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## On Frustration: Toward A Theory Of A Democratic Politics Of Perseverance

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# On Frustration: Toward A Theory Of A Democratic Politics Of Perseverance

## Abstract

This study examines democratic frustration as a defining experience of ordinary citizens, exploring how ordinary citizens should properly understand their democratic aspirations as being the source of both inspiration and frustration, and how a more robust citizenship can take shape in three distinct dimensions of democracy—communicative, symbolic, and temporal. Examining democratic communication as a site of frustration that invites a moral-psychological analysis of how to foster a better attitudinal strategy, Chapter two proposes a theory of magnanimity with which we can harness the motivational power of superiority while making the very power more compatible with and conducive to a sound and vibrant democratic politics. Focusing on the symbolic dimension of democracy, which involves the politics of the people, Chapter three offers a theory of the sublime people as an interpretive tool that highlights both the need of individual citizens to invite and invoke the people and the importance of holding up against the tendency of endangering themselves to lapse into uncritical passivity and the idolatry of the claimed people. Chapter four warns against the popular trend of placing overemphasis on relatively short-lived extraordinary moments in our democratic experience, and proffers an alternative view of time as a journey, showing how each individual can grow more attached to reality while becoming more attentive, inventive, and persevering.

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TOWARD A THEORY OF A DEMOCRATIC POLITICS OF PERSEVERANCE

Juman Kim

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Supervisor of Dissertation

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ON FRUSTRATION: TOWARD A THEORY OF A DEMOCRATIC POLITICS OF  
PERSEVERANCE

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*For my parents*

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Last but not least, I would like to express my thanks and love to my family. Hahn, who is older than this project, has frequently checked in with me if I finished “the million-sentence-project.” He even proposed a reasonable deadline for completion and pardoned my overdue submission. Dawn, who is younger than this project, has often taught me how to stack my books properly and why I should prefer geometric beauty to



convenience. I once read a great historian of our time mentioning that without his two kids, his first book would have been completed with more speed but less joy. I concur with his remark greatly. It is true that they often drive me to distraction, but more true is that I love them to distraction.

Certainly, “ineffable” is still too small a word with which to describe my love, friendship, and respect for Hyemee. She has taken an active part in every stage of this project, and will continue to help, I hope, its further maturation. I know that her perceptive judgment is often diluted by kindness, but she never loses the delicate nuance of her criticism tempered with much love. What I am most grateful to her, however, is the fact that she is the one who constantly reminds me that there is something greater and more precious than my work, something that we collectively appreciate and cherish.

## ABSTRACT

### ON FRUSTRATION: TOWARD A THEORY OF A DEMOCRATIC POLITICS OF PERSEVERANCE

Juman Kim

Anne Norton

This study examines democratic frustration as a defining experience of ordinary citizens, exploring how ordinary citizens should properly understand their democratic aspirations as being the source of both inspiration and frustration, and how a more robust citizenship can take shape in three distinct dimensions of democracy—communicative, symbolic, and temporal. Examining democratic communication as a site of frustration that invites a moral-psychological analysis of how to foster a better attitudinal strategy, Chapter two proposes a theory of magnanimity with which we can harness the motivational power of superiority while making the very power more compatible with and conducive to a sound and vibrant democratic politics. Focusing on the symbolic dimension of democracy, which involves the politics of the people, Chapter three offers a theory of the sublime people as an interpretive tool that highlights both the need of individual citizens to invite and invoke the people and the importance of holding up against the tendency of endangering themselves to lapse into uncritical passivity and the idolatry of the claimed people. Chapter four warns against the popular trend of placing overemphasis on relatively short-lived extraordinary moments in our democratic experience, and proffers an alternative view of time as a journey, showing how each individual can grow more attached to reality while becoming more attentive, inventive, and persevering.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Introduction**

*The devoted democrat has but one plan: to provide all people with access to what they are entitled to, in the name of equality in both freedoms and rights.*

Stéphane Hessel

*Keep your hands on the plow! Hold on!*

Langston Hughes

*Oh Troglodytes! Your virtue has begun to be a burden to you.*

Baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu

Very few would venture to resist democracy today. Whether it is “the best possible state” or “the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time,”<sup>1</sup> democracy seems to have become “a universal commitment” or the sole name to which “the only possible procedure of legitimization for a political regime lies in its reference.”<sup>2</sup> From the Arab Spring to the *15M* (*quince de mayo*) and the more recent Catalonia crisis in Spain, from Occupy Wall Street and Black Lives Matter movements in the United States to a series of popular uprisings in South Korea, Hong Kong, Turkey, Ukraine, France, and Brazil, we have heard deafening voices over the past few years, demanding democracy or a more real democracy. Its appeal is enduring and worldwide. Democracy seems to have achieved “the status of being taken to be generally right.”<sup>3</sup> What we are now witnessing is perhaps the “apotheosis of democracy.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 49; Winston Churchill’s speech delivered in the House of Commons on November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1947 in Robert Rhodes James ed., *Winston Churchill: His Complete Speeches, 1897-1963, Vol. VII* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1974), 7,566.

<sup>2</sup> Amartya Sen, “Democracy as a Universal Value,” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 10 No. 3 (1999), 5; Étienne Balibar, “Historical Dilemmas of Democracy and Their Contemporary Relevance for Citizenship,” *Rethinking Marxism*, Vol. 20 No. 4 (2008), 525.

<sup>3</sup> Sen, “Democracy as a Universal Value,” 4.

<sup>4</sup> David K. Kim and John L. Jackson, Jr., “Democracy’s Anxious Returns,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 637 (2011), 7. Notice that Slavoj Žižek once observed that the protesters in Egypt wanted “what in other countries the Occupy movement was protesting against: ‘freedom’ and ‘democracy’.” Likewise, some leftist thinkers, including Jodi Dean, tend to regard ‘democracy’ as being unworthy of re-appropriation because its association with political and economic (neo)liberalism. See Slavoj Žižek, “Trouble in Paradise,” *London Review of Books*, Vol. 35 No. 14 (2013) and Jodi Dean, *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009). However, more people, regardless of their distinct political

Yet democracy seems to run into trouble these days. A number of emergent democracies may not have collapsed, but some have slid more toward nominal democracies with an autocratic tinge.<sup>5</sup> Popular exhilaration for democracy has often evaporated into a more cynical disillusion accordingly. Meanwhile, people in the most advanced and well-established democracies have called into question the alleged superiority and credibility of their system. In the United States, for instance, it is often noted that Congress—the presumed most democratic branch of government—has long been dysfunctional, in which opposing major parties, perhaps too often, bring the legislative process to a complete standstill.<sup>6</sup> A sizable number of unhappy citizens choose

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backgrounds, have been striving to rethink and rework rather than dismiss the idea of democracy for their political cause. Among the leftists, for example, see Ellen M. Wood, *Democracy against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) and David Graeber, *The Democracy Project* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2013). John Dunn observes that “[t]o reject democracy today may just be ... to write yourself out of politics.” John Dunn, *Setting the People Free: The Story of Democracy* (London: Atlantic Books, 2005), 41. Even Xi Jinping, President of China, uses the term democracy frequently to defend the Chinese model of governance or “Socialism with Chinese Characteristics.”

<sup>5</sup> Orbán’s Hungary, Putin’s Russia, Erdogan’s Turkey are living examples. For theoretical accounts of the topic of democratic consolidation, erosion, and recession, see Richard D. Anderson, Jr. et al., *Postcommunism and the Theory of Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), Dan Slater, “Democratic Careening,” *World Politics*, Vol. 65 No. 4 (2013), Ellen Lust and David Waldner, *Unwelcome Change: Understanding, Evaluating, and Extending Theories of Democratic Backsliding* (Washington, D.C.: USAID, 2015), and Larry Diamond, “Facing Up to the Democratic Recession,” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 26 No. 1 (2015), and other essays contributed to the same issue of the *Journal of Democracy*.

<sup>6</sup> According to the Gallup poll in October 2017, only thirteen percent of the respondents approve of the way Congress is handling its job [Electronic source: <http://news.gallup.com/poll/1600/congress-public.aspx>]. Although public trust in Executive and Judicial branches is generally higher than that in Legislative branch, it is also true that modern-day Presidents are seen less as a uniting figure capable of standing above factionalism. Instead, they often unapologetically take a strategy of *going partisan* rather than simply *going public*. Cf. Samuel Kernell, *Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2007) and B. Dan Wood, *The Myth of Presidential Representation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). The ever-accelerating tendency of heavy reliance upon courts and

to participate in popular uprisings and protests in the name of democracy. But they have often placed much emphasis on the feeling of “being together” and “fighting together” per se so that all the ferocious fights sometimes look a distracting irrelevance, failing to convert the public clamor for changes into well-established political programs that can generate actual policy changes. One theorist has even lamented that many protesters these days “do not have a collective project.”<sup>7</sup>

Upon this odd coexistence of the lasting enthusiasm with democracy *and* the increasing disillusionment that runs parallel to such enthusiasm, a growing number of scholars and pundits have made a series of prognoses about the future of democracy, posing questions that evoke some sense of urgency: Can democracy keep thriving? Can we still believe in democracy’s progressive design? Is democracy going to decline, or has it already begun to fade? If so, is there any way to save democracy, or put it back on the right track? Or, do we need to conjure up any alternatives to democracy?

Many seem to be eager to know more *about* democracy: its place in history, its recent metamorphoses corresponding to the changed and changing conditions, and the chance of its demise and resilience. In this respect, those diagnosticians follow the path paved and trodden by democratic theorists of earlier generations such as Alexis de

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judicial means for dealing with core political questions has disturbed many people not just because it is regrettable that they have expended excessive energies and too much attention on the most elitist and least democratic branch of government, but also because in so doing, they have effectively made the judiciary a central forum for sheer struggles for supremacy between the major parties.

<sup>7</sup> Ivan Krastev, *Democracy Disrupted: The Politics of Global Protest* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 20.



Tocqueville<sup>8</sup> and Francis Fukuyama,<sup>9</sup> aiming to forecast—albeit perhaps less prophetically—the direction in which democracy seems to proceed.<sup>10</sup>

This particular intellectual and political atmosphere of the present, however, gives us a long pause. It is a pause for reflection upon what we know *of* democracy as well as what we know *about* it. Put differently, as radical outbursts of public anger in the name of democracy have become remarkably visible while at once public cynicism about democracy seems to run deeper, it is perhaps the right time to pose a different yet equally important question not from the position of diagnosticians afar but from that of a citizen: *how do we feel about democracy—what do we do with our democracy and what does democracy do with us?*

With this question concerning our felt knowledge experienced in the everyday democracy, this study aims to shift our attention from evaluating and designing

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<sup>8</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). In fact, *Democracy in America* marked one of the earliest positive uses of the word 'democracy' in modern political and social theorizing. As one prominent historian points out, "it was largely thanks to his work that 'democracy,' the word, had come to stay in current American political parlance." Paul Cartledge, *Democracy: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 297.

<sup>9</sup> Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History," *National Interest*, No. 16 (Summer 1989), which later developed into *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: The Free Press, 1992).

<sup>10</sup> Latest notable examples include David Runciman, *The Confidence Trap: A History of Democracy in Crisis from World War I to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), *How Democracy Ends* (New York: Basic Books, 2018), Tzvetan Todorov, *The Inner Enemies of Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity, 2014), Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt's *How Democracies Die* (New York: Crown, 2018), Yaschar Mounk, *The People vs. Democracy: Why Our Freedom Is in Danger and How to Save It* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), and Cass Sunstein ed., *Can It Happen Here? Authoritarianism in America* (New York: HarperCollins, 2018).

democracies<sup>11</sup> to *understanding* the collective mind of ordinary democratic citizens.<sup>12</sup> It is a study of democracy, placing particular focus on a noun of agency, a democrat, rather than on a system of rule per se. My aim is to pursue and propose a democratic theory that can bring to the fore the lived experience of ordinary citizens for whom democracy is both an idea and a reality.<sup>13</sup>

My study is unapologetically eclectic whose approach can be characterized, broadly, as phenomenological, pragmatic, and thematic. I take a *phenomenological* approach to democracy insofar as I seek to highlight the embodied experience of ordinary citizens.<sup>14</sup> I also deem my approach to be *pragmatic* as well in part because I start my arguments from the fact of a perceived democratic culture, which has rendered the age-

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<sup>11</sup> My primary concerns are not with institutional arrangements compatible with and suitable for democratic ideals. For such an endeavor, see Heather Gerken, *The Democracy Index: Why Our Election System Is Failing And How To Fix It* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009). Democracy indices widely used by empirical social scientists include the Democracy Index compiled by the Economist Intelligence Unit. See their website at <https://www.eiu.com/topic/democracy-index>.

<sup>12</sup> As for the notion of *understanding*, I take a Weberian means to achieve an Arendtian end. For Weber, *understanding* involves the interpretive grasp of "the complex of meaning" [*Sinnzusammenhang*]. Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (Berkeley: University of California, 1978), 9. For Arendt, *understanding* eventually requires "[coming] to terms with or reconcile ourselves to reality, that is, [trying] to be at home in the world." Hannah Arendt, "Understanding and Politics," Jerome Kohn ed., *Essays in Understanding 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken, 2005), 308.

<sup>13</sup> In other words, this study concerns those to whom democracy is something utterly familiar and diffuse.

<sup>14</sup> Note that phenomenology began to direct significant attention in American political theory only in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. *Existential Phenomenology and Political Theory: A Reader* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1972), the first anthology of phenomenological writings pertinent to the study of politics in the English language, came out in 1972 edited by Hwa Yol Jung. In the following year, Maurice Natanson edited and published two-volume-collection, *Phenomenology and the Social Sciences* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), whose second volume includes three entries on phenomenology and political science written by Hwa Yol Jung, Carl Friedrich, and John Gunnell.

old debates about the best type of government virtually outmoded,<sup>15</sup> rather than from any philosophical presuppositions about democracy.<sup>16</sup> Most of all, this is a *thematic* study in that it centers on and revolves around a particular theme—*frustration*—all through the course of the research even while discussing distinct dimensions of democratic politics.

### FRUSTRATION ENDOGENOUS TO DEMOCRACY

Why frustration? For frustration is the most characteristic experience common to ordinary democratic citizens. The word frustration comes from *frustrari* (to disappoint) and *frustra* (in vain). It indicates feelings of being balked and foiled, feelings that arise when original expectations of satisfaction are made null and void. It may sound odd or counter-intuitive. One would want to argue for the exact opposite: democracy guarantees that the greater number of people should not be frustrated. This is the gist of the majority rule, the argument goes, and that is why democracy is superior to other types of government.<sup>17</sup>

This view is not entirely without merit, especially at least at the collective and

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<sup>15</sup> To paraphrase Kant's answer to the famous question posed by Reverend Johann Friedrich Zöllner, it is fair to say that we are living in *an age of democracy*, though not in a *democratized* world.

<sup>16</sup> See Richard Rorty, "Human Rights, Rationality, and Sentimentality," in *Richard Rorty Philosophical Papers Vol. 3: Truth and Progress* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

<sup>17</sup> For instance, Jeremy Bentham, especially from the 1820s onward, supported representative democracy because it was the only form of the government which would afford the best security for the interest of the larger public. See Philip Schofield, *Utility and Democracy: The Political Thought of Jeremy Bentham* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

abstract level. It would make perfect sense that if all cannot be satisfied, the society should make the majority feel satisfied at the expense of the minority's frustration. Even if that is what democracy does, however, what ordinary citizens *experience* might be different. Two points deserve a brief remark.

First, what seems to be overlooked in the systematic explanation of the majority rule is the fact that the method of majority decision, as G. E. M. Anscombe once aptly pointed out, is not identical to "the principle of the decision's being what the majority wants."<sup>18</sup> On the *experiential* level, for example, it is not uncommon that "the majority vote in the minority in a majority of cases."<sup>19</sup>

Second, there seems to exist a paradox of fairness and equality: democratic citizens are more susceptible to frustration, not less, precisely because their desires, in principle, count equally in democracy. This paradox resonates with Jean-Pierre Dupuy's perceptive critique of John Rawls's portrayal of a well-ordered society. Rawls understands his ideal society as devoid of rancorous sentiments such as resentment and envy. For his proposed principles of justice ensure that everyone is treated equally and fairly. There would be no "destructive feelings," presumes Rawls, because fairness and equality eliminate any occasions for those feelings. Dupuy accuses Rawls of his somewhat one-dimensional moral psychology. What Rawls has overlooked is the fact that those negative feelings arise not just from the failure of his justice system, but also from its very operation. In other words, fairness and equality, to some extent, are

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<sup>18</sup> G. E. M. Anscombe, "On Frustration of the Majority by Fulfillment of the Majority's Will," *Analysis*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (1976), 166.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

*constitutive* of those very feelings. For people now feel more entitled and can hardly attribute their own failure or loss to anything external to themselves.<sup>20</sup> Likewise, if the desire of each citizen appears to have equal weight, the rejection of one's desire would arouse more intense frustration, not less.

