—from effectively wielding the kinds of countervailing political and economic power needed to counteract such disparities of power. Historically, there is a long tradition going back through scholarship in law and public policy, critical race and gender studies, critical legal studies, and more, back to the rise of legal realism and political economy critiques during the Progressive Era around the turn of the twentieth century. This paper returns to this early history of Progressive-Era political economy to draw out a theory of systemic and structural inequality, how to diagnose it, and how to remedy it. The paper then helps develop and refine this approach with reference to contemporary legal scholarship. The goal, I hope, is to provide some greater clarity on these questions of methodology: how we should define, identify, and then seek to remedy structural inequalities—and the role of law in shaping both analysis and response.

II. Theorizing Structural Inequality and its Remedies

A. “Natural” versus Human-Made Structures

The challenge of conceptualization structural inequality reveals a central philosophical and conceptual divide, one that often goes beyond conventional accounts of left and right. The central question is not so much the role of government; rather, it is about the degree to which we view background systems and structures as “natural” or human-made. This divide also manifests in the ways in which different thinkers seek to address such structural inequalities.

Consider for example the thought of Friedrich Hayek, one of the intellectual leaders of twentieth century libertarianism and a key figure in the revival of the emphasis on self-correcting markets and skepticism of governmental action that characterizes “neoliberal” political economic thought. The term “neoliberalism” is often contested and can at times imply a higher degree of hegemony or ideological coherence and coordination than is often the case. For our present purposes, we can use the term “neoliberalism” to refer to a configuration of conceptual approaches that include three elements in particular: a view of markets as self-correcting and epistemically superior; a skepticism about governmental action as prone to capture; and a disposition towards more classic liberal views of negative liberty as freedom from governmental interference.10 Hayek’s central dispute with thinkers advocating for more expansive approaches to social and economic justice did not necessarily turn on a rejection of the moral aspiration for greater equality of economic opportunity. Indeed, Hayek (and other libertarians following in his mold, like Milton Freidman) at times articulated a surprisingly expansive view of economic opportunity with support for extensive social insurance programs or even a basic income in the form of negative earned income tax credits. But what is especially telling is that Hayek framed his philosophical disagreement in terms of a vastly different view of structure and political possibility.

In a classic 1976 essay, Hayek argued that individual income shares in a market economy were the outcome of the market’s “spontaneous ordering,” rather than being the product of a singular will or intention. As a result, claims of social justice amounted, in his view, to a “naïve” “anthropomorphism,” attributing intentionality and responsibility for outcomes to a system that could not have any intention or will to begin with.11 “Those shares are the outcome of a process the effect of which was neither intended nor foreseen by anyone,” Hayek continues. “To demand justice from such a process is clearly absurd.”12 The market was not an individual entity with a will, and thus conventional notions of moral obligation, responsibility, or redress “has no application” to an “impersonal” and self-ordering system such as a market economy.13 Moreover, imposing distributive outcomes on market-ordering would destroy the critical social value of markets as efficient, decentralized systems for synthesizing information and optimally ordering the allocation of goods and services through the price mechanism.

Hayek’s critique of social justice was largely motivated by a desire to avoid the specter of totalitarian control of the economy associated with statist communism and socialism. But it is also revealing about a central conceptual shift required to diagnose— and remedy—inequality. Hayek writes off much of social justice because economic systems—diffuse, mindless, unintentional—cannot be the subjects of concepts like justice. This unease with treating “natural” market orderings as if they were blameworthy opened up the door to omnipresent regulatory and redistributive efforts that would inevitably escalate until all domains of economic and social activity were subject to public control. This view of the dangers and ineffectiveness of systemic regulation, and the view that systemic patterns of inequality are themselves more like forces of nature than they are like intentional, human-produced discrimination, echoes the asystemic view of markets and politics articulated by Roberts in Parents Involved and Shelby County.

Yet, while Hayek is correct that economic systems are indeed diffuse and lack a single coherent will, they are not “natural” systems beyond human agency, or neutral systems operating in intrinsically fair and equitable ways. Markets are themselves products of law and politics, and the aggregate dynamics of market systems are similarly the result of background legal and political choices that structure markets in one way or another. Indeed, a key conceptual shift in understanding the broader dynamics of inequality and subordination in the modern economy requires an appreciation for the very inequitable and human-made nature of economic systems as a whole.14 As Iris Young argues, economic and social structures while often creating constraints that are experienced by individuals as objective and exogenous are in fact the product of hidden and accumulated decisions, policies, and actions. These accumulated human choices congeal into a larger structure, which places individuals in subordinate positions. Thus racial minorities, women, and poorer individuals might lack for meaningful opportunities to experience upward mobility not because of their merit, not because of luck, and not even because of the nefarious intent on the part of their employer, their landlord, or another individual actor. Rather, their social and economic subordination arises as a result of their position in a larger socioeconomic structure in which they lack the power, resources, and opportunities to better their condition.15

The structures that in the aggregate create these uneven landscapes of social and economic position can be themselves viewed as a systemic form of unequal power and domination. Where conventionally we might view power disparities and domination in terms of specific actors that can act arbitrarily, asserting his or her will against another, diffuse systems in the aggregate can create similar disparities, even without a single consolidated intentionality, arising instead from the aggregation of many individual decisions and background policies, each of which operates within the bounds of conventional legal rules and norms. As Young argues, structural domination arises “when social processes put large groups of persons under systemic threat of domination or deprivation of the means to develop and exercise their capacities, at the same time that these processes enable others to dominate or to have a wide range of opportunities for developing and exercising capacities available to them.”16 The structure of, say, the labor market, or the physical geography of the city, thus can seem voluntary and natural, and can be the product of many independent policies and decisions, and still be a causal driver of inequality, and a legitimate target of public policy.17

B. Meliorist Versus Structural Remedies

Economic equity then is not just a result of securing an equitable distribution of income. Rather it fundamentally turns on a deeper construction and reform of what Joseph Fishkin calls the **“opportunity structure.”**18 But even if the structural dimensions of inequality are taken as given, there is a further fault line that arises in how to conceptualize the appropriate remedy to structural inequality. Some policies would in fact help individuals facing structural inequalities, but they would do so by helping an individual move within a given structure to a higher social or economic position. But they would not alter the structure that creates the hierarchies of subordination, of position, in the first place. Thus, in a given labor market, increased education and individual skill- building might help some individuals secure higher employment. But such policies, even at scale, are unlikely to alter the background rules and disparities that make, for example, low-skill and low-wage work so precarious and insecure and unrewarding. Similarly, individual-level enforcement of anti-discrimination provisions might make it easier for some individuals to gain redress for instances of racial or gender discrimination, but more would need to be done to systematically uproot systemic patterns racial and gender discrimination. Fishkin makes a similar distinction in his account, using the metaphor of the bottleneck. There are social and economic gateways that can help launch an individual from a lower socioeconomic position to a higher one: for example, admission to college, or moving to a high-growth and high-opportunity neighborhood. Some interventions can improve an individual’’ condition by moving her through the bottleneck, such as affirmative action admissions procedures or targeted educational interventions, or housing voucher programs. But these are distinct from interventions that would **dismantle or at least loosen the bottleneck itself**. Think of this as the **distinction** between **meliorist approaches** to tackling structural inequality, and **structural approaches**.