Now, it must sound more plausible to say that frustration is the most characteristic experience that pervades the everyday life of ordinary citizens. Yet my main focus is not on any frustrations taking place in democracy, but on democratic frustration. By that I mean to place special emphasis on the fact that there is frustration *endogenous* to democracy, frustration whose source is nothing but democracy itself. My primary concerns are precisely with this kind of frustration.

Democracy displays an ambitious vision that ordinary citizens are the author and builder of their common world. The principle of popular self-rule presupposes the presence of individual citizens capable of judgment, decision, and action. Democracy connotes not only popular participation but also an obligatory passion for autonomy, both

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<sup>20</sup> Jean-Pierre Dupuy, *Avions-nous oublié le mal? Penser la politique a près le 11 septembre* (Paris: Bayard, 2002), Cited from Slavoj Žižek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (New York: Picador, 2008), 87-89. For Rawls's argument pertaining to this discussion, see John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 142-145 and 532-541. For Rawls, the presence of resentment and envy, for instance, indicates that there are some problems in the basic structure of justice principles. Otherwise, believes Rawls, reasonable people would not resent the fact that they lose or fail, nor feel envious of others' success. Jeffrey Green has recently expanded on Rawls's theory and developed his own theory of "reasonable envy toward the superrich." Unlike Dupuy and Žižek (and myself), Green's primary concern in his attending to the question of envy is not with pointing out the blind spot of Rawlsian moral psychology, but with extending the logic of Rawls so as to conceptualize the role of envy in the implementation of Rawlsian justice. See his "Rawls and the Forgotten Figure of the Most Advantaged: In Defense of Reasonable Envy toward the Superrich," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 107, No.1 (2013).

individual and collective. Put differently, in a democratic society—which Pierre Rosanvallon, following Tocqueville, once described as a society of similar individuals [*une société de semblables*]<sup>21</sup>—individuals are thought to be free and equal agents who form ideas and beliefs, adopt goals and purposes, and act to pursue those purposes, not alone, but “in concert”<sup>22</sup> with other fellow citizens.

Certainly, the promise of democracy has never been fully materialized. The ideals of freedom, equality, and autonomy, much glorified notwithstanding, have to date remained incomplete. Sometimes, such a glorification sounds mere ritualistic, rhetorical, and even hypocritical especially against the backdrop of harsh realities that do not live up to those ideals.

Yet democracy cherishes a peculiar culture of transmuting its incompleteness into potential for development and its hypocrisy into occasion for self-correction.<sup>23</sup> This is how democratic citizens—to invoke and paraphrase Clifford Geertz—are suspended in webs of the *meaning* of democracy that they themselves have spun.<sup>24</sup> In democracy,

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<sup>21</sup> Pierre Rosanvallon, *The Society of Equals* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 12. See also Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), Vol. II, Part. IV, Ch. 2.

<sup>22</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Crises of the Republic* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1972), 143.

<sup>23</sup> This characteristic of democracy can be well discerned in the strategies that a number of democratic activists and reformers have often employed. One classic example is Frederick Douglass’s speech, “What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?” Philip S. Foner ed., *Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches and Writings* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill, 1999).

<sup>24</sup> Geertz once put it that “[t]he concept of culture I espouse ... is essentially a semiotic one. Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.” Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 5. Similarly, democracy can be thought to be

people *perceive* themselves as free and equal agents and take their seemingly unattainable ideal of self-rule to be achievable and, therefore, worthy of sustained pursuit and commitment. Democracy, at the fundamental level, operates as “an ethical ideal”<sup>25</sup> or “a noble dream.”<sup>26</sup>

That democracy allows for the gravitational pull of aspiration, or that it cannot shed its idealistic potential, is part of the enduring appeal of democracy I sketched above. Yet those persisting ambitions, hopes, and promises have also paved the foundation of disappointment and despair. Democratic citizens are “preoccupied with the prospect of failure.”<sup>27</sup> This leads us to an acknowledgement that democratic citizens may well be placed in a particular systematic predicament. This commonplace predicament so incident to and typical of democratic life is what I term *democratic frustration*. It refers to a kind of frustration whose source is nothing other than democratic aspiration itself.

Democratic frustration is rather banal than unusual. However, it is not my intention to explore the multitudinous array of episodic emotional outbursts in the course of democratic activities and engagements only to confirm the fact that frustration is an

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language-games à la Wittgenstein, a bundle of ideas and practices characterized by their public, conventional, yet open texture. See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), §§ 23, 65, 66.

<sup>25</sup> James T. Kloppenberg, *Toward Democracy: The Struggle for Self-Rule in European and American Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 4.

<sup>26</sup> Susan Mandus, “Democracy: A Nightmare or a Noble Dream?” The Tampere Lecture 2008 [Online Source: [http://www.tampereclub.org/e-publications/vol3\\_mendus.pdf](http://www.tampereclub.org/e-publications/vol3_mendus.pdf)].

<sup>27</sup> David Runciman, *The Confidence Trap*, xii.

empirical reality of democratic citizenship.<sup>28</sup> My claim goes rather deeper. I propose to view frustration as the general *tone* of democratic life. It is a feeling but at once a background of feelings. In other words, I see frustration as a *mood*; not just a mood, but *the* defining mood of democracy.

It may sound too pessimistic at first glance that frustration is the condition of democracy. To some extent, it seems to be expressive of a general political fatigue originating from contemporary democratic politics, which sometimes looks so stale and sterile. Yet it should be noted that I do not mean to draw an entirely pessimistic conclusion that whatever democratic citizens do will ineluctably press them further and further into hopelessness. That frustration persists does not in itself constitute pessimism. To the contrary, I aim to show that the task before democratic citizens is how to manage their motivation and psychological costs by properly attending to and coming to terms with the mood of frustration. Otherwise, citizens can easily fall into a passive and cynic acceptance or a utopian escapism, the two most popular extreme strategies for relaxing the tension of frustration.

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<sup>28</sup> The list of political and civic activities cannot be exhaustive. Some activities are as highly intensive and demanding as running for office or organizing and mobilizing campaign events, protest movements, and other rallies and marches. Other more casual and less burdensome activities include casting votes to choose representatives, pressing, persuading, or imploring those representatives and other officials by having recourse to non-electoral means such as visiting or calling their offices, giving or cancelling donations to them, attending political events and meetings, signing petitions, displaying yard signs, and just talking with friends, neighbors, or strangers about politics and policy issues. Citizens may do all of these activities at local, state, national, or international levels. And, perhaps more importantly, a considerable number of citizens choose not to do any of these activities, at least most of the time. Their abdication from politics can be self-imposed or socially imposed. See Ben Berger, *Attention Deficit Democracy: The Paradox of Civic Engagement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).



In chapters two, three, and four, this study will examine democratic frustration along three different dimensions of democracy—*communicative*, *symbolic*, and *temporal*. Divided into three main chapters, it is organized as a combination of independent modules, each of which articulates a distinct aspect of democratic frustration as well as fleshes out the general points of the project. The common objectives are as follows: to elaborate what exactly is the situation in which ordinary democratic citizens are placed, to show why that situation is particularly frustrating, to discuss what conventional solutions are available and to what extent they are not satisfactory, and to argue for my own proposal and to explain why that could be a solution worthy of special attention.

The overarching goal of this study is to pursue an alternative course to both cynicism and utopian escapism. I aim to pave the way to properly understand democratic aspirations as being the source of both inspiration and frustration, and embrace and make most use of frustration as means through which democratic citizens can keep their aspirations alive while growing more attached to reality, not less, and becoming more attentive, inventive, and persevering.

By dwelling on, and coming to terms with, democratic frustration, citizens can better configure both their disenchantment with democracy and their aspirations for its fulfillment at the same time. I also highlight how this careful view of frustration allows democratic citizens to gain insights into the processual character of democratic desires and politics gleaned from brooding over their loss and failure. Living with frustration may put democratic citizens in great affliction. But it can be a gift in disguise insofar as it

helps them to better attend to what they are, thereby intimating what they may become.<sup>29</sup>

Proffering a proper etiology of democratic frustration as well as normative suggestions as to how we can better manage such frustration, this research not only sheds light on a timely topic of democratic frustration, but also contributes to a growing conversation among political theorists and other scholars in the humanities and social sciences about the affective condition of democratic politics, realism and idealism, overheated partisan politics, populism, and popular hopes for democratic progress and grievances at its regress.

In the remainder of this introductory chapter, I will further discuss the theme of frustration as a defining *mood* of democracy, sketching its pervasive and critical meaning, and, then, explain why I take a *trifocal approach*, an architectonic theoretical tool I devise in this study, and briefly outline the main thrust of the following chapters.

#### FRUSTRATION: MOOD AS WELL AS FEELING

To regard frustration as a mood along with a feeling raises a number of questions. What is a mood? How is it distinguished from feeling or other terms that signify human sentiments such as emotion or affect? What does this view bring into focus?

As far as the purpose of this study is concerned, five exemplary conceptions merit

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<sup>29</sup> Certainly, “what we may become,” as Shakespeare’s Ophelia alludes to, may remain unknown even after “what we are” is revealed. William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, Act IV, Scene 5: “we know what we are, but know not what we may be.”

special attention: principle, drive, currents, ethos, and temper. I will discuss them briefly below. Montesquieu once used the term *principle* [*principe*] of government in a rather idiosyncratic way. A principle, according to him, is “that which makes [people] act.” In other words, they are “the human passions,”<sup>30</sup> or the animating, motivational, and inspiring affections, which set people in motion. Montesquieu selected one principle for each of the correlative structures of government. For example, *honor* is the principle of monarchical government according to which people living in the monarchical government take action. In the case of democracy, on the other hand, *virtue* is the motivating principle.<sup>31</sup>

Max Weber’s magnum opus was intended to “discover the psychological *drives* [*Antriebe*] which led people to behave in a certain way and held them firmly in this path.” What he found out, as widely known, was Calvinists’ *protestant ethic*, or, to be precise, the role of an existential fear and trembling inspired by Calvinist predeterminism. This religious ethic, perhaps quite ironically, gave rise to the most methodical approach in secular everyday life, “turning [those believers] toward a rational life in the world, but

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<sup>30</sup> Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 21.

<sup>31</sup> Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, 22-30. While praising this analysis as Montesquieu’s entirely original contribution to the traditional inquiry of the nature of government, Hannah Arendt later commented that honor (or love of distinction) and virtue (or love of equality) are two distinct yet equally fundamental and immediate feelings. Honor is a genuinely human sentiment because “men are distinguished, that is, different from each other by birth.” Virtue can also be a genuinely human sentiment given the condition of “living together with and belonging to a group of equally powerful men.” Hannah Arendt, “On the Nature of Totalitarianism,” 334-338.

neither *of* this world nor *for* it.”<sup>32</sup>

Emile Durkheim famously popularized the term *social* facts, which consist of “manners of acting, thinking, and feeling external to the individual[.]” Social facts include “beliefs, tendencies and practices of the group taken collectively.” Some social facts “do not present themselves in [a well defined] form but which also possess the same objectivity and ascendancy over the individual.” Durkheim called this particular type of social facts “*social currents*.”<sup>33</sup>

While discussing the peculiar characteristics of modernity, Michel Foucault once suggested that we focus on “the attitude of modernity,” by which he meant “a mode of relating to contemporary reality; a voluntary choice made by certain people; in the end, the way of thinking and feeling; a way, too, of acting and behaving that at one and the same time marks a relation of belonging and presents itself as a task.” In other words, continued Foucault, this attitude is close to “what the Greeks called an *ethos*.”<sup>34</sup>

Finally, Joseph Krutch, an American writer, articulated the *temper* of the twentieth century in his book, *The Modern Temper*. He characterized the temper of the century as an anguish state of disharmony, ambiguity, and isolation. Krutch believed that this acknowledgment of despair was necessary for understanding modern culture and

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<sup>32</sup> Max Weber, “The Protestant Ethic and the “Spirit” of Capitalism” in Peter Baehr and Gordon Wells eds., *The Protestant Ethic and the “Spirit” of Capitalism and Other Writings* (New York: Penguin, 2002), 69-122.

<sup>33</sup> Émile Durkheim, “The Rules of Sociological Method” in Steven Lukes ed., *The Rules of Sociological Method and Selected Texts on Sociology and Its Method* (New York: The Free Press, 1982), 53-55.

<sup>34</sup> Michel Foucault, “What Is Enlightenment?” Paul Rabinow ed., *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 39.

society correctly.<sup>35</sup>

These accounts show some affinities with my approach. Although I am skeptical of the Montesquieuian system of principle that assigns one passion to one type of government, I share in common with Montesquieu that I recognize the importance of that which sets people in motion. This interest in motivation, of course, resonates with the Weber's theoretical orientation. With respect to its pervasive and objective characteristic, frustration can be compared to temper and social currents, although my focus is not necessarily on all-encompassing atmosphere of society at large. Frustration, on my account, shapes the attitudes, or we might say, ethos, à la Foucault, in a direct or indirect way.

That said, the best terminology suitable for characterizing the role and place of frustration is mood. Byung-Chul Han's succinct categorization warns against the tendency of equating or conflating four different related yet distinct terms of human sentiments: mood, feeling, emotion, and affect.<sup>36</sup> Mood or atmosphere [*Stimmung*], according to Han, "expresses *a way-it-is*[" representing "a state of being or state of mind [*Befindlichkeit*]." It has an objective character and is "*static and constellative*." Feeling [*Gefühl*] refers to something objective as well, albeit to a lesser degree. It allows "*duration*" or "narrative length or breadth." On the other hand, emotion [*Emotion*] and

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<sup>35</sup> Joseph Wood Krutch, *The Modern Temper* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1929). Cf. C. Wright Mills, "The Conservative Mood," *Dissent*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1954).

<sup>36</sup> Han is critical of a number of recent studies unconcerned with, or less sensitive to the conceptual differences among these terms, one example of which is Eva Illouz's *Cold Intimacies: The Making of Emotional Capitalism* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007).

affect [*Affekt*] “refer to strictly subjective matters[.]” Emotion is more fleeting than feeling; affect is even more momentary. Both are “expressions of subjectivity.” If feeling is “*constative*,” emotion is rather “*performative*” while affect is “*eruptive*.”<sup>37</sup>

Although Han’s analysis is in line with some of the empirical psychological studies,<sup>38</sup> his languages mark the legacy of Martin Heidegger in whose work mood plays a quintessential role. In *Being and Time*, for instance, Heidegger explains that mood is neither wholly external nor entirely internal.<sup>39</sup> He says: “A mood assails us. It comes neither from ‘outside’ nor from ‘inside’, but arises out of Being-in-the-world, as a way of such Being.”<sup>40</sup> Mood is indicative of our thrownness [*Geworfenheit*], a context in which we are already situated. It is something *presupposed* by intentional actions. It “[determines] the space of possible kinds of concern.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Byung-Chul Han, *Psychopolitics: Neoliberalism and New Technologies of Power* (New York: Verso, 2017), 41-48.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, Panteleimon Ekkekakis, *The Measurement of Affect, Mood, and Emotion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>39</sup> Heidegger stresses the importance of mood when he attempts to challenge the age-long hierarchy between *logos* and *pathos* (or *ousia* and *pathos*). See, for instance, Plato’s *Euthyphro* (11a-b) where Socrates admonishes Euthyphro for continuously talking about mere affect or quality (*pathos*) of the problem while not seeing the nature or essence (*ousia*) of the problem. Since Plato, explains Heidegger, *pathos* in general has often been seen as “the utterly fleeting and ungraspable shadows of clouds flitting across the landscape.” Heidegger does not dismiss outright this characterization. Yet he is interested in how to “grasp mood *positively* as belonging to the essence of man,” or, as Jean-Paul Sartre once put, as “a specific manner of apprehending the world.” See Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 64-65) and Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Emotions: Outlines of A Theory* (London: Methuen, 1962), 57.

<sup>40</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: Harper & Low, 1962), 176.

<sup>41</sup> Matthew Ratcliffe, “The Phenomenology of Mood and the Meaning of Life,” *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Emotion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 357.

Heidegger's study of mood is massive, including his lengthy and rigorous account of boredom as the foundational mood [*Grundstimmung*] that, according to him, prompts philosophical thinking. Here, I just focus on one element in his account of three distinct *modes* of boredom since his distinction can give us important insights into mood in general. Heidegger offers a tripartite distinction of boredom: "becoming bored by something," "being bored with something," and "profound boredom as 'it is boring for one'."<sup>42</sup> The first kind of boredom is the one when there is a particular situation that fails to satisfy us. The second kind of boredom, on the other hand, is deeper because it is not the case that any particular thing that fails to satisfy us. Even if "there is nothing at all to be found that might have been boring about" particular things, claims Heidegger, one could still be *in* the situation of boredom, which would come to attention *later*. The third one is even deeper because boredom in this case is all encompassing.