This distinction is not always a sharp one, but rather it sketches out a spectrum of policy responses to structural inequality. Consider for example, the conventional meritocratic and competitive view of “equal opportunity.” On this view, the central question for social policy is to ensure a fair competition for (scarce) goods and opportunities such that the most meritorious can secure access regardless of their starting point in life. But this standard approach narrows our focus too much by zeroing in on making competitive entry to key opportunities fairer—such as through access to quality schools and college admissions. This narrow focus leaves out broader questions such as what “merit” means, or why such opportunities are structurally so scarce and critical for success in the first place. It also means implicitly prioritizing a single pathway for economic well-being rather than looking to make possible a plurality of life plans and pathways.19 Furthermore, this “fair competition” view of equal opportunity implicitly codifies a distinction between the “deserving” and the “undeserving” poor: only those poor individuals who have “merit” can and should benefit from social policies meant to expand economic opportunity. This may seem unobjectionable, but the notion of an undeserving poor has long played a pernicious role in making our social contract and welfare systems unduly punitive and restrictive.20 The focus on merit thus leaves in place an underclass, rather than seeking to remedy the problem of poverty and insecurity for all in the first place.21 To put it another way, this bifurcation of those who benefit and those who do not may at best diversify the economic elite, but leaves the disparity between elite and non-elite in place; it is effectively the “equal opportunity to be unequal.”22

Another common way of thinking about equal opportunity and the role of social policy focuses not on fair competition but on the problem of risk mitigation. Much of the American social policy regime can be understood as mechanisms to insure individuals, families, and communities against various kinds of risks and economic shocks.23 This view of opportunity and social policy fares better than the fair competition view, in that it lacks the implicit value judgments about deservingness, and suggests a more universalized approach to policy. We are all vulnerable to risks, and social policy should serve to protect each of us from the most severe social and economic repercussions of such risks. The language of risk highlights the important shift that social policy is not about identifying the most deserving of impoverished or insecure individuals to grant them more opportunities; rather it is about enabling all of us to live more secure and stable lives—a security and stability which in turn can make it possible for each of us to pursue our own social, economic, and personal aspirations. But many of the inequalities we face in today’s economy are not just a product of increased risk faced by poor families, contingent workers, and the like; rather they are products of deeper structural disparities in access to opportunities.

But **equal opportunity**, in the end, is **not about fair competition** or risk mitigation; rather, it is fundamentally about **freedom**—the freedom “**to do and become things we otherwise could not.**”24 The risks, vulnerabilities, and insecurities that families and individuals face in the market economy are not the product of forces of nature; rather, they arise from the ways in which we structure the market economy through policy—and represent the aggregation of disparities of bargaining power and positional power between, for example, landlords and tenants, managers and workers.25 Equality of opportunity, then, must also be understood as a project of expanding freedom from relations of domination, exploitation, exclusion—particularly the kinds of domination that can arise from diffuse systems and structures as described above.26 Achieving **equality understood as economic freedom** thus requires something more than a **narrow focus on opportunity**, desert, risk, or even raw redistribution. Instead, it requires asking hard—and empirically-rich—questions about the ways in which our current economic structures work to include or exclude, to empower or subordinate. It requires responding to these structural inequities by, on the one hand, better protecting vulnerable communities and constituencies from such structural subordination, and on the other, affirmatively expanding their capabilities and functionings, expanding their agency and ability to live lives they value.27 Mitigating risk and investing in the education and capabilities of individuals are of course potential elements of a larger freedom-enhancing, structural inequality-reducing policy framework. But by themselves they can often be approached in an overly narrow way.

Indeed, it is this structural quality of economic freedom and justice that is often so difficult to identify and pursue. For libertarian and conservative thinkers like Hayek, structure is actively rejected as a cause of inequality. Instead, inequalities are cast as the product of poor individual decisions taking place in an otherwise naturally-occurring and neutral background structure.28 For meliorist policy thinkers, structure may be part of the diagnosis, but changing structure is under-emphasized as part of the solution. By contrast, contesting structural inequality is a **central** **theme** in the **many social movements today**. The attempt to **first politicize,** and **second** **transform**, these **political economic structures** is a **key focal point** for **feminist critiques of capitalism,** revived literatures on **racial capitalism,** and the **labor movement’s** historical and more recent attention to how background structures produce **worker precarity and lack of power**. This is also a central concern in the history of legal political economic thought—a history that is worth remembering and recovering, for it can help provide a framework through which contemporary scholarship and policy debates can address modern-day questions of structural inequality.

C. Progressive Political Economy and the Contestation of Structure

This conceptual discussion of structural inequality suggests that neither the neoliberal acceptance of structural inequities nor meliorist solutions are adequate. But what would a more granular approach to diagnosing and remedying structural inequalities look like? The move to structure is one of the central developments of Progressive era political economy, including (and perhaps especially in) legal thought. Recovering this intellectual history and method can help provide greater clarity to conceptualizing and addressing structural inequalities today.

The social and economic upheaval of the industrial revolution generated tremendous anxiety, inequality, and intellectual ferment, leading to what some scholars have rightly described as the “first law and economics movement.”29 A wave of legal scholars and thinkers began to explore these questions of power, economic structure, and inequality. A central thread among these thinkers was a common focus on the problem of economic structure—and in particular, a focus on the ways in which economic structure magnified disparities of power. Thus, the legal realist movement argued that the state, through the operation of background legal rules of property, contract, and tort law, constructed the realities of economic markets, including their disparities of outcomes, opportunities, and bargaining power. This reality suggested that these background rules should be subjected to the same standards of public welfare and public justification that accompanied the exercise of state power.30 Similarly, this legal realist critique helped inform a wider movement of legal scholars and reformers who focused not just on the systemic background rules of industrial capitalism, but also on the ways in which these rules enabled the concentration of private power among newly powerful firms: monopolists like Standard Oil and employers and managers governing industrial labor. Thus, the antitrust movement emerged during this time and labor organizers took on greater importance in addressing the needs of workers in the new power dynamics of the economy.

As I have suggested elsewhere,31 theorists of Progressive Era political economy saw the problem of economic power as a particular threat to ideas of democracy. The challenge of private power and structural inequality required substantively different social and economic policies. But more importantly perhaps was that they required new forms of democratic action that would enable the public at large to contest, constrain, and respond to these forms of power. Thus, it should be no surprise that thinkers of this period were also emphatically interested in new forms of civil society organizing such as through the labor movement. They were also interested in institutional reforms that would enhance democratic governance, from creating new administrative agencies to establishing the direct election of senators and ballot referenda procedures. For Progressive Era thinkers like Louis Brandeis, these institutions of democracy were needed to counteract systemic inequalities. Policies like antitrust law would restrain concentrations of private power and create more fair background rules of economic competition and opportunity. Public policy would be made more responsive and adaptive to the modern economy through the creation of new expert-based regulatory bodies, and through greater policymaking by local-level democratic institutions like states and cities. Labor organizers saw the problem of industrial capitalism as one of concentrated private power, enabled by skewed background rules of market ordering and the workplace itself. The remedy required new forms of movement organizing and action aimed at creating a different system of workplace relations. These efforts to enable democratic agency exemplify what John Dewey theorized as the central problem of democracy in industrial capitalism. For Dewey the modern economy created forms of **inequality** and upheaval so **diffuse** and **systemic** that it would **appear outside the scope of human agency**. Only by creating new forms of democratic communication, action, and institutional structures, could Americans gain the ability to **restructure these background rules** to create a more equitable—and more free—economic order.32

So what happened to this progressive political economic vision? Over the course of the twentieth century, two key changes defused this approach to contesting structural inequalities.33 First, the more **substantive accounts of economic freedom** envisioned by thinkers like Brandeis and Dewey gradually **eroded** into a thinner vision of economic policy that emphasized the optimization of growth and markets with the mitigation of the most extreme forms of inequality. Second, the resurgence of Hayekian critiques of progressive political economy prompted a further change. On the one hand, these critiques defused the sense of threat that Progressive Era thinkers saw from private power and economic systems, by presenting markets as self-correcting, and welfare-optimizing. At the same time, the corporations that so threatened early labor organizers and antitrusters came to be viewed as themselves checked by the expansion of financial markets that created more shareholder ownership and power over firms, and the checks and balances of market competition itself. On the other hand, these thinkers also viewed governmental regulation as increasingly likely to give way to interest group capture, corruption, and inefficiency.

Yet this earlier approach to political economy offers an important set of methodological and policy implications for contemporary debates over structural inequality. First, it suggests the value of using law as a way to map and diagnose new concentrations of power lying beneath a changing economic system. Second, it suggests the importance of law in shaping the capacity (or lack of capacity) to **hold** such **economic power accountable**. The rest of the paper will explore each of these implications in the context of contemporary inequality debates.

III. Inequality as a Product of Power and Structure

A **structural lens** on inequality helps uncover the ways in which **background legal rules** facilitate disparities in economic income, opportunity, and wealth. Furthermore, this approach helps diagnose the ways in which law helps concentrate economic power, which is often obscured behind, and operating through, layers of background legal regimes. Law facilitates these dynamics, and makes regulation difficult because new forms of twenty- first-century private power operate by exploiting legal structures and forms effectively. Thus, much of today’s inequality crisis is not just the product of technological change or natural evolution of modern-day capitalism; rather, it is the product of legal systems that are themselves subject to change and potential reform. Furthermore, diagnosing these structural inequalities highlights the degree to which reform efforts will have to take a structural, rather than meliorist, orientation.

#### No smokescreen link – competition law does not necessarily require the preservation of fair competition – whole 1AC reallocates it to non-domination. Anti-statism and rejecting antitrust cannot cope with large-scale problems like climate and redistribution.

Damian **WHITE** Prf. Rhode Island School of Design **’19** “Ecological Democracy, Just Transitions and a Political Ecology of Design” *Environmental Values* 28 p. 44-46

Debate has ranged in urban design circles for many years now as to how we can reconcile the tension between Jane Jacob’s vision of a bottom-up driven vision of an urban future and the vision of the master builder offered by Robert Moses. Thinking beyond both forms of ‘horizontalism’ that overstate the capacities of grass-roots innovation to change the world and paternalistic ‘verticalist’ imaginaries with their command-and-obedience models of social change would seem long overdue. Transition projects compatible with just, democratic and effective outcomes are going to be multi-scalar and complex in their forms of institutional design. We are going to need effective representative and participatory democratic structures, modes of radical municipalism and strong democratic states, informed and engaged publics and accountable professionals, civic experts and responsible civil servants who serve the public interest to build sustainable and post carbon futures.

What, though, are the limits of contemporary radical design theory? Let me now draw out four concerns here. First, it could be observed that a great deal of radical and transition design recognises the need for multi-level and multi-scalar modes of redirective practices; the levels of everyday life and the local are almost always foregrounded as spaces for intervention for a design politics. In part, this is a product of the fact that these spaces often provide the initial sites where much design is able to make an intervention. There is some variation here between industrial design, service design, landscape design and urban/regional planning, with the scales of engagement progressively chang- ing. If users are persistently attended to in design, and radical designers like Manzini (2015) have thought hard about how micro-publics could be brought into more participatory engagements with the project of redesigns through community planning, public meetings, new interfaces and so on, the broader institutional contexts and representative structures that could guide and direct a design politics functioning at larger scales have not been adequately theorised. The role that local, regional, federal, national and post-national state structures might play in facilitating or supporting design for the just transition is under-theorised.