Let us focus on the distinction Heidegger makes between the first and the second ones. This is essential for understanding my use of democratic frustration as well precisely because what I intend to emphasize by proposing to conceive of frustration as the mood of democracy is that democratic citizens are being held *in* the situation of frustration. Heidegger uses two illustrative examples (waiting a train at a quiet and uninspiring station and attending a dinner) to explain the difference between the first and the second type of boredom. An important and subtle difference is how he describes one would pass the time in response to the respective situations of boredom.

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<sup>42</sup> Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 78-159.

We read the timetables or study the table giving the various distances from this station to other places we are not otherwise acquainted with at all. We look at the clock—only a quarter of an hour has gone by. Then we go out onto the local road. We walk up and down, just to have something to do. But it is no use. Then we count the trees along the road, look at our watch again—exactly five minutes since we last looked at it. Fed up with walking back and forth, we sit down on a stone, draw all kinds of figures in the sand, and in so doing catch ourselves looking at our watch yet again—half an hour—and so on.<sup>43</sup>

In this case of the train waiting, it seems obvious that one is bored *by* the situation and kills the time by doing unambiguously meaningless things. The second case, however, is quite different.

... cigars are passed around again. We have already let them pass by once, but now we take a cigar. We are not getting sleepy, and yet—we smoke, not to become more sleepy, nor to be stimulated by the nicotine, but because smoking itself is a socially ideal way of passing the time, which is not to say that everyone who smokes is passing the time in so doing, i. e., is bored. Socially ideal—this is intended to mean that smoking is part of it all, one is encouraged to do so, and in this way—without our knowing it—an inconspicuous possibility of passing the time plays right into our hands. Passing the time is thus there in this situation too, though admittedly hard to find, and this precisely because it presents itself in such a public manner.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 93.

<sup>44</sup> Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 111-112.



Heidegger explains that “[p]assing the time is not lacking in this boredom either.” It is not “hidden or repressed[.]” But, interestingly, it is “*transformed* in a particular way[.]” as his cigar example indicates.

How can we extrapolate his perceptive analysis to my case of democratic frustration? I would suggest the following reading. Individual citizens might be frustrated *by* a number of events for a lot of different reasons. We can recognize it by looking at their emotional reactions: rage, impotent anger, despondence, et cetera. Absent those usual signs of frustration, however, one can still be held *in* the condition of frustration. In other words, it is plausible that citizens, perhaps without knowing at the moment, are expressing their deep-seated exasperation in a “transformed” and “socially ideal” way. Just like what the Heidegger’s guest did by smoking a cigar. Perhaps citizens dispute with other fellow citizens over pressing issues or participate in a mass protest. They may choose not to do anything, showing a nonchalant shrug to any democratic issues. Nonetheless, we should still be able to read their frustration or frustration permeated through the space in which they are placed. This does not mean that their actions (or inaction) are entirely disingenuous or mere perfunctory. What it means is frustration can be understood as a *status* in which democratic citizens find themselves situated, which implies the persistence of frustration at the structural level, not merely as an episodic emotional register.

That said, my focus is placed on how democratic citizens would be likely to

approach the condition of frustration in a more conspicuous way. I will look at how they adopt attitudes, orientations, and ethos and pathos with regard to it. The most symptomatic reaction to frustration is to escape it. Frustration breeds an impulse to seek immediate comforts or consolations, inviting extreme reactions. Two strategies prevail.

The first strategy is to remove or cut down high expectations and to be content with the status quo or to take an even more pessimistic view of democratic life so as to be prepared for the anticipated uneasiness. The second strategy is to make oneself deeply immersed in a utopian scheme of thoughts. As long as one keeps gravitating toward and clinging onto some of the heightened hopes and ideals, she may be able to hold the sense of frustration at bay, at least temporarily. These two immoderate extremes—one urges us to let go of much hope and the other makes us live by moving from dream to dream in the sense of drifting in utopianism—are the most popular avoiding strategies that could oust frustration from the view.

To escape the feeling of frustration may sound natural and optimal, but it is worth noting that such an endeavor misses out on the opportunity to properly understand and attend to the situation we are in. A lurking danger is a devastating twofold trend of cynicism *and* utopian escapism. Both can serve as subterfuges in which people may temporarily take refuge. Neither, however, is an effectual and sustainable solution. Instead, we need to foster a different strategy with which we can better cope with the indelible democratic frustration.

Contemporary democratic theory, unfortunately, has failed to properly attend to

the phenomenon of democratic frustration in part because most theorists have devoted too much attention either to analyzing idealistic arrangements of democracy or to describing the dispiriting reality of democratic politics. These alleged idealism and realism also reflect intellectual anxieties torn between utopianism and cynicism. The point is not that the former is too idealistic and the latter too realistic. The real danger is that the former is often a siphoning away of attention, a distraction from how to savor ideals as genuine possibilities in the everyday democracy, while the latter often distracts us from reality—by accepting the limits of the given situation too quickly, often demoralizing any attempts to look at broader and deeper truth of the very situation.<sup>45</sup> Thus, those two tendencies can degenerate into a devastating twofold trend of cynicism and utopianism.

#### THROUGH A *TRIFOCAL* LENS, CLEARLY

This study offers a threefold framework through which we can better understand frustration as endogenous to democracy. I call the overarching framework *a trifocal approach* because of its analogy to trifocals. Trifocals are a pair of glasses that have three regions that correct for near, intermediate, and distance vision. The lenses with different focal lengths *remind* us of what it means to have good vision—being capable of discerning objects visually at a *short, medium, and long* distance. Yet we normally rather

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<sup>45</sup> Reality is multifaceted. Studs Terkel once interviewed Virginia Durr who was a founding member of the Southern Conference for Human Welfare. When asked how did she become an activist, she said that the Depression changed it all. The following statement of hers would have been said by anyone: "It was the first time I had seen the other side of the tracks. I saw the world as it *really* was." [Emphasis added.] Studs Terkel, *Hope Dies Last: Keeping the Faith in Difficult Times* (New York: The New Press, 2003), xxiv-xxv.

hold a holistic view of our vision (twenty-twenty or not) than keep ourselves conscious of the distinct capacities to see the objects at different distances unless we come to suffer from presbyopia or other clinical problems that demand for precise correction.

Likewise, the democratic life—a backdrop against which democratic frustration arises—has different reference points.<sup>46</sup> Democratic citizens form and perform their agency in the different terrains of focus, structured by distinct expectations concerning diverse goals, ideals, and desires. Just like trifocals that offer a tripartite compartmentalization of lenses, I shall reduce my considerations to three dimensions of democratic life, offering a threefold analysis of democratic frustration: *Communicative*, *Symbolic*, and *Temporal*, each comprising four components: *Subjectivity*, *Ideal*, *Source of Frustration*, and *Proposal*. The attached table arranges them in a schematic form.

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<sup>46</sup> Certainly, I take trifocals to be an analogy to my threefold framework, and no more. Notice that trifocals may sound anachronistic from the perspective of modern day ophthalmology and optometry. Many people with presbyopia would now prefer line-free progressive lenses to trifocals. Likewise, my focus on the three dimensions of democratic life does not mean to preclude myself (and others) from looking into another important dimensions of democracy such as economic, bureaucratic, and technological dimensions.

**Table 1 Trifocal Approach**

	Trifocal Dimensions		
	<i>Communicative</i>	<i>Symbolic</i>	<i>Temporal</i>
<i>Subjectivity</i>	Citizen-Partisan	Citizen-Sovereign	Citizen-Becoming
<i>Ideal</i>	Keeping Conversations Going	Enacting Popular Sovereignty	Progress
<i>Source of Frustration</i>	Striving for Superiority	The Unrepresentability of the People	Fast tempo and the bifurcated temporality
<i>Proposal</i>	Magnanimity	The Sublime People	Experience/Journey

The communicative dimension of democracy involves a variety of conversations and contestations into which ordinary citizens enter. This is where the relationship between the first person and the second person matters. Here, democratic citizens are thought to aspire to attain and exercise *mutual respect*. It is important, however, to recognize the fact that the democratic subject cannot but exist as a *citizen-partisan* in the realm of communication, holding her own superiority over her opponents and hoping to

defeat them. In other words, it is common that democratic citizens tend to escalate partisan tensions by fanning the flames of mutual contempt, hatred, and aggression even while acknowledging that in democracy they are supposed to uphold the ideal of mutual respect.

This creates a particular condition of frustration. Again, I do not merely mean that individual citizens are likely to feel frustration in a particular episode of conversation. More fundamentally, frustration as a mood occupies the mind of democratic citizens. The two most extreme tendencies—to cease all efforts to talk to one’s opponents and to pounce on their words in every possible way—are indicative of frustration. How can democratic citizens keep motivating themselves to engage in democratic conversations in a way that mitigates too much aggression? I argue that moralist pleas for rationality, civility, and tolerance would not work very well precisely because those solutions do not properly understand the motivational aspect of the urge for superiority. Yet it is not desirable to promote the sense of superiority in a counter-productive form. Examining democratic communication as a site of frustration that invites a *moral-psychological* analysis of how to foster a better attitudinal strategy, I propose a theory of *magnanimity*, with which we can harness the motivational power of superiority while making it more compatible with and conducive to a sound and vibrant democratic politics.

The symbolic dimension of democracy involves the politics of the *people*. Here, the democratic subject takes the form of *citizen-sovereign*, participating in “the

continuing self-fashioning of the demos.”<sup>47</sup> This is where the relationship between the first person singular and the first person plural matters. The people cannot appear in any immediate form. This indefinite nature of the people makes its representation both necessary and incomplete, which makes individual citizens in permanent tensions with the people. This tension creates a particular condition of frustration, which can be characterized by the tense dynamic of the need of individual citizens to invite and invoke the people at the risk of betrayal and suppression by the despair emanating from the inescapably incomplete and possibly false representation.

Two extreme solutions provide particular ways in which individual democratic citizens can shape their sensibilities toward the people by way of relaxing the tensions between themselves and the people. The first method, which I call a reductionist paradigm, views the people as the foundation of political authority while constraining the potential of popular energy. On the other hand, the second method, which I call an aspirational paradigm, valorizes the popular energy of ordinary people. The former is driven by the fear of the popular power while the latter is galvanized by the delight in communion with the people. Recognizing the fact that these two paradigms end up mutually reinforcing as well as the problem of erasing the tension between individual citizens and the people, I propose a theory of *the sublime people* as an interpretive tool with which we can better attend to the interplay between the individual citizen and the people. This particular aesthetic approach to the people highlights the pleasure of the sublime, which helps the citizen to invoke and engage in the people while elevating the

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<sup>47</sup> Sheldon Wolin, “The Liberal/Democratic Divide: On Rawls’s Political Liberalism,” *Political Theory*, Vol. 24, No.1 (1996), 98.

capacity of herself. In so doing, it paves the way that resists a worrying twofold trend of minimalism and populism.

The third and last dimension concerns the question of democratic *time*. The democratic subject takes the form of *citizen-becoming*. Previously, the focus was on the question as to how the citizen could form and exercise her democratic agency against potentially offensive others (the communicative dimension) and the people at large (the symbolic dimension). Here, what matters is the relationship between the democratic subject and time. The individual citizen is a temporally extended being. She might retain her “first-personal perspective and identify as the same subjective self from moment to moment,” but “over time, gradual change can accumulate such that [she] no longer stand in the same-self relation to a past self.”<sup>48</sup> To think about oneself persisting and becoming through time involves understanding oneself from both the agential (first-personal) and observational perspectives.

When it comes to democratic time, however, citizens are prone to place overemphasis on relatively short-lived extraordinary moments at which they express their wishes, desires, and opinions through various means of participation, electoral or otherwise. The rest of ordinary time is often left unattended. In other words, democratic time has tended to be characterized as a series of vapid proceedings save only a few sweeping overheated moments. This binary shows some signs of particular temperaments with respect to time perceived as pervading in democracy—impetuosity on the one

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<sup>48</sup> L. A. Paul, “Subjectively Enduring Self” in Ian Phillips ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Temporal Experience* (London: Routledge, 2017), 267.



hand, and apathy on the other—which aggravates a twofold trend of voluntarism and deterministic defeatism. This chapter argues that the bifurcated view of democratic time robs democratic citizens of a temporal space suitable for self-growth or self-overcoming. I propose an alternative view of time as a journey, stressing that each individual “has its own time carries within itself its own temporal measure[,]”<sup>49</sup> and that she can grow more perseverant by staying or tarrying in the time of frustration.

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<sup>49</sup> Reinhard Koselleck, *Sediments of Time: On Possible Histories* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018), 4.

## **CHAPTER 2: The Communicative**

### **From Impudence Toward Magnanimity:**

#### **Reclaiming an Aristotelian Sense of Superiority for Democracy**

*There are seasons in every country, when noise and impudence pass current for worth.*

Alexander Hamilton

*It is not enough for me to win—the other must lose.*

Gore Vidal

*[T]hinking how obscurity rids the mind of the irk of envy and spite;  
how it sets running in the veins the free waters of generosity and magnanimity;  
and allows giving and taking without thanks offered or praise given[.]*

Virginia Woolf

Long before Donald Trump burst upon the political scene, parading shameless self-flattery and disregard for others, Athenian democratic citizens once came under attack for their “effrontery and impudence.”<sup>50</sup> The accuser was Socrates. In his peroration at the trial that resulted in his death,<sup>51</sup> Socrates came to conclude that he lost the case not because his arguments were inadequate and unconvincing, but because he lacked effrontery and impudence, arguably the most conspicuous characteristics attributable to his fellow Athenians. By highlighting these characteristics, Socrates points out that perhaps contrary to the conventional wisdom of his time, the boldness and fearlessness of Athenian democratic citizens, often praised for promoting frank speech [*parrhēsia*] and daring acts, are not entirely worthy of acclaim. According to him, those dispositions can lead citizens toward shameless self-praise and disrespect for truth and justice.

Yet there is an irony. From the perspective of ordinary Athenians, it was Socrates who had the effrontery to disregard outright the authorities of his fellow citizen-judges. Notice that Socrates began his defense speech by flouting a social norm of the time—he

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<sup>50</sup> Plato, *Apology*, 38d. Translation by Hugh Tredennick and Harold Tarrant. The original Greek terms are *tólma* and *anaischuntia*, which sometimes translate into a number of distinct yet related sets of words such as “impudence and shamelessness” (by Harold North Fowler) and “boldness and shamelessness” (by G. M. A. Grube). I will revisit the semantic and emotional affinities between *tólma* and *anaischuntia* in the following section.

<sup>51</sup> As Josiah Ober succinctly describes, “In 399 BCE, the Athenian citizen Socrates, son of Sophroniscus of the deme (township) Alopece, was tried by an Athenian court on the charge of impiety (*asebeia*). He was found guilty by a narrow majority of the empanelled judges and executed in the public prison a few days later.” Ober, “Socrates and Democratic Athens,” Donald R. Morrison ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Socrates* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 138.

referred to the judges simply as “men of Athens” [*andres Athenaioi*], not as “judges” [*adres dikastai*]. Later, he gave the name of “judges” only to those who voted for his acquittal.<sup>52</sup> Hence, Socrates displayed an arrogant contempt for the opinion of his peers precisely when he was castigating them for their shameless disrespect for him. It is ironic because Socrates does not seem to be lacking what he claims he is short of; his impudence could be well detected by his opponents. We can see a direct parallel to the Athenian impudence—which Socrates harshly condemns—in the attitudes of Socrates himself. In other words, Socrates’s mode of engagement may be no less impudent than that of his alleged opponents.<sup>53</sup>

If we set aside the oft-made juxtaposition between Socratic philosophy and democratic rhetoric or that between the philosopher and the sophist,<sup>54</sup> what comes into

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<sup>52</sup> Socrates says that “in call you judges I give you your right name.” Compare his dictions in *Apology*, 17a and 40a. Harrold Tarrant also draws attention to the Socrates’s deliberate choice of the term “judges” for the particular occasion. See his note in *Plato: The Last Days of Socrates* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 221.

<sup>53</sup> In this respect, I do not invoke the kind of irony often associated with Socrates—namely, Socratic irony—which calls attention to the dynamics of discursive relations in which the ignorance of a skillful questioner (Socrates) invites and induces others into making statements that would eventually lead them toward their own ignorance. The idea of irony in general and Socratic irony in particular deserve an independent comprehensive study. For more on the concept of *eirōneia* and the role of Socrates in the mutation of *eirōneia* into *ironia*, see Gregory Vlastos, “Socratic Irony,” *Classical Quarterly*, Vol. 37 No. 1 (1987). See also Melissa Lane’s disagreement with Vlastos in her “Reconsidering Socratic Irony,” Donald R. Morrison ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Socrates* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 237-259.

<sup>54</sup> The trial (and death) of Socrates has been deemed to be so momentous an event that it has ceaseless been subject to a series of thorough examinations by numerous scholars for the purpose of determining the nature of philosophy, politics, or both, often with an eye on the unbridgeable gulf and fundamental discords between the two. See, among others, Hannah Arendt, “Philosophy and Politics,” *Social Research*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (1990) and Leo Strauss, “Philosophy as Rigorous Science and Political Philosophy,” in Leo Strauss, *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

clear view is an adversarial condition of political discourse into which both Socrates and his fellow contestants entered as democratic citizens. Likewise, ordinary democratic citizens routinely set foot in a polemical or antagonistic condition where they are confronted with their opponents who are almost always ready to assail them. In this impassioned situation, people are susceptible to impudence. Rather than reflect upon and attend to their own possibly unsound or biased reasoning and be contemptuous of themselves when they employ it, people are often not ashamed of being one-sided, uncivil, and self-centered, and instead too easily hold their opponents in contempt. Their penchant for victory defies humility, tolerance, and self-criticism.

Impudence—which has a Latin origin, *impudēns*—usually means shamelessness. My point is that ordinary democratic citizens are prone to shamelessly disregard those who have dissimilar and opposing views and perspectives. The primary reason I select to use the word impudence rather than shamelessness is twofold. First, as archaic<sup>55</sup> as the former may sound, it does not instantly elicit such a narrow and peremptorily negative response as the latter normally does. Second, unlike shamelessness, impudence usually takes place against the backdrop of competing claims to superiority.

One might say that democratic citizens should refuse to talk of high and low in the name of equality. Every citizen owes one another mutual respect and fair cooperation.

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<sup>55</sup> The word impudence was more widely used until 19th century. For example, Richard Steele writes about impudence in the then popular British magazine *The Spectator*, placing it with a number of other colloquial expressions: "Impudence in an Englishman, is sullen and insolent; in a Scotchman it is untractable and rapacious; in an Irishman absurd and fawning. As the course of the world now runs, the impudent Englishman behaves like a surly landlord, the Scot like an ill-received guest, and the Irishman like a stranger, who knows he is not welcome." Robert Steele, *The Spectator*, No. 20 (1710-1711).

From this perspective, impudence can be seen as a simple failure—a failure to comply with the basic rules and norms of democracy. Yet it is not reasonable to readily assume that ordinary democratic citizens uphold the virtue of mutual respect expressing a sense of humility and civility. Nor is realistic to believe that they usually practice unwavering self-criticism prior to and in the course of confronting their opponents. Even if citizens acknowledge the fact that in principle, they cannot know for certain the nature of any political matter in its entirety, and that whatever values and perspectives they hold dear cannot be undisputable, this awareness of one’s partiality and fallibility does not automatically construct or confirm an intellectual and moral foundation of mutual respect.

In fact, democratic equality does not have to be incompatible with the sense of *superiority*; oftentimes, in practice, those two are intermingled. However vulgar and modest it may sound, democratic equality experienced in the everyday democracy is that each citizen is equally entitled to claim that she is right and her opponents are wrong, and, by extension, that her people, her party, and her views are superior to those of her opponents. In this down-to-earth version of democratic theory, the impulse to equality can supplement rather than supplant the sense of superiority. To paraphrase Edmund Burke’s remark, the haughtiness of disregard can combine with the spirit of equality.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Edmund Burke in his famous speech on conciliation with the colonies states that “the haughtiness of domination combines with the spirit of freedom[.]” Here, Burke discusses the distinct nature of the southern colonies, especially with regards to their love of freedom. Burke argues that since white British subjects in the southern colonies are “masters of slaves,” freedom is to them “not only an enjoyment, but a kind of rank and privilege.” He clearly acknowledges the fact that “the superior morality” is attached to their sense of freedom. So, it is the existence of the system

The comportment of democratic impudence, which implies the sense of *superiority*, is the unfortunate corollary of the ontological condition of antagonism conjoined with an epistemological tendency toward justifying beliefs that one wants to hold—as opposed to constructing a political view based on a thorough and unbiased examination of one’s preconceived ideas and beliefs. Thus, ordinary citizens can be rather impudent, disregarding dissimilar views and perspectives especially when they are politically aware and active in the face of stark opposition. To be impudent means to be intellectually and morally presumptuous, which can easily provoke others to anger, subject them to insult, and invite them into making claims that would lead them toward their own impudence. It seems clear that if citizens continue to inflame one another with impudence to an increasing extent, they will end up heightening mutual anger, hatred, and aggression in the realm of democratic communication. This downward spiral of impudence is conducive to a tense and vitriolic atmosphere of democratic politics.

Insofar as none or very few of us can escape blame for practicing and promoting the politics of impudence, this can be called a *democratic* phenomenon—a phenomenon that ordinary citizens clearly discern and commonly practice in the everyday democracy.

That said, it is neither realistic nor entirely desirable to deal with this problem by simply

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of dominance (slavery) that makes their love of freedom much more “high and haughty.” I would make an unorthodox Burkean argument that it is precisely the alleged absence of the system of dominance that now prompts the urge of enhancing self-esteem infused with the sense of superiority, which may place people in confrontation with their commitment to mutual respect. In doing so, I disagree with Thomas Paine who says in *Common Sense* that “[w]here there are no distinctions there can be no superiority; perfect equality affords no temptation.” See Edmund Burke, “Speech on Conciliation with the Colonies” in Francis Canavan ed., *Select Works of Edmund Burke, Vol. I* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1999) and Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* in Eric Foner ed., *Thomas Paine: Collected Writings* (New York: The Library of America, 1995).

calling for more respect, civility, and decorum. It is unrealistic because ordinary democratic citizens are not capable of doing so unless they choose to rest content with a democratic politics devoid of much energy and vigor. They tend to care disproportionately more about their own views and positions or those bound up with them by ideological or emotional contiguity, cloaking their intense care in the trappings of impudence. It is not entirely desirable either because the suggested moralistic plea for behavior guided strictly by those lofty ideals of respect, civility, and decorum can bring about a politics that is markedly pallid and charmless, which is unable to offer excitement and enthusiasm necessary for active participation.

Then, the task before us is twofold. While recognizing the negative consequences of democratic impudence—that it is likely to create and perpetuate the condition of frustration in which citizens keep mutually escalating and thereby being fed up with contempt and hostility—we first need to refrain from dismissing it outright merely as an inordinate and repulsive vice, and to address such a phenomenon as an integral and enlivening part of democratic life. Second, if ordinary citizens are so inclined to democratic impudence, we should examine and attend to where indeed their proclivities and susceptibilities to impudence come from and seek out a viable strategy with which to extract a motivational and self-gratifying element from it while preventing or alleviating too much destructive aggression and obstinacy.

In this chapter, I aim to show that democratic impudence is indicative of the sense of superiority that ordinary citizens often assert and indulge in, and search for the ways in which to develop a more legitimate claim to superiority in democracy without promoting



an unnecessarily overbearing pride and a searing disdain for opponents. The question is not about how to denounce or transcend the abiding sense of superiority in democracy, but about how to harness the motivational power of superiority while making it more compatible with and conducive to a sound and vibrant democratic politics. My solution is to turn to a related yet distinct form of superiority: *magnanimity*.

This chapter will proceed as follows. Section 1 pays special attention to two leading perspectives in contemporary democratic theory—liberal (deliberative) and agonistic—which, on my account, have failed to properly address the problem of democratic impudence. Section 2 proffers an anatomy of impudence as a *pathos* that shows a curious amalgam of base shamelessness and cheerful boldness, which gives the person enlivening energies as well as a belittling posture. Section 3 examines why it is both naïve and wrongheaded to attempt to solve the problem of impudence by doing away with it, and turns to the concept of *magnanimity* to remedy the situation. In what follows, I will base my arguments on, and derive their tenor from, to large extent, my reading of Aristotle—first his analysis of human *pathē* in general and *anaischuntia/anaideia* in particular, then that of *akrasia*, and finally that of *megalopsychia*—though I will also discuss other sources, both ancient and modern. Rather than pretend to give a comprehensive exegetical study of Aristotle, I would like to claim that his philosophy so understood can guide us to rethink and rework our contemporary difficulties that concern the vexing problem of democratic impudence. My novel reading of Aristotle in this purpose, in turn, provides a new insight into his theory of *magnanimity*.

## BEYOND THE LIBERAL AND AGONISTIC MODELS

Contemporary democratic theory has not yet provided us with a framework best suitable for clarifying and comprehending the problem of democratic impudence. Given that the recent years have witnessed the growing concerns with the alarming polarization and the rise of inflammatory expressions and impudent attitudes in the United States and beyond, it is unfortunate that leading perspectives in democratic theory failed to address the subject of democratic impudence.<sup>57</sup> To fill this lacuna requires us to examine predominant tendencies in the study of democratic theory.

First of all, the liberal democratic model understands the politics of impudence as an aberration of democracy—not a problem incident to and typical of democracy per

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<sup>57</sup> A number of leading social scientists and journalists have claimed that America has been deeply divided over the past few decades by socio-cultural values and moral visions as well as political ideologies and preferences. For the recent political climate in which much of outrage and incivility has been animating democratic politics, see Jeffrey Berry and Sarah Sobieraj, *The Outrage Industry: Political Opinion Media and the New Incivility* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), Diana Mutz, *In-Your-Face Politics: The Consequences of Uncivil Media* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), Katherine Cramer, *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016). See also Naomi Cahn and June Carbone, *Red Families v. Blue Families: Legal Polarization and the Creation of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), and J. D. Vance, *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis* (New York: Harper, 2016). For the ideological polarization of two major parties in the United States, see Nolan McCarthy, Keith Poole, Howard Rosenthal, *Polarized American: The Dance of Ideology and Unequal Riches* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016); for the asymmetrical polarization with congressional GOP being stretched rightward far significantly, see Edward Carmines, "Class Politics, American Style," *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 9 Issue 3 (2011); for the development of party sorting and the roles of religion, media, and gerrymandering in the process of polarization, see eds. Pietro Nivola and David Brady, *Red and Blue Nation* (Baltimore: Brookings Institution Press, 2006); and for party sorting more in detail, see Matthew Levendusky, *The Partisan Sort: How Liberals Became Democrats and Conservatives Became Republicans* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

se—while instead propagating an image of the idealized democratic self as deliberative, reflective, self-critical, and tolerant. From this perspective, democratic impudence appears to testify to the failure of establishing and complying with the basic rules and institutions of liberal democracy such as rational deliberation, tolerance, and mutual respect.

For instance, Rawls’s theoretical project for a “well-ordered society” presumes that democratic citizens “take part in social cooperation on a footing of *mutual respect* under appropriately equal conditions.”<sup>58</sup> In the large scheme of the Rawlsian democratic society, citizens are believed to “desire to act on the natural duty to advance just arrangements.” It is as though their morality derive from “public principles of justice”, not from actual “ties of fellow feeling.”<sup>59</sup> However “realistically utopian”<sup>60</sup> his theory may seem, it remains less sensitive and attentive to how central the mutual exchange of impudence (not of respect) is to our actual democratic life. Habermas’s advocacy for a deliberative form of democracy idealizes “*the attitude of communicatively engaged citizens*,”<sup>61</sup> which is expected to enable them to realize “civic autonomy” via unconstrained discourse. By pitting this particular attitude of mutual respect against that of competition that people embody “simply in the role of actors oriented to success,”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), xv. Emphasis added.

<sup>59</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 415.

<sup>60</sup> This is how Rawls himself understands his own theoretical position. John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 4.

<sup>61</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 32. Emphasis added.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

Habermas demands that citizens drop the latter attitude in favor of the former. Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, too, pay more attention to how liberal democracy proposes to design a set of better principles, or “fair terms of cooperation,” to resolve and accommodate moral conflicts than to the fact that ordinary citizens routinely involve in a number of non-deliberative activities in which they gear up for competition oriented to success and victory.<sup>63</sup> Martha Nussbaum and Sharon Krause—whose respective works attend to and appreciate the role of passions and emotions in democratic deliberation much more explicitly and extensively than their Neo-Kantian counterparts—also endeavor to secure and valorize the ideal of equal respect.<sup>64</sup>

To be clear, I do not mean to dismiss such a normative claim as completely pointless. Nor do I deny both theoretical and practical utilities of thinking about and cherishing the ideal situation in which people may be guided to present themselves as decent and right-minded and treat other fellow citizens with full respect. It is by no means my intention to abandon the liberal democratic ideal of free and equal citizenship as such.

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<sup>63</sup> Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996) and *Why Deliberative Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), especially chapters 3-4. For the emphasis on an ethic of mutual respect, see also James Tully, *Strange Multiplicity: Constitutionalism in an Age of Diversity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995) and Charles Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” in ed. Amy Gutmann, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). Michael Walzer draws up a list of those non-deliberative activities including mobilization, demonstration, bargaining, lobbying, campaigning. See Michael Walzer, *Politics and Passions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), chapter 5. My primary concern is not with elite politicians involving in these activities, but with ordinary citizens intellectually and emotionally responding and reacting to a number of different democratic issues.

<sup>64</sup> See Martha Nussbaum, *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), especially chapters 5, 6, and 10 and Sharon Krause, *Civil Passions: Moral Sentiment and Democratic Deliberation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), especially chapters 3 and 4.

Yet I contend that any attempts to denounce the politics of impudence merely as a failure of upholding democratic values without understanding the reasons—existential, intellectual, and moral psychological—of its obduracy and recurrence would likely end in empty gesture.

The agonistic model of democracy, though it falters in its own way as I will explain shortly, proffers a better perspective, directing much attention to the antagonistic nature of political existence.<sup>65</sup> Chantal Mouffe, for example, draws on Carl Schmitt's understanding of *the political* when she claims that democratic politics “has to do with conflict and antagonism, not free discussion.” For Schmitt, as Mouffe understands correctly, “the criteria of the political ... is the friend/enemy discrimination.”<sup>66</sup> Democratic politics is largely about the “formation of a ‘we’ as opposed to a ‘they’, and is always concerned with collective forms of identification[.]”<sup>67</sup> William Connolly also sees this subject-formation or identity-construction in connection with a series of contesting differences. The struggle—*agon*—for political existence is decisive and pervasive.<sup>68</sup> From this perspective, partisanship is normally presented to democratic

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<sup>65</sup> For the existential antagonism between friends and enemies in the realm of politics, see Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1996), Ellen Kennedy, “Hostis Not Inimicus: Toward a Theory of the Public in the Work of Carl Schmitt,” in ed. David Dyzenhaus, *Law as Politics: Carl Schmitt's Critique of Liberalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

<sup>66</sup> Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 11.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> See, among others, William Connolly, *The Ethos of Pluralization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995) and *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

citizens as a *fait accompli*.<sup>69</sup>

It is true that the agonistic model—especially its deep skepticism of a rationalized, consensus-based politics—helps us to better appreciate the ontology of the democratic self, whose political existence bears inherent and permanent conflicts.<sup>70</sup> Yet the agonistic embrace of those inherent and incessant struggles—which is profoundly exemplified by Connolly’s call for an ethos of “agonistic respect”—seems to redouble the standard liberal model by lifting up the already elevated level of civic respect. Connolly’s strategy aims to foster more tolerant and more respectful citizens whose “chastened partisanship” enables them to arrive at “negotiations and settlements.”<sup>71</sup> Albeit different from the liberal virtue of mutual respect, this “agonistic respect” too is “a reciprocal virtue,” a virtue “appropriate to a world in which partisans find themselves in intensive relations of political interdependence.”<sup>72</sup> The problem, though, is that the reciprocal respect on an equal footing—agonistic or otherwise—is hard to achieve. If the liberal model displays its naiveté in believing or pretending that ordinary citizens can treat one

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<sup>69</sup> Although party affiliation is critical in most democracies, partisanship is more than simply following the party lines. As V. O. Key’s influential study on the one-party Democratic South suggests, even if we all belong to the same party, minute differences that divide us may aggravate (not mitigate) the intensity of competition and mutual hostility. See V. O. Key, *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949). I am indebted to Adolph Reed Jr. for this point.

<sup>70</sup> Bonnie Honig, another leading theorist of agonistic democracy, once opposed “[the] theories that displace conflict, identify politics with administration and treat juridical settlement as the task of politics and political theory”—which she called “virtue theories of politics”—to “[the] theories that see politics as a disruptive practice that resists the consolidations and closures of administrative and juridical settlement for the sake of the perpetuity of political contest”—which she called “*virtù* theories of politics.” See her *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 2-5.

<sup>71</sup> Connolly, *Identity\Difference*, xxi.

<sup>72</sup> Connolly, *Identity\Difference*, xxvi.

another as fellow moral and political agents equally, fairly, and rationally, the agonistic model—which has gained popularity by condemning the liberal model’s refusal to take into serious account heightened antagonism embedded in democratic politics—would rather be too aspirational insofar as it demands that ordinary citizens respect their *enemies* while clearly acknowledging and even welcoming a series of disputes and confrontations with them. It requires too much heroic or tragic a virtuosity to fight against and at once do justice to one’s foes.