Second, the overwhelming focus in radical design on civil society as the space of innovation has ensured that most contemporary currents of radical design have had very little to say about the opportunities for democratic redesign of the workplace or the proposition that radical designs might actually emerge out of workplace struggle(see White 2015) as well as broader civic struggles for new forms of collective consumption outside the workplace (Cohen 2017; Goldstein 2018). Traditions of worker-orientated design need to be re- covered here. It was designers working with Scandinavian trade unionists in the 1970s and 1980s and attempts to bring together industry democracy with workers’ self-management at the Lucas Plan in the UK (amongst other places) that played a very significant role in inspiring the rise of the participatory de- sign movement (see Ehn et al. 2014). Equally it could be observed that most contemporary radical design literatures have little to say about redesign of the workplace for more emancipatory ends but even less to say about how public institutions could be made more democratic by design but also act as potential partners with civil society to expand the possibilities of drawing publics into design discussions. The state has a very loose presence in Manzini’s visions of a co-created commons (Manzini 2015). It has even less presence in Tony Fry’s vision of redirective practice (Fry 2009), which maintains, in an apocalyptic vein, that existing state forms are unlikely to survive in a radically warmed future marked by social and ecological breakdown and the mass movement of people. John Barry (2012), Christian Parenti (2012) and most recently, Laurence Delina (2016) have all compellingly argued in contrast to these positions that the democratic state, despite its many failings, must play a critical role in transition. Parenti argues that it is the state that is the only institution large enough and powerful enough with the power to: (a) face down the fossil-fuel industry; (b) redirect the trillions of dollars of finance and in- vestment that will be required to fund climate mitigation and adaptation; (c) enact continental scales of energy, green industrial and green infrastructure retrofitting; (d) redirect national research and development priorities towards ecological innovation; (e) embark on long-range national democratic planning to facilitate optimal strategies for climate adaptation and resilience.

Parenti’s statism has its limits. The state can’t do everything. As Hillary Wainwright (1994) has long argued, unless a transition state is held accountable to a fully mobilised transition-orientated civil society engaged in redirective practice, the transition state may well repeat the problems of the conventional state in being ‘all thumbs and no fingers’ (Lindblom, cited in Dryzek 2000: 24). But it seems evident that post carbon transitions are unlikely to be suc- cessful without reworked relations between a democratic transition state and democratic transition currents in civil society.

Third, radical and critical design literatures are insufficiently alert to the many ways in which neoliberalism can happily feed off, co-opt or co-exist with all manner of bottom-up social design experiments and co-created institutions. Here lies the danger of Manzini’s tendency to take as given neo-liberal stories of the end of the welfare state. We have already seen in the United Kingdom that conservative projects like David Cameron’s Big Society can easily co-opt all manner of mutualist and bottom-up social design enterprises and use them as arguments for unravelling the welfare state and state provision**.** What is generally missing in a good deal of radical design discourse is extended engagement with the ways in which smart policymaking and revised bureaucratic institutions might be able to protect and augment the voices of civil society and its design experiments from below. The co-creation of alter- native institutions has possibilities, but without macro policy and institutional support for such policies (in the form of a robust green welfare state, a uni- versal basic income scheme, maximum and minimum wages, guaranteed paid time off and the provision of childcare and care for the elderly), diverse modes of eco-design led social innovation can merely end up giving voice and agency to the time rich and commitment light (White 2015).

#### New socio-technical systems demand positive imagination – including large-scale geoengineering as part of our assembly avoids the false binaries found in their impact claims.

Holly Jean **BUCK** postdoctoral research fellow at UCLA’s Institute of the Environment and Sustainability **‘19** *After Geoengineering: Climate Tragedy, Repair, and Restoration* p. Unpaginated copy

What would it be like to live in a society that’s brought greenhouse gas emissions not just down to zero, but into negative territory? Who works there? How did they learn the skills they need to know? And what are their rituals, their aesthetics, their emotional lives like? Do they pride themselves for having come down a curve of carbon dioxide emissions and temperatures? Does success in achieving the feat of climate restoration define aspects of their culture? Or is that curve long forgotten?

Exploring an after-zero society means playing with utopian possibilities. These may seem like flights of fancy in today’s world, where men of industry are making presentations about “carbon negative” oil for “negative emissions,” preparing to capture the concept of carbon removal to prolong the life of fossil fuels. Even so, it’s worth taking a moment for utopian exploration. The casual dismissal of utopian thought is linked to an oppressive politics. Marxist feminist scholar Kathi Weeks observes that “political realism tends to be associated with a mode of hard-nosed, hard-ball politics,” while “utopianism can be understood—building on this traditional gender logic—as both softhearted and softheaded, or, more precisely, softheaded because softhearted.”1 Social relations are stabilized by claims about their natural basis—for example, claims about how women “naturally” are—and analyses that propose alternatives are often dismissed as unrealistic, Weeks writes. It was for this reason that the eighteenth-century feminist writer Mary Wollstonecraft was forced to say that even her moderate visions of gender equality could “be termed Utopian dreams.”

When you dig deep into the discourse of what’s possible with regard to climate change, you find similar claims about the “natural” state of things—that it’s human nature to degrade our environment, for example, or that humans will always place their own and their group’s selfinterest first. That humans won’t choose to do things unless they garner economic incentives. And to suggest otherwise will inevitably garner labels of utopianism.

As science fiction author Kim Stanley Robinson writes, it may be easy to imagine a radically different society, “in that one merely expresses wishes and defines some version of justice, equality, peace. That’s all easy. What’s hard is imagining any plausible way of getting from here to there.”2 Robinson writes that perhaps when Marxist theorist Fredric Jameson talks about the future as being “unimaginable,” he doesn’t mean that the future is an unimaginable destination; what’s unimaginable is “a history to a good future place.” Trying to imagine it anyway, though, is valuable, Robinson says: doing so points to the problem, and it generates new stories. So, is this after-zero society techno-utopia? Or is it a small-is- beautiful utopia? Perhaps it can be both. I’m interested in a synthesis between these industrial technologies and something that appears to be on the other side of a binary from them: degrowth.

Environmental scientist Giorgios Kallis defines sustainable degrowth as “an equitable downscaling of production and consumption that increases human well-being and enhances ecological conditions.”3 The organizing principles are simplicity, conviviality, and sharing. Note that these are organizing principles, not values (though they are probably that, too). In a degrowth mindset, innovation is “directed towards new social and technical arrangements that will enable a convivial and frugal living.” Yet the view of many degrowth advocates is that technologically complex systems beget technocratic elites: fossil fuels and nuclear power are dangerous because sophisticated technological systems managed by bureaucrats will gradually become less democratic and egalitarian.4 Large-scale technological systems, the argument goes, result in a society divided into experts and users. This limits the engagement of degrowth thinking with many forms of carbon removal, which is unfortunate. Many tenets of degrowth encompass what I think a best-case scenario of carbon removal would look like: directing innovation toward conviviality, frugality, and also justice. As Kallis sees it, “sustainable degrowth denotes an intentional process of a smooth and ‘prosperous way down,’ through a range of social, environmental, and economic policies and institutions, orchestrated to guarantee that while production and consumption decline, human welfare improves and is more equally distributed.”5 The “way down” dovetails with the narrative of removing emissions. Some of the proposals Kallis sets out in his book In Defense of Degrowth include basic and maximum income, green tax reform, cessation of subsidies for pollution and reallocation of these funds toward clean production, support for a solidarity society, optimization of the use of buildings, and abolition of the use of GDP as an indicator of economic progress. Many of these would enable carbon removal at scale.