The binary between the liberal model of democracy and its agonistic counterpart roughly overlap that between “political moralism” (or idealism) and “political realism”, à la Bernard Williams.<sup>73</sup> Again, the greatest advantage of the agonistic model of democracy is its acutely realistic recognition of the ontological condition of democratic antagonism. Its realism, however, seems to go awry when it carries on with the ideal of equal mutual respect, which has been championed by its liberal deliberative counterpart. Though deeply sympathetic to the realistic appeal of the agonistic model,<sup>74</sup> I contend that the agonistic model remains idealistic in its own way as it persists to valorize robust agonistic politics which requires heroic virtuous citizens who properly respect their enemies. Its radical proposal is hardly lived out. I argue that we need a realism that is even more deflationary and thereby achievable. By that I mean to focus more on actual emotional

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<sup>73</sup> Bernard Williams, *In the Beginning was the Deed: Realism and Moralism in Political Argument* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), chapter 1. See also Raymond Geuss, *Philosophy and Real Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), Part I.

<sup>74</sup> See William Galston, “Realism in Political Theory,” *European Journal of Political Theory*, Vol. 9 No. 4 (2010) and Andrew Schaap, “Political Theory and the Agony of Politics,” *Political Studies Review*, Vol. 5 (2007).

burdens and psychological costs that dissuade ordinary citizens from pursuing those ideal virtues of mutual respect, and stay adhering to those earthy realities without envisioning the ideal situation<sup>75</sup>—not merely of a liberal deliberative kind, but also of an agonistic sort.

The realistic democratic theory, on my account, begins with a keen acknowledgment that democratic citizens tend to flatter themselves and their group while appreciating the opportunity to regard their opponents as worthless. Empirical studies ranging from political psychology to cognitive science help us better understand the epistemic tendency of one-sidedness in the antagonistic condition of democracy, which is always rife with political divides, factional disputes, and polarized ideologies.<sup>76</sup> People mostly stay close to like-minded fellows: “likes talk to likes.”<sup>77</sup> In the constant presence of their opponents, they normally do not “seek out and assess information and

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<sup>75</sup> Insofar as I suggest that we need to orient ourselves more toward fear of the worst rather than hope for the best, I am in agreement with Judith Shklar’s anti-utopian political thoughts.

<sup>76</sup> This epistemological problem of one-sidedness can be substantiated by groupthink, motivated reasoning, and other similar intellectual and psychological phenomena. For example, *groupthink*, which was conceptualized and popularized by Irving Janis, refers to a defective condition in which highly cohesive groups strive to reach unanimity in their decision without adequately taking into account alternative solutions. See Irving Janis, “Groupthink,” *Psychology Today*, Vol. 5 Issue 6 (1971) and “Groupthink and Group Dynamics: A Social Psychological Analysis of Defective Policy Decision,” *Policy Studies Journal*, Vol. 2 Issue 1 (1973). A recent study by Leonie Huddy, Lilliana Mason, and Lene Aarøe argues that the power of partisan identity generates action-oriented emotions that propel people into campaign involvement. See their “Expressive Partisanship: Campaign Involvement, Political Emotion, and Partisan Identity,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 109, No. 1 (2015).

<sup>77</sup> Diana Mutz, *Hearing the Other Side: Deliberative versus Participatory Democracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 9. See also Miller McPherson, Lynn Smith-Lovin, and James M. Cook, “Birds of a Feather: Homophily in Social Networks,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 27 (2001). I thank Matt Levendusky who directed my attention to Huddy, Mason, and Aarøe and McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook.



interpretations”<sup>78</sup> on their own with an open and self-critical mind. Instead, they selectively expose themselves to a friendly environment, relying upon partisan resources with which they can make sense of political issues at ease. The group—most notable examples include parties, factions, and identity groups—offers particular reasonings, cues, frames, and heuristics,<sup>79</sup> and people process overflowing information with and through those partisan prisms. The decisions they make and the attitudes they form, therefore, depend largely upon the polemical situation in which they are placed.

This partisan epistemology is intertwined with partisan psychology or attitudes.

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<sup>78</sup> Paul Sniderman, “Taking Sides,” in Arthur Lupia, Matthew McCubbins, and Samuel Popkin eds., *Elements of Reason* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 75.

<sup>79</sup> Much evidence from Philip Converse to Ilya Somin has suggested that ordinary democratic citizens are mostly ignorant of major political issues. For Converse’s argument that the majority of ordinary citizens show “non-attitudes” on most political and policy matters instead of holding any consistent and sophisticated belief systems, see his “The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics,” in ed. David Apter, *Ideology and Discontent* (New York: Free Press, 1964); Larry Bartels shows similar empirical findings, but he describes the phenomenon—that ordinary citizens lack any clear and coherent preferences—as “democracy with attitudes”. See his “Democracy with Attitudes,” in eds. Michael MacKuen and George Rabinowitz, *Electoral Democracy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003); For Somin, ignorance about politics is mostly rational. As for his argument with respect to rational ignorance or rational irrationality, see his *Democracy and Public Ignorance: Why Smaller Government Is Smarter* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013). However, the widespread public ignorance is not my primary concern. First, following V. O. Key, I basically contend that the lack of information commonly attributed to ordinary citizens originates to large extent from the purposefully vague and inconsistent pronouncements from political elites. Second, as Arthur Lupia and others have argued, I believe that ordinary citizens, while using heuristics, could act “as if” they were fully informed. See V. O. Key, Jr., *The Responsible Electorate: Rationality in Presidential Voting, 1936-1960* (New York: Vintage, 1966); Arthur Lupia, “Shortcuts vs. Encyclopedias: Information and Voting Behavior in California Insurance Reform Elections,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 88 No. 1 (1994) and see also Arthur Lupia and Matthew McCubbins, *The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn What They Need to Know?* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), chapter 1 and Diana Mutz, “Political Psychology and Choice,” in eds. Russell Dalton and Hans-Dieter Klingemann, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Within their partisan enclave, democratic citizens are prone to “strive to defend and maintain their extant values, identities, and attitudes.”<sup>80</sup> To defend and advocate for a certain view in democratic politics means to perceive that view as *superior* to the rest, including some otherwise perhaps equally reasonable opinions. Citizens, thus, tend to strike a pose of superiority vis-à-vis their enemies insofar as they choose to stay active in democratic politics. Put differently, if they do not assume their superiority, it is more likely that they remain politically confused and inactive. When they are clear and active, they seek “directional” more than “accuracy” goals.<sup>81</sup> Their top priority is to ensure that their opinions and desires are protected from the competing wishes of their opponents. Critical in the everyday democratic practice is an attempt to proclaim the validity and importance of their views while minimizing those of oppositional views. Studies show

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<sup>80</sup> Rune Slothuus and Claes H. de Vreese, “Political Parties, Motivated Reasoning, and Issue Framing Effects,” *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 72 No. 3 (2010), 632.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. See also Ziva Kunda, “The Case for Motivated Reasoning,” *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 108, No. 3 (1990). “Motivated reasoning” is a process in which people choose certain facts among others seeing that they are more suitable to their predetermined beliefs and attitudes. “Belief echoes” touches a related but distinct phenomenon that even if people recognize the falsehood of the information they acquired, there is still the power of misinformation as it persistently affects how they think. See Emily A. Thorson, *Belief echoes: The persistent effects of corrected misinformation*, PhD Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2013. Although I draw here upon explanatory social science research, I generally, on a deeper level, follow Michael Oakeshott’s philosophy of experience: “Fact, whatever else it may be, is experience. ... Fact is what has been made or achieved; it is the product of judgment. And if there be an unalterable datum in experience, it certainly cannot consist of fact. Fact, then, is not what is given, it is what is achieved in experience. Facts are never merely observed, remembered, or combined; they are always made. We cannot “take” facts, because there are none to take until we have constructed them. And until a fact is established, that is, until it has achieved a place in a coherent world, it is no more than an hypothesis or a fiction.” Michael Oakeshott, *Experience and Its Modes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966 [1933]), 42. What is noteworthy in the domain of democratic politics is that this experience of fact as the product of judgment becomes much more prominent in the presence of competing groups.

that not only do people dislike having their beliefs challenged, they are also “less inclined to seek new information after finding out that they were wrong.”<sup>82</sup> Often being deficient in self-criticism, democratic citizens, wittingly or otherwise, seize on every occasion to preen themselves on the thought that they and their group are superior to their contenders. In this regard, the rise of inflammatory expressions and shameless attitudes discerned in American politics today is certainly not aberrational; it is at most a flamboyant extension of the typical democratic politics.<sup>83</sup>

Those empirical studies help us better understand the proclivities and susceptibilities of ordinary citizens to impudence. Here, the task of political theory, as David Mayhew once pointed out, is to offer “ontological illumination”—not merely “normative illumination”—which provides us with “a window to the nature of political reality.”<sup>84</sup> If it is the norm rather than exception that democratic citizens often find their

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<sup>82</sup> Steven Sloman and Philip Fernbach, *The Knowledge Illusion: Why We Never Think Alone* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2017), 192; Thomas Leeper and Rune Slothuus, “Political Parties, Motivated Reasoning, and Public Opinion,” *Advances in Political Psychology*, Vol. 35.

<sup>83</sup> In democracy, politicians and activists often exaggerate the urgency of the present-day situation by propagating the idea that what they are witnessing now is an imminent catastrophe caused by their opponents, and that nearly blind support of them is necessary to prevent cataclysm. The current political landscape in the United States, for example, has often been portrayed as unusually inflamed, embittered, and torn asunder, but one could find not so much different conditions in the recent past, let alone socio-political divisions in the distant past. For example, recall “the clashing cultures of the 1990s — urban riots, rural militia companies, and bombed-out federal buildings ... the insurgents of the 1994 congressional election[.]” Mary P. Ryan, *Civic Wars Democracy and Public Life in the American City during Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 1. For the broader cultural changes over the past decades, see James Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), *What’s the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America* (New York: Henry Holt, 2004).

<sup>84</sup> David Mayhew, “Political Science and Political Philosophy: Ontological Not Normative,” *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 33 Issue 2 (2000).

adversaries—and themselves as well, if they remain honest—being impudent and shameless in the face of stark opposition, we need to attend to what makes the comportment of impudence—which displays the sense of superiority in the form of determined disregard or contempt for dissimilar or antipodal views and perspectives—so appealing and enduring as well as exasperating.

That said, simply launching a normative condemnation of the unfortunate corollary of the ontological, epistemological, and psychological conditions of democracy while calling for bringing more virtues and virtuosity into the realm of democratic politics can be beside the point.<sup>85</sup> For example, Edward Shils claims that civility helps citizens to show “esteem and deference to another person,” refraining them from aggression and intimidation. It urges people to pursue a common good while keeping their partisan interests in check. Benjamin Barber puts emphasis on civility as well, believing that civility promotes “reciprocal empathy and mutual respect.” His strong democracy demands active participation, and such a participation requires the virtue of civility. Along the same lines, Jean Elshtain argues that shame “requires symbolic forms, veils of civility that conceal some activities and aspects of ourselves,” which is therefore an important part of “democratic habits and dispositions” that make respectful democratic intercourse possible.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> I will revisit this theme again in the last section, where I discuss some of the most promising works in recent literature on shame, shamelessness, and civility.

<sup>86</sup> See Edward Shils, *The Virtue of Civility* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1997); Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 223; Jean B. Elshtain, *Democracy on Trial* (New York: Basic Books, 1995). See also Christopher Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites and*

Those remedies can be called *allopathic* insofar as their moral treatments tend to impose the means that have opposite effects to the symptom—civility, shame, and so on. The allopathic approach, however, has failed to properly address the recurring pattern of democratic impudence. Although it is true that the politics of impudence and shamelessness can escalate mutual hatred and aggression, it is worth noting that embodying the heightened sense of superiority itself is a feature not a bug<sup>87</sup> in democratic politics. Absent the sense of superiority, citizens likely remain politically confused and stay inactive and passive. The point is not to replace impudence with those lofty virtues. It is to scrutinize the mechanism of impudence—its emotions, operations, and implications—and make it more conducive to a sound democratic politics.

In this respect, this study departs from, or takes some relief from, the popular normative trend in political theory toward the construction of political ethics that calls to civil manner and moral behavior. Instead, I shall offer a *homeopathic* remedy to the problem of democratic impudence, a remedy that admits the need for gratifying the sense of superiority—the very substance that causes the problem in the first place—and seeks an alternative way to satisfy the desires for superiority while relieving the nuisance of the politics of impudence and thereby improving the overall health of democratic life.

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*the Betrayal of Democracy* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996); Jennifer Jacquet, *Is Shame Necessary?* (New York: Vintage, 2015); Cheshire Calhoun, "The Virtue of Civility," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 29 (2000).

<sup>87</sup> Teresa Bejan helped me to clarify the point with this colloquial expression.

## THE PATHOS OF IMPUDENCE: AN ARISTOTELIAN ANATOMY

The objective of this section is twofold. First, by carefully reading Aristotle's account of *anaischuntia/anadeia* and other related feelings and emotions, I aim to offer an in-depth analysis of impudence.<sup>88</sup> Second, in so doing, I also direct much attention to my realistic or deflationary reading of Aristotle's political theory, which does not focus so much on his teleological ethical project—which centers on the questions of how to actualize the potentialities of human soul and how to bring into existence true human happiness [*eudaimonia*]<sup>89</sup>—as on his penetrating gaze at diverse human behavior and its moral-psychology.

The most typical reading of Aristotle's ethics and characterology would emphasize the capacity of deliberate choice [*prohairesis*] and practical wisdom [*phronesis*], with which we could wish the right object at the right time and choose the right means to achieve them. Yet the genius of Aristotle as a political thinker does not lie only in his teleological ethico-political project, but also—and perhaps more evidently, in my view—in his perceptive understanding of moral and political phenomena

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<sup>88</sup> These are two words for impudence or shamelessness in attic Greek, paired, respectively, with *aischunē* and *aidos*. Christina Tarnopolsky and others pointed out that although the latter is more archaic than the former, the differences had been far less significant and these terms had begun to be used interchangeably by the time of Plato and Aristotle. See Christina H. Tarnopolsky, *Prudes, Perverts, and Tyrants: Plato's Gorgias and the Politics of Shame* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010) and Douglass Cairns, *Aidos: The Psychology and Ethics of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greek Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>89</sup> See W. D. Ross, *Aristotle* (London: Routledge, 1995[1923]), Ch. 6; Carns Lord, "Aristotle," in eds. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, *History of Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

[*phainomena*] per se. *Phainomema* refers to what appears to us in experience.<sup>90</sup> In this regard, Aristotle's political theory is experiential and empirical—though not *empiricist*<sup>91</sup>—in that he never loses sight of the political reality. Keenly acknowledging the fact that it is almost impossible to “stimulate the many towards being fine and good [*kalokagathia*],” Aristotle admits that however unfortunate it may seem, most people “live by their feelings[.]”<sup>92</sup> To pay due attention to Aristotle's realism means to see his analysis of things “that are human,” of which feelings [*pathē*] as well as the states of characters [*hexeis*] are important part.

My reading of Aristotle helps us to better understand the mechanism of impudence, examining its negative relationship with the experience of shame [*aischunē*], its near relationship with courage [*andreia*] and daring [*tólma*], and a peculiar condescending bearing it carries. Impudence arises in a particularly partisan social context, where we, intentionally or otherwise, are prone to hurt the feelings of certain group of people while sparing those of others. From a first person perspective, our

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<sup>90</sup> In *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle claims that *phainomena* are “evidences and examples” for ethical inquiry. Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, 1216b27. Certainly, it is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss Aristotle's methodological use of *phainomena*. Notice that G. E. L. Owen explains that Aristotelian *phainomena* may include our opinion and belief as well as observed facts and the data of perception. W. D. Ross in the original Oxford translation often renders the word *phainomena* by “observed facts.” Martha Nussbaum advances a more robust conclusion that his use of *phainomena* reveals his methodological point that there is no “sharp Baconian distinction between perception-data and communal belief” and what exists is just “a loose and inclusive notion of experience.” See Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), Ch. 8.

<sup>91</sup> The distinction between empiricism and empiricalism is from Richard Flathman, when he defines Michael Oakeshott's inclination toward to the latter. See Flathman, *Pluralism and Liberal Democracy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 111.

<sup>92</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1179b10-17.

impudence may remain unknown to ourselves, or we realize it but often do not fully reflect upon it. It is the comportment we take as we feel empowered, inspired, and assertive. As a second or third person, however, we often accuse our interlocutors and disputants of their impudence, pointing to their shameless and provocative assertion.