Whatever its particular form, what’s clear is that we need a social imagination to match our technological imagination. And these perspectives of degrowth and ecomodernism do not comprise two ends of a continuum. For we will need more of certain kinds of industries, and less of others, and we can use a lot of the same tools that degrowth advocates are calling for toward many of the ends degrowth theorists favor. Reiterating a tired binary between ecomodernism and withdrawal makes it impossible to see what we need to do. Critical thinkers have been so focused on documenting the unfolding crisis that we don’t focus on the ways in which industrialization could advance. But there may, in fact, be a hybrid position, a third, distinct frame. What about a democratically controlled industrial technology that doesn’t exist to “conquer” nature?

There’s clearly no single answer to what an after-zero society looks and feels like, who lives there, and what they will value and do—but there are manifest interesting possibilities. This terrain is made more complex by the variety of technological and non-technological trends we might anticipate over the next century. Some of them we can reasonably foresee: demographic shifts to a population of 9 or 10 billion, advances in machine learning and synthetic biology, transformations in the nature of work and education, and climate change itself. Other trends will be surprises. However, I’m looking at this terrain with an eye to how a culture committed to carbon removal would interact with these trends, and backcasting from there.

#### Technological utopianism can reframe geoengineering -- broadening input and activating anti-capitalist values changes the debate.

Oliver **MORTON** Frmr Chief News and Features Editor for Nature Winner American Astronomical Society's 2004 David N. Schramm Award for High Energy Astrophysics Science Journalism Writer for Discover, The New Yorker ‘**16** *The Planet Remade* p. 29-31

[Yes/Yes world referes to those who believe both that the impacts of climate change will be significant and that transition away from fossil fuels will be difficult]

And it is in the Yes/Yes world that you will find people imagining a planet where the earthsystem is manipulated in such a way that climate and carbon emissions are no longer so tightly bound. There is much to criticize in such thinking. It can be horribly simplistic. It can feed on, and give rise to, ideas about ‘the control of nature’ that are neither plausible nor palatable. It can be used to justify inaction. But I believe it can also open up doors, doors both practical and utopian. I think there may be ways in which climate geoengineering could really reduce harm. I also think that imagining geoengineered worlds that might be good to live in, in which people could be safer and happier than they would otherwise be, is worth doing. A utopia does not need to be attainable – indeed, by definition it cannot be. But that is not a reason to reject utopian thought. It is part of the reason for embracing it.

The possibilities of utopian imagination, though, are undercut, even betrayed, if the group doing the imagining is too small. That is currently the case, I think, for geoengineering. Listen to the discussion of the topic going on today and you will hear natural scientists who are cautiously curious about the ideas but have no real interest in trying to make them practical; you will hear social scientists and philosophers interested in providing critiques of the modes of thinking that shape the discourse; you will hear environmentalists who see in it, or project on to it, everything they dislike about centralized action, about capitalism, about mechanistic world views; you will hear the fantasies of the rich and powerful and the fears of the frightened and doctrinaire. It is too small a set of voices.

The way a society imagines its future matters. And who gets to do the imagining matters. The purpose of this book is to spread the tools with which to imagine a re-engineered earthsystem a little more broadly. In doing so, it looks at the scientific possibilities under discussion. It also looks at the history of that discussion, at the beliefs people have held about the proper relationship between climate and humanity, at the political contexts that have grown up around those beliefs. I fear that may make it sound like the driest sort of imagining. I hope it will prove not to be. If nothing else, I think there is a particular appreciation of the wonder of the earthsystem that can be gained only by imagining how it could be changed.

The ultimate challenge is not just to picture what an earthsystem subject to some level of deliberate design might be like. It is to picture a world in which you would feel happy about such a design being realized. It is about finding happiness and exercising compassion on a planetary scale – a project that will have to be as political as it is scientific or technological. The goal is to help you imagine a world attractive enough that many would welcome it, but robust and provisional enough that its creation does not require everyone to agree on every aspect of it; a world that requires neither uniformity of outlook nor the suppression of dissent, but offers ways for justice and sympathy to spread out through the human world and into the earthsystem beyond.

#### Alternative does not solve – no explanation for how Black techno-conjuring escapes calculation. If their uniqueness claim is correct, there is no mechanism for small-scale thought experiments or individualized resistance to prevent it.

#### The alt’s strategy is the worst possible response to the inevitable takeover of technology. Hiding from an AI isn’t gonna end very well for you, but there’s nothing intrinsically evil about technology. All their offense is about it’s usage, which the solution to is reorienting technology to egalitarian ends.

Paul Buckermann 17 {Sociologist interested in art and technology. Research assistant in NCCR eikones at University of Lucerne. “On Socialist Cybernetics, Accelerationist Dreams, and Tiqqun’s Nightmares.” http://networkcultures.org/longform/2016/12/19/communication-control-communism-on-socialist-cybernetics-accelerationist-dreams-and-tiqquns-nightmares/}//Comrade-JM

Srnicek and Williams deliver some practical hints for navigating towards radical futures, too. In general, they propose a counter-hegemonic strategy including radical think tanks, propaganda, alternative economics, hierarchical organizations, utopian pop-culture and all kinds of technological experimentation. Srnicek and Williams propose that representative parties should work together with mass movements and the state should be turned into a meaningful tool for the people. The authors shortly mention Chile’s Cybersyn and soviet cybernetics, which are analyzed in the next section, praising them as outstanding positive examples and seeing technological and political constraints as reasons for their failure. I want to offer deeper insights into decisive problems with these projects, problems that are related to political and bureaucratic structures in which innovations were implemented. COMMUNISM IS SOVIET POWER PLUS THE COMPUTERIZATION OF THE WHOLE COUNTRY Cybernetics and Computer-Based Socialist Economy in the Soviet Union Questions of economic calculation and cybernetic control were assessed politically in post-WWII Soviet Union. In the early 1950s both cybernetics as well as information theory – having emerged from military research in the US – were called pseudo-scientific, reactionary and idealistic. As seen in Tiqqun’s work, cybernetics was nevertheless also conceived as the enemy’s powerful ideological and technological weapon. Traditional soviet academics battled the idea of disciplinary take-overs, and media comments imagined the rise of robot-soldiers without conscience and robot-workers without class-consciousness. After Stalin’s death in 1953, the discourse successively changed. Nikita Khrushchev recognized cybernetics as a new form of governing technique and as a way to overcome the weak economic situation of the post-Stalin era. In 1957 the Soviet Academy of Sciences demanded an accelerated development and broader usage of computers and statistics for planning. In this era the so-called ‘cyberspeak’ gained an aura of objectivity and cybernetics became a powerful scientific paradigm in the Soviet Union. The soviet economy was also conceptualized by cybernetic ideas and planning was understood as a control system with various feedback loops. Especially the engineer Anatolii Kitov, deputy head of the Computation Center No. 1 of the Ministry of Defense wanted to reduce staff, inefficient data processing and administrative redundancies by building large computer networks between economic production and political decision patterns. Kitov wrote to Khrushchev in 1959, that computerization ‘make[s] it possible to use to the full extent the main economic advantages of the socialist system: planned economy and centralized control. The creation of an automated management system […] would ensure a complete victory of socialism over capitalism.’ Kitov soon lost his academic position and party membership because of formal and power-related reasons after he proposed a dual-use network of the military and civil sector. Military authorities criticized Kitov heavily, because they were not interested in any associations to potential economic weakness. Political authorities were concerned about their loss of direct control and the lack of ideology in automated management. In 1961, the Communist Party adopted their program’s third version at the 22nd party congress, including this passage: ‘automation will be effected on a mass scale, with increasing emphasis on fully automated shops and factories, making for high technical and economic efficiency. […] Cybernetics, electronic computer and control systems will be widely applied in production processes in industry, building, and transport, in scientific research, planning, designing, accounting, statistics, and management.’ Within this new party politics Viktor Glushkov was contacted by officials and started to work on new ideas (see also Glushkov’s personal reminiscences). His plan for a computer network all over the Soviet Union for monitoring labor, production and retailing would integrate a number of existing informational infrastructures and included more than 100 regional network nodes interconnected by wide-band channels as well as over twenty thousand local computer centers. The structure would additionally provide a distributed data bank accessible from everywhere. This idea for data compiling, storing and processing, later specified together with Nikolai Fedorenko, was crucial to the whole concept and would have meant a major shift in soviet bureaucracy. Instead of collecting raw economic data and feeding different administrative channels, Glushkov and Federenko thought of single storage in central data banks, which would then be made accessible for all different kinds of usage. But Glushkov’s plans reached even further: to reorganize the whole bureaucracy and, for example, to abolish material money. The opposition against such proposals quickly increased. The plans were criticized from three positions. First, bureaucrats and factory managers did not feel attracted to more observation and standardized control over their daily work and general efficiency. Second, more liberal economists saw a new rise of centralization and extensive planning from above. Finally, the building of a universal computerized data network was confronted with resistance from top political level in order to preserve the administrative status quo. With an eye on the US-American ARPANET in the late 1960s, Glushkov developed and promoted OGAS (Russian abbreviation for Statewide Automated Management System for Collection and Processing of Information), a cybernetic design for controlling all civil production and retailing of the Soviet Union. OGAS included the former plans of thousands of computer centers, the connection of automation networks and the installation of a powerful supervising agency. Driven by the wish to conserve the balance of power and authority over strictly divided competences, the general cybernetic idea of OGAS was fragmented into separate technological tools. After the 24th Party Congress of 1971, several ministries, agencies, the party and the military increased their individual implementation of networks and information technology for their particular needs. They all focused on the technological aspects and neglected the comprehensive cybernetic management models. The different programs were not compatible to each other, both on hardware and software levels. Beside the secret and non-transparent systems of the military sector, there were single and incompatible networks constructed for aviation, banking, weather prediction, as well as numerous state and party bodies. I want to emphasize one particular insight that is central for the progress of cyber-communist approaches. Technological and scientific insufficiencies were not the prime problem for building a general cybernetic system for the Soviet economy. Instead, political mechanisms of power, information exclusivity and competence skirmishes prevented a technologically bolstered, cybernetic re-coordination of the economy. The political, academic and military divisions showed a tendency for applying only parts of the large-scale innovations for their particular purpose. Computer technology, information networks and especially cybernetic modeling are by definition general ideas applicable to various problems. Military authorities, economics, politicians and scientists did all anticipate benefits for their particular needs in the Cold War. One problem in the Soviet Union was, for example, the lack of standardization and coordination for computer networks. In the US and the Western World, general communication protocols, like TCP/IP, or addressing systems, like DNS, were widely implemented over a battled period spanning into the 1980s. Without such standards for digital communication and because of incompatible hardware and software the bunch of different soviet networks were never to be connected. Each one was sheltered and veiled by intransparency and the fear of losing already gained privileges.

#### Don’t understand Blackness as slippage b/w institutions. Use governance instead.

Ali **MEGHJI** Lecturer @ Cambridge **’20** “What can the sociology of race learn from the histories of anti-colonialism?” *Ethnicities* Online First p. SAGE p. 7-13

Getachew’s (2019: 2) book holds that while decolonization is seen as a moment of ‘nation-building [. . .] and the formation of nation-states’, instead, we ought to see anticolonial nationalism itself as an exercise in ‘worldmaking’. In other words, Getachew recasts anticolonial nationalism itself as a transnational process, seeking an equitable remaking of the world to overcome the injustices of colonialism and neo-colonialism. Getachew’s (2019: 5) book thus signals a gestalt shift in the way that she envisages anticolonial nationalism not as ‘marking the collapse of internationalism and the closure of alternative conceptions of a world after empire’, but instead as a direct, transnational confrontation to ‘the legacies of imperial hierarchy with a demand for the radical reconstitution of the international order’.

Through focusing explicitly on Nnamdi Azikiwe, W.E.B. Du Bois, Michael Manley, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, George Padmore, and Eric Williams, Getachew focuses on three forms of anticolonial worldmaking. Firstly, Getachew explores the anticolonial demand for the right to selfdetermination. Central to Getachew’s (2019: 75) argument is that anticolonial nationalists did not simply ‘take up’ the West’s discourse of self-determination and use it to secure their own independence, but – similarly to how Gopal (2019) looks at anticolonial iterations of liberty, freedom, and justice – through an ‘anticolonial appropriation’ such nationalists radically reconceptualised the meaning of self-determination. Thus, as it was first articulated by the League of Nations, self-determination involved ‘the consent of the governed and consultation with subject people’; however, this definition still allowed for colonialism given that ‘racially backwards people’ were said to not yet be capable of self-governance (Getachew, 2019: 42). Years after the League of Nations, the United Nations (UN) Charter of 1945 again evoked ‘human rights and equality of nations [. . .] as founding principles of a new world order’ despite the continuity of colonial rule (Getachew, 2019: 71). By contrast, anticolonial radicals – through forming organisations and conferences such as the League against Imperialism, and the Pan-African Congresses – directly highlighted the hypocrisy of the Westernized definition of self-determination. For instance, Nkrumah and Padmore organised the fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester, 1945, where the epistemic roots were planted for self-determination to be reconceptualised as a universalist issue of human rights. Through showing how colonialism itself was a violation of human rights, the work of anticolonial nationalists radically shifted the discourse of selfdetermination such that by 1960, when Nkrumah spoke to the UN as the president of Ghana, he was able to use the principle of self-determination to show how colonialism was directly against the UN’s principles, thus leading to the Article 1514 Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Peoples and Countries.