To begin with, impudence can be understood by way of its negative relationship with shame. For Aristotle, shame [*aischunē*] is “a kind of fear of disrepute”<sup>93</sup> that comes as a result of disgraceful actions. Although it is often treated much like a virtue in the sense that the person prone to shame can also be considered “intermediate”<sup>94</sup> as opposed to two immoderate extremes, shame does not seem to be proper to the virtuous for two reasons. First, the virtuous would never voluntarily carry out any disgraceful actions from which a feeling of disgrace springs. It might be “a good thing conditionally: if a good person were to do this, then he would feel shame.”<sup>95</sup> In this hypothetical situation, we can imagine a good person susceptible to the experience of shame. Second, shame is not properly spoken of as a virtue since it is more like a *feeling* than a *state* of character.<sup>96</sup> When he says this, Aristotle is juxtaposing “a feeling” [*pathos*] with “a state” [*hexis*]. *Pathos* is a term that has “connotation of passivity” in a sense of “being affected.” It could refer to “an attribute (an affection) or an event/experience (an affect),”<sup>97</sup> but is clearly distinguished from a state of character.

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<sup>93</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1128b11.

<sup>94</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1108a34.

<sup>95</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1128b30.

<sup>96</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1128b10. Emphasis added.

<sup>97</sup> Cairns, *Aidōs*, 393.



Within the system of Aristotelian ethics—which is essentially a science of virtues—impudence [*anaischuntia*] as a derivative of shame may seem to merit little to no attention. For it is nothing but the absence of shame—the lack of an already marginalized pseudo-virtue. It seems clear that impudence is even less proper to the virtuous. Again, they would not engage in any reprehensible activities. Even if they do, it is still very unlikely that they feel no shame at their own disgraceful actions. Those who feel no shame are unreservedly bad. There seems to be no way to gloss over the baseness of impudence. Perhaps this is why Aristotle includes *anaischuntia* into the list of feelings that are utterly base. He states that “[not] every action or feeling admits of the mean. For some have names immediately connected with depravity [*phaulotes*], such as spite, impudence [*anaischuntia*], envy, and, among actions, adultery, theft, homicide. All these, and others like them, are so called because they themselves, and not their excesses or deficiencies, are bad [*phaulos*].”<sup>98</sup>

However, it is misleading to conclude that we can distinguish some people of lowly character from others. Again, impudence is not a *character* but a *pathos*, which implies that there are particular conditions against which people may or may not be unusually susceptible to impudence. Aristotle claims that people usually “[feel] shame toward those whose opinion [they take] account of.” The point is that there exists an audience whom they think highly of and care about; the very audience is “those who are going to be with them and those watching them[.]”<sup>99</sup> What Aristotle pinpoints is a

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<sup>98</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1107a9-11.

<sup>99</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, Book II, Chapter 6, Section 14, 18.

partisan or tribal attitude revealed in the feelings of shame or the lack thereof. One brief conclusion to be drawn from the analysis of impudence by way of its negative relationship with shame, therefore, is that whether or not we are prone to impudence depends to large extent on the nature of the audience we converse, cope, and fight with.

The marginal place of impudence in the scheme of Aristotelian ethics is beyond dispute. Yet the analysis of impudence paired with shame leaves us with some important questions. What exactly is the affective and emotional experience of impudence? If impudence falls on the domain of *pathos*, which means the realm of “things accompanied by pleasure or pain[,]”<sup>100</sup> what kind of pleasure or pain does impudence generate? What are the effects of impudence on the person who has that bearing as well as on his contenders? In other words, what is to expect of the politics of impudence? In order to answer these questions, we need to see more carefully how this particular *pathos* comes into play in reality, instead of placing impudence at the bottom of the Aristotelian taxonomy of virtues.

At first glance, one would claim that the first question has already been answered. As shown above, *anaischuntia* is a derivative of *aischunē*; hence the experience of impudence also concerns a particular perturbation of the mind arising from the apprehension of an evil at hand in the experience of shame. In other words, the emotional experience of impudence is certainly the same feelings that shame is all about—the fear of disrepute. The only difference is that in the case of impudence, those feelings are experienced not by their presence but by their absence. This explanation, however,

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<sup>100</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1105b23.

sounds almost absurd. What does it mean that the impudent person is being affected by the absence of that particular fear of disrepute? Does this mean that he feels the nonexistence of the very pain? How can we describe his affective experience of the non-feeling? It seems that in this way, we cannot sufficiently identify what exactly is experienced at the moment of impudence. But there is one clue to better address this problem, which requires a further reading of Aristotle's account of courage.

Courage [*andreia*] is certainly one of the most admirable virtues in the large scheme of Aristotelian ethics. Interestingly, however, Aristotle finds an overlap between impudence and courage in that both display a sense of fearlessness. That overlap, strictly speaking, is illusory because the former reveals a particular type of wrongheaded fearlessness while the latter is clearly the laudable one. Further, the truly courageous person is not entirely fearless. Put it precisely, he is the one who fears “for the right reason, in the right way, and at the right time[.]” As a virtuous man, he “feels and acts in accordance with the merits of the case, and as reason requires.” Nonetheless, Aristotle still acknowledges the fact that “some people extend the term ‘courage’ to cover [the case of impudence], since [the impudent person] has a degree of similarity to the courageous person, in that the latter is also a sort of fearless person.”<sup>101</sup>

This “transference of meaning”<sup>102</sup> might be of no interest to those who faithfully uphold the orderly system of Aristotelian virtues. Yet it is Aristotle's point as well that such a transference transpires as places where the virtuous coexist with—and are almost

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<sup>101</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1115b16-20.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

always outnumbered by—those who are not virtuous. He seems to suggest that the lure of impudence arises from its pretension of holding qualities that courage is meant to offer such as confidence and pride. Like “rash cowards,” who attempt to make themselves appear to be courageous but do not actually “stand their ground against what is fearful,” the impudent person might be driven and guided by a mistaken impulse. But the perceived similarity between courage and impudence gives evidence for the latter’s appeal. Impudence as a *pathos* does not have to be *negatively* defined as the absence of shame; it can be understood by way of its alleged emotional contiguity to courage.

The confidence-inspiring element of impudence can be reaffirmed by my first example: Socrates’s condemnation of his fellow Athenian citizens for their “*tólma* and *anaischuntia*.” As was indicated in one of the footnotes prior, it is debatable how to translate those terms into the right English equivalents. For instance, this phrase has been rendered into “effrontery and impudence” (by Tredennick and Garold Tarrant), “impudence and shamelessness” (by Harold Fowler Hugh), or “boldness and shamelessness” (by G. M. A. Grube). What merits special attention is the fact that the association of *tólma* and *anaischuntia* demonstrates that there exist semantic, discursive, and emotional affinities between being over-daring and being impudent.

*Tólma* usually refers to daring aggression.<sup>103</sup> In Aeschylus’s trilogy of *Oresteia*, for example, *tólma* is first mentioned when Agamemnon is about to sacrifice Iphigeneia:

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<sup>103</sup> Sometimes even with a connotation of “a quality of the actively resolute and frequently criminal spirit.” John R. Wilson, “Tolma and the Meaning of Talas,” *The American Journal of Philology*, Vol. 92, No. 2 (1971).

But when [Agamemnon] had donned the yoke of Necessity, with veering of mind, impious, unholy, unsanctified, from that moment he changed his intention and began to conceive that deed of **uttermost audacity** [*pantotolmon*].<sup>104</sup>

Similarly, both Sophocles and Euripides use the same term to describe Odysseus's blameworthiness.<sup>105</sup> In *Philoctetes*, Odysseus urges Neoptolemus to contrive some evil acts. He fully acknowledges the honest and noble nature of the son of Achilles, but presses this young man to cajole and cheat the mind of Philoctetes nonetheless:

I know, my son, thy honest nature shrinks

From glozing words and practice of deceit;

But (for 'tis sweet to snatch a victory)

**Be bold** [*tólma*] to-day and honest afterwards.

For **one brief hour of lying** [*anaiides hémeras*] follow me;

All time to come shall prove thy probity.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 218-222.

<sup>105</sup> For the dramatic change in depicting the image of Odysseus as an immoral demagogue by the late fifth-century tragic writers, which is a marked departure from the Homeric identification of him as a moderate leader, see Silvia Montiglio, *From Villain to Hero: Odysseus in Ancient Thought* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011).

<sup>106</sup> Sophocles, *Philoctetes*, 82-85. This translation is done by F. Storr from the Loeb edition. David Grene's rendition is as follows:

"I know, young man, it is not your natural bent  
to say such things nor to contrive such mischief.

But the prize of victory is pleasant to win.

Bear up [*tolma*]: another time we shall prove honest.

Notice that boldness is tied with impudent deeds. Boldness associated with impudence offers confidence and power to set in motion a daring act. The juxtaposition of two different translations of *tólma* also suggests that to be bold means to bear up with difficulties to do something. The very boldness is in the service of disgraceful deeds. In Euripides's *Hecuba*, there is a scene where Odysseus let Hecuba—the Trojan queen now enslaved by the Greeks—know the decision of her daughter Polyxena's sacrifice and admonishes her to “endure it [*tólma tad*].” This callous and unethical nature of Odysseus's words is confirmed by the immediately following chanting of the chorus leader: “Alas! how cursed is slavery always in its nature, forced by the might of the stronger to endure unseemly treatment.”<sup>107</sup>

When Plato's Socrates characterizes “*tólma* and *anaischuntia*” as arguably the most notable attributes of democratic citizens, this should be read in the nexus between impudence and over-daring (or a perverted and pejorative form of courage). It is no surprise that Plato later in his *Republic* critically assesses the refashioning of the meaning of impudence in democracy: democratic people call “insolence good breeding, anarchy freedom, extravagance magnificence, and impudence [*anadeia*] courage [*andreia*].”<sup>108</sup> Plato would say that impudence deceives people by appearing to be other than it actually

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For one brief shameless portion of a day [*anai des hémeras*]  
give me yourself, and then for all the rest  
you may be called most scrupulous of men.”

Note that Grene's translation of *anai des hémeras* is more straightforward.

<sup>107</sup> Euripides, *Hecuba*, 326-332.

<sup>108</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 560e-561a.

is. Nonetheless, it is still true that people often equate one thing with another, calling, as Shakespeare once put, “honorable boldnes impudent sawcinesse,” and vice versa.<sup>109</sup>

As shown above, the experience of impudence can be explicated through the analysis of its relationship with shame on the one hand, and that with courage or daring on the other. Impudence is a *pathos* that presumes a certain degree of partisanship, which enables one to stay empowered and motivated while causing harm to his ability to feel the proper shame before his opponents. In other words, impudence displays one’s status brimming over with the feelings of confidence and daring, which would lead to his shameless disregard for whom he comes into conflict with. His impudence, which is self-aggrandizing viewed from his first person perspective, can infuriate and exasperate others. The reason that impudence can provoke others to anger is that it invites and induces competing claims to superiority. For this, Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* offers an insightful perspective.

In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle defines *aischunē* as “a sort of pain and agitation concerning the class of evils, whether present or past or future, that seem to bring a person into disrespect,”<sup>110</sup> which sounds not very far from the definition he makes in the ethical works. Yet, with regard to *anaischuntia*, he drops one delicate hint for a richer interpretation. He states that “[let] *anaischuntia* [be defined as] a belittling about these same things.”<sup>111</sup> Belittling here is *oligōria*, which is an action whose emotional

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<sup>109</sup> William Shakespeare, *Henry IV*, Part II.

<sup>110</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, Book II, Chapter 6, Section 2.

<sup>111</sup> Idid.

manifestation cannot be reduced to the lack of the pain concerning disrespect. It can be substantiated and instantiated in a range of different ways, but it comes with a perception of one's own dominance and superiority vis-à-vis one's perceived inferior. Aristotle, elsewhere in the same treatise, explains what he means by belittling more in details. According to him, belittling is "an actualization of opinion about what seems worthless." It includes apathetic indifference to "whatever amounts to little or nothing," but it also carries with it a more active gesture of disregard and denigration. Aristotle highlights that "there are three species of belittling: contempt [*kataphronēsis*], spite [*epēreasmōs*], and insult [*hybris*]." <sup>112</sup>

It is worth noting that belittling—contempt, spite, and insult—is a relational term that presumes an asymmetric, hierarchical, or partisan human relationship. It requires a concrete opposite party toward whom one embodies the *pathos* of superiority. What the impudent person is said to belittle is not just the feelings of shame or fear of disrepute. It also bespeaks the particular way in which he belittles his audience, conceiving of his place as superior to them. The audience has to be regarded as worthless. It does not necessarily mean that the impudent person has genuinely and indisputably firm grounds for establishing his superiority over the given audience. The point is that his acts can be seen as if he thinks he *were* superior to them. In other words, his impudence is emblematic of a superior outlook, and can be construed as a way that he feeds off his

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<sup>112</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, Book II, Chapter 1, Section 3. For the main differences between these three species (especially their anger-inducing nature), see David Konstan, "Aristotle on anger and the emotions: the strategies of status," in Susanna Braund and Glenn W. Most eds., *Ancient Anger: Perspectives from Homer to Galen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).



self-assurance and self-importance. In belittling his perceived inferior, he can exult in the asserted sense of superiority.

Reading Aristotle's account of *anaischuntia* in conjunction with other related concepts such as *aischunē*, *andreia*, *tólma*, and *oligōria*, we can now better understand what is experienced when people become impudent. First, impudence is a form of expressing a sense of superiority or a kind of self-assertion rising from an excess of energy. Impudence can be motivational as it is empowering and inspiring. The lure of impudence stems from this self-magnifying and enlivening character, which could explain why people are inclined and vulnerable to impudence. Second, insofar as impudence is indicative of the desire to belittle the opinion of another—and thereby bringing down that person in general—it tends to provoke the anger of the other party. It is displeasing to behold and deal with such impudence since the asserted superiority of the impudent may be seen as a threat to the opposite party. These two points—impudence is conducive to self-aggrandizement and it makes incursions into the tranquility of the other party—are different aspects of the same phenomenon.

Two literary examples should suffice to illustrate this point. The first example comes from the work of Shakespeare, where we can find one of the notable earliest registers of the English word impudence. The passage below is from his well-known play entitled *All's well that ends well* [1623], which affirms the cheering connotations of impudence while stressing the backdrop of a hierarchical relationship:

KING

Art thou so confident? Within what space  
Hop'st thou my cure?

HELEN

The greatest grace lending grace,  
Ere twice the horses of the sun shall bring  
Their fiery torcher his diurnal ring,  
Ere twice in murk and occidental damp  
Moist Hesperus hath quenched her sleepy lamp,  
Or four and twenty times the pilot's glass  
Hath told the thievish minutes how they pass,  
What is infirm, from your sound parts shall fly,  
Health shall live free, and sickness freely die.

KING

Upon thy certainty and confidence,  
What dar'st thou venture?

HELEN

Tax of **impudence**,  
A strumpet's **boldness**, a divulged shame  
Traduced by odious ballads; my maiden's name

Seared otherwise—nay, worse of worst, extended

With vilest torture, let my life be ended.<sup>113</sup>

This is the scene where Helen, the daughter of an acclaimed doctor, attempts to persuade the ailing King of France to accept an offer of her treatment. Originally pessimistic, the King is eventually convinced by Helen's confidence. The relationship between Helen and the King presumes an overtly and objectively asymmetrical hierarchy in which she is naturally given a modest estimate of her own worth and expected to submit herself to the power of her superior. Helen's posture of confidence, which may imply her potential non-compliance or resistance, appears to be impudent only against her assigned lowliness and submissiveness. When she asserts her eagerness at the risk of her life, we can see her impudence in action, parading as a curious amalgam of base shamelessness and cheerful boldness. This distinctive semantics of impudence helps us elaborate the meaning of Helen's transgression of the expected boundaries drawn for restricting her from going beyond the confines of the assigned submissive role. For Helen, impudence and active agency seem inseparable.

The second example is from an English translation of Homer's *Iliad*, which was completed about half a century after the publication of *All's well that ends well*. The translator was the octogenarian Thomas Hobbes who deliberately chose the word

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<sup>113</sup> Willian Shakespeare, *All's Well that ends Well*, lines 768-785. Emphasis added.

impudence for *anaideia*—a Greek term that is the private of *aidos* [shame].<sup>114</sup> The very first pages of *Iliad* presents Achilles rising against Agamemnon, accusing him of prioritizing his greed over any other matter including the task of safeguarding his own soldiers. The reason that soldiers are dying of plague, according to the seer, is that “the god’s enraged because Agamemnon spurned his priest [Chryses], he refused to free his daughter, he refused the ransom.” Agamemnon—though he would later grudgingly agree to give “the young girl Chryseis” back to her family—seems to be concerned mostly about his own prize: “my prize is snatched away!”<sup>115</sup> Here comes Achilles snarling at Agamemnon rendered in the Hobbes edition:

O **impudence!** Achilles then replied,  
What other of th’ Achaeans willingly,  
Will, when you only for yourself provide,  
Go where you bid, or fight with th’ enemy?<sup>116</sup>

Elaine Scarry drew special attention to this particular passage by juxtaposing the Hobbes’s translation cited above with that of Robert Fagle’s which is more modern,

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<sup>114</sup> As was mentioned before, I generally use two pairs of words indicating shame and impudence interchangeably: *aidos/anaideia* and *aischunē/anaischuntia*.