Secondly, Getachew looks at anticolonial nationalist worldmaking through focusing on the formation of regional federations. As Getachew (2019: 113) shows, to such anticolonial nationalists, sovereignty granted through the right to self-determination was ‘meaningless in the context of international hierarchy and economic dependence’. This relates to Nkrumah’s critique of neo-imperialism, described as ‘the disjuncture between formal independence and de facto dependence’ (Getachew, 2019: 108), whereby nation states have ‘nominal freedom’ yet remain economically dependent on the Global North and thus vulnerable to political domination through financial control. In response to this neo-imperialism, radicals like Nkrumah and Eric Williams saw federations – such as the Union of African States or the West Indian Federation – as providing the potential for economic trade and development that did not require foreign intervention and reliance on the Global North. This is why, for instance, upon Ghana becoming a republic in 1960, Nkrumah’s nationalism also involved successfully advocating for a clause in the constitution that conferred on the parliament ‘the power to provide for the surrender of the whole or any part of the sovereignty of Ghana’ once a Union of African States was formed (Getachew, 2019: 107): national independence was thus connected to an embracing of anticolonial internationalism.

Connected to such building of federations, which ultimately failed, Getachew explores the final form of anticolonial nationalist worldmaking: the demand for a New International Economic Order (NIEO). Getachew thus shows how ‘second wave’ anticolonial nationalists, such as Michael Manley and Julius Nyerere, developed Nkrumah’s critique of neo-imperialism to show how formerly colonized nations were still vulnerable and exploited in an unequal global political economy – if not by other nations, then by private corporations. This meant that not only were the newly independent nations unequally integrated into the world economic system, but that their efforts of state building were also much more susceptible to the fluctuations of the international markets and private, corporate interests. Thus emerged the demands for a New International Economic Order (NIEO). The Declaration for the Establishment of an NIEO, put to the UN in 1974, challenged the way that the UN’s General Assembly – where each member has one vote – has the power to issue legally binding international economic policy. Anticolonial nationalists, such as Nyerere, pointed out that such formal, legislative equality that was granted to formerly colonized nations was not translated into a substantive equality – as Getachew (2019: 93) summaries: ‘to say that Jamaica or Tanzania and the United States were equal members of the international order obfuscated the outsized economic dominance that the United States exercised and could deploy to compel dependent states’. Thus, Nyerere argued that an NIEO was needed such that newly independent states could have the freedom to pursue their own economic programmes, including the ability to nationalize industries under private control. To such nationalists, this NIEO was in fact a necessary prerequisite to achieve the UN’s founding principle for international order: that of sovereign equality. In other words, anticolonial radicals used the principle of national sovereignty, and economic control over one’s own nation, again as a process through which we could achieve an anti-imperial world order.

At the heart of Getachew’s (2019: 2) book, therefore, is the principle that ‘decolonization was a project of reordering the world that sought to create a domination free and egalitarian international order’. Anticolonial nationalism, read through this lens, despite evoking principles of self-determination and national sovereignty, was always concerned with the grander transnational project of remaking the world in an equitable fashion.

Stretching the sociology of race across time and space

While my review of these three books’ arguments is fairly brief, I hope it is already apparent that despite making discrete arguments and contributions, they each share some fundamental similarities. Throughout the books, we see recurrent figures mentioned – from Du Bois, Padmore and Nkrumah, through to Gandhi, Churchill, and Woodrow Wilson – as well as analysis of key institutions and conferences – from the Gadar Party, based on the West Coast of the United States campaigning for Indian anti-colonialism, through to the League against Imperialism and the Pan-African Congresses. I want to now develop this review by focusing on three particular ways that these three books’ transnational and historical scopes push forward the sociology of race.

Racism at home, imperialism abroad

Firstly, each of these three books makes the point that there is an inherent connection between racism ‘at home’ in the West, with Western practices of colonialism, imperialism, and neo-colonialism ‘abroad’. Desai’s (2020) discussion, for instance, interrogates how Du Bois saw racialised capitalism as the binding factor between the United States’ exploitation of Black Americans with the British empire’s colonial apparatus, and how ‘whiteness’ offered a symbolic space of purity – a material and psychological wage – that impeded the white workers across the West to endorse an anti-imperialism. In his critique of racial capitalism, therefore, Du Bois argues that ‘the English working classes are exploiting India [. . .] and the working classes of America are subjugating Santo Domingo and Haiti [. . .] He is a co-worker in the miserable modern subjugation of over half the world’ (quoted in Desai 2020: 144). Similarly, Gopal (2019: 284) questions: ‘How could the problem of race in the context of global imperialism be addressed in its specificity and as it intersected with the question of class and the exploitation of labour?’ In exploring this question through the lens of dissent against the British empire, Gopal (2019: 441) presents the work of anticolonial Marxists – such as C. L.R James, Padmore, and Eric Williams – each of whom stressed that ‘if empire was to be left behind, then the buccaneering capitalism that it had propagated would also need to be replaced with a more radically egalitarian system’. In advocating for a new ‘radically egalitarian’ alternative to global capitalism, these radicals sought to not just free those newly independent nations from the Global North’s economic control, but also those ‘postcolonial citizens’ exploited in the metropoles itself. Lastly, Getachew (2019: 20–21) discusses the notion of a ‘global Jim Crow’, highlighting how rather than being an idiosyncrasy of the US South, ‘the color line was an international phenomenon of which segregation and racial domination in the United States were only a domestic iteration’.