<sup>115</sup> Homer, *Iliad*, Book I, 111-113, 141.

<sup>116</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes, Vol. 10: Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1839), 145-148. [Electronic version: <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/homer-the-english-works-vol-x-iliad-and-odyssey>]. Emphasis added.

popular, and literary. Her point is to stress Hobbes's careful choice of impudence over shamelessness.<sup>117</sup> Whereas shamelessness—the word selected by Fagle—“designates a state of moral deficit that could occur at any level of the political hierarchy, from its lowest rung to, as here, its highest[,]” claims Scarry, impudence “is an allegation that is normally reserved for a subordinate, for one with less majesty and status than the person making the accusation.” Hobbes's rendition, therefore, means to capture the tension between Achilles and Agamemnon: “Hobbes, in choosing to use the word *impudence* to describe King Agamemnon, has conspired with Achilles to reverse the normal understanding of power lines.”<sup>118</sup>

Scarry's perspicacity in highlighting the political hierarchy within which the emotion and practice of impudence can make sense notwithstanding, her simple characterization of Achilles as Agamemnon's inferior can be misleading. Clearly, Agamemnon is the king and commander. Yet it is also true that Agamemnon, as George Kennedy once briefly pointed out, is rather “Achilles's inferior in fighting, in fame, and in birth.”<sup>119</sup> That Agamemnon is under the accusation of being impudent, *pace* Scarry, does not necessarily mark the subversion of the entire hierarchical structure. What appears to be unequivocal instead is that Achilles is being provoked by the perceived impudence of Agamemnon. Achilles understands that he has been treated as insignificant

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<sup>117</sup> Fagle's translation of the passage is as follows: “Shameless—armored in shamelessness—always shrewd with greed! How could any Argive soldier obey your orders, freely and gladly do your sailing for you or fight your enemies, full force?”

<sup>118</sup> Elaine Scarry, *Thermonuclear Monarchy: Choosing Between Democracy and Doom* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2014), 219-220.

<sup>119</sup> See his footnote n. 12 in Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 117.

and unworthy and vents out his anger as a legitimate response. By making the very castigation of Agamemnon for his impudence, Achilles holds him in contempt, challenging his alleged superiority. In turn, this would invite Agamemnon's disdain for his opponent, giving rise to a vicious spiral of impudence.

The lesson I draw from the examples of Helen and Achilles is not that impudence is “the vice of the saucy underling who doesn't offer an appropriately studied deference.”<sup>120</sup> The point is that impudence is the mark of competing claims to superiority, which buttresses or undercuts the alleged background hierarchy. In democracy, those claims to *putative* superiority become more tentative, wrangled, and subtler. Although democratic citizens normally discredit any monolithic and permanent status hierarchy, they still understand their political views and those of their opponents in terms of high and low, or of noble and despicable. Assuming their own superior status, in other words, citizens do not have to abandon the precept of democratic equality entirely. Formal equality recedes into the background—but not into complete oblivion. Citizens can treat their opponent as an *inferior* while giving a perfunctory nod to democratic equality. Equality is coupled with, and adumbrated by, the consciousness of the pleasing sense of superiority. This reassuring sense of superiority manifested in the comportment of democratic impudence is provocative and belittling. It is no surprise that Aristotle understands that the elevation of impudence—contempt and insult, among other things—

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<sup>120</sup> Don Herzog, *Poisoning the Minds of the Lower Orders* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 214.

can cause serious faction [*stasis*] and disturbances in politics.<sup>121</sup>

## MAGNANIMITY AS A HOMEOPATHIC REMEDY

Drawing heavily on Aristotle, among others, this chapter has shown thus far that although impudence may seem to deserve absolute rejection as a classic example of baseness, it is in fact an ambivalent *pathos*, which has both positive and negative valences. My reading of Aristotle has suggested that like courage [*andreia*], impudence provides over-daring confidence. The association of impudence and belittling [*oligōria*] has helped us understand how competing claims to superiority can invoke, assert, or disturb a certain hierarchy, provoking each other to anger and heightening mutual tension and aggression.

Notwithstanding that impudence may escalate mutual contempt and hostility, simply denouncing the politics of impudence and insisting on bringing more shame, deference, or decorum into the sphere of democratic politics might not be the best solution. For democratic citizens do not seem to dispense with impudence without seriously undermining its motivational power. Further, according to Aristotle, impudence is a problem of vice or *akrasia*.<sup>122</sup> It means that even if we can experience the moment of

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<sup>121</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1302a16-1302b16. Aristotle acknowledges the potentially destructive effect of *kataphronēsis* and *hybris*. Although more of his examples center on the relationships between the ruler and the ruled in a non-democratic regime, he explicitly states that the causes of a drastic and often violent change both “in constitutional and in royal governments must be deemed to be the same[.]” Aristotle, *Politics*, 1311a22-25.

<sup>122</sup> *Akrasia* is normally translated into incontinence or the weakness of will. I retain the term *akrasia* as it is throughout for two reasons. First, the word incontinence presents unnecessary distractions as it points to a medical problem concerning

recognition or self-criticism and become much more uncomfortable with our own impudent behavior, that does not necessarily prevent us from *knowingly* acting in the similar way. If it is hard to force us to feel a pang of shame at displaying the comportment of impudence in a particularly heated condition of democratic politics and is even harder to make us bring to an end the politics of impudence, we should perhaps develop a different strategy—a strategy that is rather *homeopathic* than *allopathic*. By that I mean that the problem of impudence can be mitigated and well managed by steering the superiority-promoting power—or *dunamis*, to use Aristotle’s own term<sup>123</sup>—so that we can re-channel and re-direct the sense of superiority to better ends.

Recall that in *Rhetoric*, Aristotle enumerates three actions related to the demonstration of *anaischuntia*, each of which presumes more explicitly the need for asserting one’s sense of dominance and superiority: contempt, spite, and insult. All of these will likely lead us to wrongdoings. An impudent or shameless person is one of the classic examples of wrongdoers:

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urination and defecation. Second, not only did Aristotle not have a robust conception of “will” in the way we moderns do, placing exclusive focus on will can also be wrong.

<sup>123</sup> The term *dunamis*, as we have already seen above, is often understood as potentiality in its relation to actuality [*energeia*], which refers to the power of a thing to be in a different and more complete state. However, *dunamis* can be understood simply as the power to produce changes, whose exercise is described as a movement or process [*kinēsis*]. With respect to feelings, Aristotle often explains that “we are said to be moved” [*kineisthai*], not “to be in a certain state” [*diakeisthai*]. That which enables us to flow into a certain emotion can be discerned as a particular capacity [*dunamis*]. Then, we can first say that impudence points to the particular situation in which the shame-inducing *dunamis*, without which we are incapable of feeling shame, has gone awry. Or, more interestingly, we may also want to ask whether there would be possibilities that impudence is in fact a kind of an intricate affective situation in which we are affected by the meddling *dunamis* of the related species—capacities that concern the sense of superiority. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1106a4-6; *On the Soul*, 412a9-10; *Metaphysics*, 417b and 1048a25.



Let wrongdoing [*to adikein*] be [defined as] doing harm willingly in contravention of the law. Law is either specific [*idion*] or common [*koinon*]. I call specific the written law under which people live in a polis and common whatever, though unwritten, seems to be agreed to among all. ... Now everything they do willingly they do not do by deliberate choice [*prohairesis*], but whatever they do by deliberate choice they do knowingly[.] ... **Vice [*kakia*] and weakness [*akrasia*]** are the reasons why people make the choice of harming and doing bad things contrary to law; for if certain people have one or more depravity, it is in relation to this that they are in fact depraved and are wrongdoers; for example, one is ungenerous with money, another is indulgent in pleasures of the body, ... **another shameless through contempt [*oligōria*] for public opinion[.]**<sup>124</sup>

Impudence can be seen as an unpleasant threat to others. Why do we—those who are as yet not virtuous enough—keep giving in to the *pathos* of impudence, then?

The answer given by Aristotle is vice and *akrasia*. In order to fully understand his answer, we need to attend to his discussion of the human soul. Aristotle assumes that the human soul consists of two distinct parts—one part is for reason [*logon ekon*] and the other for the non-rational [*alogon*]. He then makes subdistinctions for each part. The non-rational part of the soul is divided into the merely vegetative section, which is “the cause of nutrition and growth.” The other subdivision of the non-rational part of the soul consists in “appetites [*epithumia*] and desire in general.” And this is the realm where non-rational desire “conflicts with and resists [reason].”

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<sup>124</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, Book I, Chapter 10, Section 3.

The rational part of the soul is twofold as well: “one that has reason to the full extent by having it within itself, and another [that has it] by listening to reason as to a father.” The former is purely intellectual and the latter concerns human character. It is worth noting that Aristotle states that the appetite element of the non-rational part of the soul “does seem to partake in reason” insofar as it “both listens to reason and obeys it.”<sup>125</sup> We might suggest, therefore, that his dual model could be seen as a kind of a tripartite classification of the human soul with a middle domain that can encompass the second subdivisions of each realm.

In fact, both vice and *akrasia* present a puzzle. The vicious person must be guided by reason. For he is said to act on deliberate choice [*prohairesis*], which makes him not different from the virtuous person on this particular matter. Both the virtuous, the vicious, and the continent<sup>126</sup> act on their rational decision. Yet the vicious person, on the other hand, cannot be guided by reason precisely because he does not live in accordance with reason. In this respect, he must be dominated by the non-rational part of his soul. What that means, therefore, is that the vicious person is governed in part by the rational part while at once being governed by the non-rational part. He decides to act viciously based on his deliberate choice. His rational part of the soul is severely affected in such a way that his decision serves to satisfy his non-rational desires.

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<sup>125</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1102a26-1103a11. As for the question of whether the nonrational part of the soul is separable from the rational counterpart, Aristotle says “it does not matter for present purposes.” He leaves it open whether these two parts “distinguished as parts of a body” or “they are two only in account, and inseparable by nature, as the convex and concave are in a surface.[”] For the further discussion of the subject, see his *On the Soul*, 413b13-32,

<sup>126</sup> Like shame, continence is not a virtue. “Continence is not a virtue either, but is, as it were, mixed[.]” Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1128b35.

The *akratic* person acts on his non-rational desire, not on his deliberate choice.<sup>127</sup> So it seems more simple to point out that he is controlled by the non-rational part of the soul. For this person to be *akratic*, however, the rational part of his soul must not cease to function because *akrasia* presupposes and presumes the presence of knowledge. It concerns actions that he has *knowingly* done *against his best judgment*.<sup>128</sup> Socrates would not agree with this argument. For him, it is absurd to suppose that a wise man ever acts against his best judgment.<sup>129</sup> Those who are called *akratic* are simply ignorant, argues Socrates.<sup>130</sup> Yet, what appears to be true at the level of appearances [*phainomena*] is that the *akratic* person “knows what he does is bad, but does it because of what affects [*pathos*] him[.]”<sup>131</sup> The main task before Aristotle was to reconcile the dispute between the Socratic insight—that *akrasia* is an illusion—and the common beliefs [*endoxon*]—that even some intelligent person [*phronimos*] often seems to be *akratic*. Aristotle retains the interpretive space for *akrasia* by suggesting two conceptual divides: the division of the universal and the particular and that of actuality [*energeia*] and potentiality [*dunamis*]. He argues that it is possible that the *akratic* person has “knowledge of the universal but not that of the particular,”<sup>132</sup> and that he has knowledge while not attending

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<sup>127</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1111b13-15.

<sup>128</sup> Aristotle discusses *akrasia* at length in the seventh book of *Nicomachean Ethics*. His account of vice is far less extensive.

<sup>129</sup> Plato, 358d.

<sup>130</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1145b24-27.

<sup>131</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1145b12.

<sup>132</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1146b33-1147a3.

to it.<sup>133</sup>

If the impudent person is *akratic*, what conclusion can we draw from this here? That means the person acts on desires to disregard and disdain other people while knowing that the very action he is taking might not be the best one. Whereas the intemperate person, an example of the vicious person in Aristotle's discussion, is "led on by rational choice, believing he ought always to pursue the present pleasure," the *akratic* person "thinks the opposite[.]" The question is why he would "pursue it nevertheless."<sup>134</sup> The main lesson from Aristotle's *akrasia* comes down to the problem of actualization. The actualization of one potentiality would diminish the actualization of others.<sup>135</sup> Even if one holds a certain belief—such as that democratic citizens should be respectful, self-critical, and tolerant when interacting with other fellow citizens whose views and perspectives are dissimilar and opposing to theirs—he can fall prey to impudence because according to his perception [*aisthēsis*]<sup>136</sup>, the pleasure from impudence may appear to be much more immediate. In the very enjoyment, he may anticipate that some regrets will come. But that does not mean that he can easily stop yielding to impudence.

The Aristotelian philosophy of *pathos* offers a useful theoretical tool with which we can better address the question of democratic impudence. That democratic citizens are

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<sup>133</sup> The most striking examples are those who are "asleep, mad, or drunk." Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1147a13.

<sup>134</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1146b22-24.

<sup>135</sup> See Justin Gosling, "Mad, Drunk, or Asleep? – Aristotle's Akratic," *Phronesis*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (1993).

<sup>136</sup> This is "a sphere controlled by perception." Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1147a26.

susceptible to the *pathos* of impudence does not mean that citizens are *characteristically* impudent or shameless. It does not have to be the case that citizens are a kind of person for whom impudent conduct emanates from a certain fixed disposition. That people might be simply *akratic*—not even necessarily be vicious—to be inclined to impudence means that they are not entirely free of moral constraints. My final aim is to seek an Aristotelian remedy to the problem of impudence, acknowledging the empowering and motivating element of impudence and seeking out different strategies with which to keep motivation and self-conceit alive while preventing or alleviating too much destructive aggression and obstinacy.

Again, this remedy is *homeopathic* rather than *allopathic* in that it searches for a way to negotiate—not to repress or reprove—the feelings of superiority. The point is that we need to pay more sustained and explicit attention to the issue of how to address and, to some extent, pander to the half-hidden desires for superiority. As we have seen earlier, there seem to be the real urges within us for self-promotion or reassuring self-worth, which are often spouted via the comportment of impudence. Rather than disregard or suppress those haunting desires for superiority, my strategy is to find the way to harness the pleasing and motivational power of superiority while directing that toward better ends. For this particular purpose, I finally draw on Aristotle's analysis of *magnanimity*.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> I am indebted to Anne Norton for our conversation regarding the idea of magnanimity. Though it was not about Aristotle nor about its relevance in terms of taming impudence, our conversation led me to think further about the particular moral psychology of magnanimity. Norton once claimed that magnanimity is democracy's peculiar virtue: "The practices of a liberalism triumphant in the common-place points to the capacity of democracy to exceed itself. If we look for a democratic ethic, we should look for the ethic suited to its virtues, an ethic of excess,

My suggestion may seem odd at first. For Aristotle, magnanimity literally means “greatness of soul” [*megalo-psychia*]. He even states that magnanimity is “a sort of adornment [*kosmos*] of the virtues”<sup>138</sup>—the complete virtue and excellence in the fullest sense. The magnanimous man, the virtuous man of all, is the person who “thinks himself worthy of great things and is really worthy of them.” Put simply, “he is the best person.”<sup>139</sup> Then, it looks almost absurd to turn to this greatest virtue—which would probably remain as an unachievable goal<sup>140</sup>—in the course of searching for a realistic remedy to the politics of impudence. There seems to be too wide a gulf between magnanimity and impudence. Whereas the magnanimous person deserves high praises, the impudent and shameless person is at most half-base. To demand that ordinary citizens cultivate the virtue of magnanimity would be a bridge too far.

Furthermore, there are some ambiguities of Aristotle’s account of magnanimity in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Let alone the vexing question of whether magnanimity is ultimately a theoretical virtue or a moral virtue<sup>141</sup>, scholars and commentators have long

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an ethic that asks for more. Lack is the origin, desire the proper impulse, of democracy. Magnanimity is its peculiar virtue.” Anne Norton, *Republic of Signs: Liberal Theory and American Popular Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 174.

<sup>138</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1124a1.

<sup>139</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1123b2-3, 28.

<sup>140</sup> Aristotle himself says that “it is hard to be truly magnanimous[.]” *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1124a3.