Indeed, it may seem almost too obvious of a point to make that racism is connected to the processes of colonialism and neo-colonialism. After all, ‘the concept of race was thus the glue that stuck the colonial world order together, as it became common-sense knowledge that there was a global racial hierarchy which permitted the colonization of the “lesser” races by the dominant white Europeans’ (Meghji, 2020a: 4). Nevertheless, if we look at dominant approaches in the sociology of race, then such transnational connections tend to be elided. Instead, much sociology of race tends to be characterised by a methodological nationalism in which it becomes sociologically viable – and advisable – to study racism within the confines of particular, discrete nation states (Meghji, Forthcoming). However, such methodological nationalism is not analytically useful for our current predicaments. It is the same social system that exploits the labour of children in China to make electronic goods, that exploits the (disproportionately Black and Brown) zero-hour contracted truck driver who delivers this product to its eventual owner in the West; it is the same imperialised-racialised principle that Islam is opposed to modernity that justifies the state surveillance of Muslims under the Patriot Act in the United States and the Prevent counter-terrorism programme in Britain, that justifies Western military intervention in the Middle East under the guise of civilizing the backwards world. While neither Getachew, Desai, or Gopal’s books are explicitly about the links between racism and imperialism, they each highlight that there is a radical tradition of thought which has always analysed these two processes in tandem with one another. The fact that this tradition already exists pushes me to my next point, as I argue that the sociology of race needs to adopt a more historical approach.

Looking backwards to move forwards

While each of the three reviewed books use historical methods, each of them also reflects on our present conjunctures. Getachew (2019: 181) points out that the ‘worldmakers of decolonization’ offer an intellectual tradition through which to think about contemporary transnational movements such as ‘the Movement for Black Lives, the Caribbean demand for reparations for slavery and genocide, and South African calls for a social and economic decolonization’. Similarly, Gopal (2019: 448) argues the dispelling the myth of British colonial benevolence, and centering anticolonial agency, allows us to both move beyond the idea that Britain is a global superpower that has the legitimacy to intervene across the globe, as well as allowing ‘Britons to lay claim to a different, more challenging history [. . .] which can draw on multiple historical and cultural resources’. Lastly, Desai (2020) argues that his book highlights historical themes that still shape the present day, such as the United States’ claim of being the champion of liberalism and democracy while it still routinely kills many of its citizens (and those around the world).

In short, therefore, each of the three authors stress the necessity of having a historical sensibility to comprehend current situations and social processes. At the very same time as they are developing such temporal linkages, however, we are seeing increased attempts within the sociology of race to bifurcate the study of racism away from its historical roots in colonialism (and consequently, its contemporary basis in neo-colonialism). If we take critical race theory, for instance, Bonilla-Silva (2015: 74) even goes as far as to say that this paradigm ought to move beyond ‘the sins [of the] past (e.g., slavery, colonization, and genocide)’ in studying the ‘contemporary foundation’ of racism. Of course, Bonilla-Silva has apt reasons for his methodological scope – by reducing racism to being a consequence of past events, we lose sight of how racism continues because it still benefits people in the present day, who consequently maintain an interest in reproducing it. Nevertheless, we have to question whether being captured in a methodological ‘presentism’, which explicitly attempts to bifurcate the study of the present from its past, is analytically viable when it comes to the processes of racialisation and racism.

Very often, for instance, what we immediately think of as a social process specific to our present racialised social structure in fact has a much longer history informed by the logics of coloniality. For instance, consider the case of the militarisation of the police in the United States – a key issue in contemporary racism. As Go (2020) shows, such militarisation of the United States’ police started in the early 20th century primarily as a means of punitively surveying and controlling the racially subdominant. However, the tactics used by this police – such as the creation of mobile squads and intelligence divisions – derived from the United States’ military practices in their colonies (Go, 2020). In this regard, Go creates a temporal link between a contemporary issue of police militarisation with its historical origins, and also a transnational link between ‘racism at home’ with the US’ ‘imperialism abroad’ in a way that transcends bifurcated understandings of racialized processes.

Without necessarily having it as their primary focus, therefore, Getachew, Gopal, and Desai each show the possibilities for social analysis that can be opened up if we retain a historical focus when looking at contemporary society. Through appreciating the historical linkages with contemporary racism, we become better placed to connect with the various intellectual paradigms which dedicated themselves to dismantling this system in the fight for social justice. It is this theme of social justice that we now turn to.

Towards anti-racist, anti-colonial solidarities

A recurrent theme runs through each of the reviewed books: the importance of forging transnational solidarities. Gopal (2019) shows how anticolonial radicals in Britain centred solidarity – in the sense of multicultural, transnational, crossorganisational coalitions – in their struggles against the British empire, meaning that thinkers in the metropoles, such as Frederic Harrison and Arthur Ballard, came to argue that the British ruling class’ fascism in the colonies, in the name of capital accumulation, could be connected with their exploitation of white British workers. Similarly, Desai’s (2020: 45) concept of ‘transnational refraction’ was built around the premise that anti-imperialists thought about colonialism and racism through the sense of shared struggle and solidarity, citing, for instance Saint Nihal Singh’s argument that there was a fundamental ‘link between the Asian migrant laborer [in the United States], the African American subject, and the colonized Indian, each connected the other by the sheer fact of being on the wrong side of the color line’. Desai (2020: 199) even concludes his book with the assertion that such transnational refraction is a prerequisite for solidarity, when he comments that: ‘solidarity emerges only out of a wilful act of seeing through the eyes of another, whose life we can only understand in glimpses’. Lastly, Getachew (2019: 145) too notes that anticolonial nationalists ‘fashioned Third World solidarity as a form of international class politics, and demanded redistribution on the basis that postcolonial states had in fact produced the wealth the West enjoyed’.

Each of these authors focuses on transnational, multicultural, multiorganisational forms of solidarity not because it is historically interesting, but because history has shown us that these forms of solidarity are successful and necessary in the struggles for social justice. I make this point not because the sociology of race is wilfully ignoring the importance of such solidarity, but because the issues of racism facing us in the contemporary and future world need to replicate these forms of solidarity fostered by the anticolonial radicals recounted in these three books. When we think of the climate crisis, for instance, a solidarity needs to be forged between the poor workers across the West (many of whom areracialised as Black and Brown) who are disproportionately exposed to air pollution, with the environmental destruction faced by indigenous people across Latin America, Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand in the name of capital accumulation, who also in turn need to form a solidarity with those in South Asia facing starvation due to droughts, who in turn need to form solidarities with those in the Caribbean, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe, where cyclones and hurricanes have been creating humanitarian crises. When we think of Islamophobia, we need to form a solidarity between those campaigning against the punitive surveillance of, and state violence towards, Muslims in the West, with those campaigning against the Uyghur detention camps in China, and the Hindutva violence towards Muslims in Kashmir. When it comes to race and racism, we are always talking about transnational, historically, epistemically, and spatially connected social processes, and – as Getachew rightfully highlights – ‘worldmaking’ processes of inequality require equally global solidarities and projects of resistance.