<sup>141</sup> The most notable contenders of each claim are R. A. Gauthier and Harry Jaffa. See their respective works: R. A. Gauthier, *Magnanimité: L’ideal de la grandeur dans la Philosophie Païenne et dans la Théologie Chrétienne* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1951) and Harry Jaffa, *Thomism and Aristotelianism: A Study of the Commentary by Thomas Aquinas on the “Nicomachean Ethics”* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952). See also Susan D. Collins, *Aristotle and the Rediscovery of Citizenship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 61-66 and Jacob

expressed their discontents with his notion of magnanimity due in part to its tenor of arrogance and aloofness. For instance, W. D. Ross understands that “as a whole the picture [of the magnanimous man] is an unpleasing one.” It bespeaks “somewhat nakedly the self-absorption which is the bad side of Aristotle’s ethics.”<sup>142</sup> After quoting a lengthy passage on magnanimity from the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bertrand Russell comments that “one shudders to think what a vain man would be like.”<sup>143</sup> W. F. R. Hardie also points out that since “nothing is great” for the magnanimous man, he gives an impression of “looking down on human affairs[.]”<sup>144</sup> H. H. Joachim and Angela Hobbs even suggest that Aristotle is being humorous or flippant in his account of magnanimity while Jacob Howland sees Aristotle’s implicit criticism of the magnanimous man.<sup>145</sup>

While acknowledging both conceptual and discursive difficulties that the study of Aristotelian magnanimity might bring forth, I aim to propose a different reading of Aristotle—a reading that does not center on his notion of magnanimity as the crown virtue that is the pinnacle of Aristotelian human excellence nor on the magnanimous man’s alleged deficiencies. Instead, my primary concern is with the *pathos* of magnanimity that can serve as a backchannel to gratify the haunting desires for

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Howland, “Aristotle’s Great-Souled Man,” *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 64, No. 1 (2002), 29-31.

<sup>142</sup> W. D. Ross, *Aristotle* (London: Routledge, 1995[1923]), 218.

<sup>143</sup> Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1975), 176.

<sup>144</sup> W. F. R. Hardie, ““Magnanimity” in Aristotle’s Ethics,” *Phronesis*, Vol. 23, No.1 (1978), 65.

<sup>145</sup> H. H. Joachim, *Aristotle: The Nicomachean Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1951), 125; Angela Hobbs, *Plato and The Hero: Courage, Manliness and the Impersonal Good* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 39; Jacob Howland, “Aristotle’s Great-Souled Man,” *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 64, No. 1 (2002).

superiority. Much emphasis, in other words, shall be placed on the images and emotions that the *pathos* of magnanimity evokes and sets in motion. For this particular task, I suggest that we ought to pay special attention to Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, where his more earthy and modest account of magnanimity is put forward.<sup>146</sup>

One passage from the *Rhetoric* shows an obvious departure from Aristotle's general theory of magnanimity as a unitary and complete moral virtue. It is from the section where he offers his stereotypical portrayal of young people. In general, young people are described as impulsive and optimistic. They are "prone to desires and inclined to do whatever they desire." In his ethical works, Aristotle locates his discussion of the attributes of the young within the context of feelings. For example, he underlines that "the feeling of shame is suitable for youth" because young people "live by their feelings [*pathei*], and hence often go astray[.]"<sup>147</sup> For youth, therefore, shame seems to be a good emotional deterrent. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle elaborates further on the subject. A few more qualities are ascribed to this specific age group. Most notable is his explicit reference to magnanimity.

Aristotle claims that although young people are concerned with honor, they "love victory more[.]" For they "long for superiority and victory is a kind of superiority." In this context, he bluntly states that "they are magnanimous[.]"<sup>148</sup> Anyone who is familiar

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<sup>146</sup> Heidegger once claimed that "this work of Aristotle (the *Rhetoric*) must be taken as the first hermeneutic of the everydayness of Being with one another." See his *Being and Time* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 178.

<sup>147</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1128b16-20.

<sup>148</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, Book II, Chapter 2, Section 11.



with his definition of magnanimity found in his ethical works cannot but pause here and ask: what can this possibly mean that those young people who are impulsive and pleasure-loving deserve to be called magnanimous? The reason we can attribute the magnanimous properties to those young people is that they, explains Aristotle, “think [themselves] worthy of great things in magnanimity[.]”<sup>149</sup> Yet nowhere in his ethical works does he imply that the self-understanding of greatness alone can justify the name of magnanimity. As we have discussed above, the magnanimous man is the person who “thinks himself worthy of great things *and* is really worthy of them.” The person must hold some qualities objectively discernible by others. In painting young people as magnanimous in the *Rhetoric*, then, Aristotle seems to violate his own definition of magnanimity. This tension, however, offers an important occasion for rethinking about the concept of magnanimity.

Perhaps one would want to make Aristotle’s account of the young’s magnanimity congruent with his earlier discussions of the very concept in the ethical works by simply refusing to treat the young as magnanimous in the strict sense of the term. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle mentions those who “imitate [the magnanimous man].” They clearly lack the virtue but still think “themselves worthy of great things,” which he understands cannot be justified.<sup>150</sup> Like those imitators, young people also think “themselves worthy of great things,” and we know that Aristotle leaves the question unanswered whether those young are truly virtuous. The answer is most likely to be

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1124a28.

negative, mainly because those young people are described as living by their feelings, not guided by their virtues. Can young people be taken as imitators, then? The problem, though, is that Aristotle seems to tolerate young people's ungrounded claim to magnanimity while peremptorily dismissing the self-evaluation of the imitator.

There exists one meaningful difference between the young and the imitator that merits further attention. The imitator in his example are those who possess material wealth, power, or other sorts of goods, and it is the fact of their ownership of such things that would make them misread their magnanimity.<sup>151</sup> The young described in the *Rhetoric*, however, do not represent any particular economic or political classes. When he explains that young people are magnanimous, that statement cannot be regarded as describing any distinct characteristics attributable only to one or a few subdivisions of the age group. Unlike those imitators, who at least have a great deal of something that separates them from the rest of the population, young people do not necessarily have anything that can possibly prove that they are better or higher than other groups of people. To what extent is it plausible to call those young people magnanimous, who do not even have anything whatsoever that makes them distinguishable clearly from others? The incongruity between Aristotle's account of the imitator and that of young presents a puzzle.

Yet perhaps therein lies one Aristotelian answer. The real reason that we can call the young magnanimous—in other words, the reason that Aristotle's two different accounts of magnanimity can be considered not necessarily erroneous or inconsistent—is

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<sup>151</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1124a27-1124b7.

that young people are *potentially* magnanimous. Seen this way, it is much more convincing to say that their desires [*epithumia*] for superiority make them *potentially* magnanimous. Read Aristotle's explanation for the magnanimity of young people again:

And they are magnanimous; for they have not been worn down by life but are inexperienced with constraints, and to think oneself worthy of great things in magnanimity and this is characteristic of a person of good hopes.<sup>152</sup>

Here, we can see that young people, by virtue of being young, are depicted as “inexperienced” or “having not been worn down by life,” which is a sign of potentiality revealed in the form of incompleteness. Young people desire and long for superiority; and it is worth noting that according to Aristotle, even the fully magnanimous person, who must perfectly exercise the virtue of magnanimity to the full, still “wishes [*bouletai*] to be superior.”<sup>153</sup> That rational wish [*boulēsis*], which presumes the faculty of deliberation, is the developed form of sheer desire [*epithumia*]. What potentiality [*dunamis*] is to actuality [*energeia*], the desire of the young for superiority is to the rational wish of the fully magnanimous person to be superior. In portraying the young as magnanimous, Aristotle in all likelihood describes and attends to the phenomenon that they exhibit the *pathos* of magnanimity, which is another form of the sense of superiority.

Turning to magnanimity, to be clear, I do not mean to demand that ordinary citizens start conducting themselves with the utmost propriety and nobility. Within the

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<sup>152</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, Book II, Chapter 12, Section 11. The last part of the cited passage, “this is characteristic of a person of good hopes,” was rendered by J. H. Freese as “a feeling which belongs to one who is full of hope.” The Greek original is “*touto de euepidos* [hopeful or cheerful],” where *touto de* introduces an explanation of the significance of the preceding statement.

<sup>153</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1124b14.

Aristotelian understanding of human *pathei*, both impudence and magnanimity concern similar species of pleasurable activities: self-aggrandizement and confidence-inspiration. Aristotle states that “[t]he pleasures enhance the activities, and what enhances an activity is proper to it; and what are proper to things different in species are themselves different in species.”<sup>154</sup> It reassures us that we can address the problem of impudence productively by nudging people into embodying the sense of magnanimity to the extent that they are gratifying their own urges for superiority but not in the form of contempt, disrespect, and belittling. Rather than continue to intensify the already heated disputes fraught with scurrilous mutual assaults, I argue that we should learn and embody an attitude of *magnanimous* composure or disregard.

Like impudence, magnanimity is indicative of the sense of superiority—perhaps in full blossom. It is enlivening, self-aggrandizing, and delightful. If democratic citizens are magnanimous in the sense we discussed above, it means that they may still be biased, prejudiced, self-centered, and arrogant, pointedly disregarding their opponents. Unlike impudence, however, magnanimity does not tend to provoke the anger of the other party. Nor does it propel its bearers to subject their opponents to insult. In magnanimity, democratic citizens appear to be less flappable, less flammable, and less obstinate in relation to their opponents precisely because in this case, the sense of superiority can be confirmed and promoted not by hounding and pouncing on their confrontational opponents, but by, at least to large extent, accepting and making light of their losses and injuries.

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<sup>154</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1175b.

The key is this idiosyncratic composure in conjunction with the sense of superiority, which makes it possible to strike an engaged yet detached pose with respect to confrontational others. Imbued with the sense of magnanimity, even while dwelling on their prowess and self-conceit, the magnanimous citizens do not initiate or promote the downward spiral of the politics of impudence. They rather remain undamaged or at least less affected by those who are taking a swipe at them. Magnanimity rids their mind of immoderate anger and spite. Albeit detached, on the other hand, they would never retreat into the state of pusillanimity. Since their longing to be superior puts them in constant need of others as inferiors, they hardly vitiate their aspirations and willingness to engage in others.

## CONCLUSION

We began our inquiry with an acknowledgement that democratic citizens often fall prey to impudence. Democratic impudence is at once an ontological (or existential), epistemological (or intellectual), and psychological (or attitudinal) phenomenon, the phenomenon that ordinary citizens often display their contempt or shameless disregard in relation to those who hold dissimilar and opposing views and perspectives. This chapter has suggested that such phenomenon is a sign that testifies to the existence of our urges for superiority stirred up and stimulated in the antagonistic condition of democratic politics. The negative consequences of the politics of impudence seem obvious. It would heighten mutual anger, hatred, and aggression in the realm of democratic conversation

and engagement, which would result in the vicious spiral of a tense and vitriolic politics.

Nonetheless, instead of perpetuating the popular belief that ordinary citizens can and should practice mutual respect in place of reciprocal impudence, we have sought a different yet much more viable and productive strategy to honestly announce and assert the sense of superiority while at once hedging against severe reactions to it. My proposal appreciates and embraces the Aristotelian *pathos* of magnanimity—which shows an undeniable departure from the standard Aristotelian teleological ethical project but is still in line with his realistic political theory—that directs us to see how democratic citizens can savor the feelings of superiority while preventing a much more worrying trend of mutual aggression and hostility. To conclude, I shall re-emphasize the main contribution of this chapter by way of locating its place in relation to the most notable works in recent scholarship on democratic ethos, emotions, and attitudes.

First, Christina Tarnopolsky and others have attempted to rethink and rework the politics of shame, focusing self-critical—instead of conformist—repercussions of shame.<sup>155</sup> Drawing largely on Plato’s *Gorgias*, Tarnopolsky sheds light on a particular horizon opened up by shame. She warns against “the desire to banish shame from [one’s] collective psyche and polity” as shame can lead us in two different directions: one “in the direction of conformity and flattery” and the other in the direction of “critical reflection and respect.” Tarnopolsky pursues the latter possibility with her formulations of “Socratic

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<sup>155</sup> Another good recent example is Christopher Lebron, for whom shame is an affective experience citizens should embrace and further cultivate as it prompts them to self-critical reflection of potentially controversial matters such as racial injustice and inequality. See Christopher J. Lebron, *The Color of Shame: Race and Justice in Our Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

respectful shame” and “Platonic respectful shame” as opposed to “flattering shame.”<sup>156</sup>

Granted Tarnopolsky’s close reading of *Gorgias*, it is hard to be sanguine about transformative possibilities opened up by the politics of shame in terms of precipitating a more open, reflective, yet engaged democratic politics. As I have argued above, people may be immune to shame in the face of stark opposition, and even if they do experience a moment of awakening that shame is said to offer, that does not necessarily mean that they will ultimately succeed in putting their self-reflection, self-criticism, and moral and political deliberation into effect.<sup>157</sup> Instead, as long as they choose to stay active and engaging in democratic conversations rife with sharp antagonism and deep disagreements, they are prone to reassure themselves by promoting self-importance (or group-importance) in the trappings of impudence. In fact, *pace* Tarnopolsky, the dialogues between Socrates and Callicles staged in *Gorgias* can be read differently. Callicles in the end refuses to discuss with Socrates anymore, snarling at the philosopher that he “couldn’t care less about anything [Socrates says].”<sup>158</sup> The increased emotional

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<sup>156</sup> Tarnopolsky, *Prudes, Perverts, and Tyrants*.

<sup>157</sup> See the following remarks by Callicles and Socrates, respectively. Callicles: “This man [Socrates] will not stop talking nonsense! Tell me, Socrates, aren’t you ashamed, at your age, of trying to catch people’s words and of making hay out of someone’s tripping on a phrase?”; Socrates: “This fellow [Callicles] won’t put up with being benefited and with his undergoing the very thing the discussion’s about, with being disciplined.” Plato, *Gorgias*, 489b and 505c.

<sup>158</sup> *Gorgias*, 505c. Callicles dismisses Socrates’s request to continue their conversation: “Couldn’t you go through the discussion by yourself, either by speaking in your own person or by answering your own question?” *Gorgias*, 505d. The dialogues between Socrates and Callicles boils down to the question about the way people are supposed to live. Socrates advocates the life spent in philosophy while Callicles the life engaging in manly activities (speeches, oratory, and other activities in politics). Is Callicles ashamed of pursuing his way of life one-sidedly and narrow-mindedly? It’s not clear. Nor is clear either that he would become much more self-critical and deliberative had he experienced the moment of shame. Jeffrey Green

burdens and psychological costs may have made Callicles (and can likewise make ordinary democratic citizens in real life) withdraw from the heated engagement in fear of causing or receiving offenses.

Other scholars take a rather critical position on the trend in restoring shame as a democratic virtue. Most notable is Jill Locke's recent work on "unashamed citizenship." Locke aims to free democratic subjects of guilty feeling about shamelessness or incivility. Whereas scholars writing on shame and civility explore the positive effects that such emotional and attitudinal restraints put on democratic engagement,<sup>159</sup> Locke is more prone to raise the concerns of the negative effects of shame as a restraint against "the ideal of self-representation, self-fashioning, or a healthy democratic skepticism toward tradition and custom or hierarchy[.]"<sup>160</sup> For Locke, democratic life would benefit not so much from valuing shame as from invigorating shamelessness precisely because shame as "an anchoring sensibility" tends to "discipline particular subjects in their personal, social, public embodiments," while making them "weaker, more timid, less confident[.]" In other words, shame enforces a common set of values that contains "social disturbance that meaningful democratic ideal of equality and self-fashioning necessarily bring about."<sup>161</sup> Likewise, calling for civility also serves to protect the norms and interests of those who feed on the existing social hierarchies. Instead, Locke's call for "unashamed

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points out the immunity of Socrates to shame and the challenge offered to him by Callicles. See Green, "The Shame of Being a Philosopher: Critical Response to Tarnopolsky," *Political Theory*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (2005).

<sup>159</sup> See page 45.

<sup>160</sup> Jill Locke, *Democracy and the Death of Shame: Political Equality and Social Disturbance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 23.

<sup>161</sup> Locke, *Democracy and the Death of Shame*, 20, 23, 32, 34.



citizenship” reclaims and embraces the somewhat shameless self-worth and pride of the oppressed as a genuine ethos of democracy.<sup>162</sup>

My attention to the empowering element of impudence may resonate with Locke’s study of “unashamed citizenship” precisely in that her study attempts to rescue democratic shamelessness (or impudence, in my diction) from too simplistic and moralistic condemnation while appreciating the empowering element of it. Yet, unlike Locke, I do not tend to oversimplify the lived experience of ordinary democratic citizens into a particular type of democratic politics defined as disruptive resistance to the status quo of hierarchical domination. Critical for Locke are her *bifurcated* and *vertical* understanding of social identities between the privileged and the disadvantaged as well as her careful ascription of the attribute of shamelessness exclusively to the latter. In so doing, Locke re-appropriates the pejorative—shameless or unashamed people—for the radical position she intends to defend.<sup>163</sup> Albeit sympathetic with her reconstruction of shamelessness as a strategy suitable for a particular type of transformative politics, especially when we have witnessed enduring structural domination—for instance, “white supremacy, empire, heteronormativity, capital, and misogyny,” as Locke enumerates<sup>164</sup>—I contend that the full richness and complexity of the lived experience of ordinary citizens

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<sup>162</sup> Arlene Saxonhouse, too, emphasizes shame as entailing “a reverence for the old,” which can be at odds with democratic egalitarianism. See her *Free Speech and Democracy in Ancient Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>163</sup> In a way, Jeffrey Green takes a similar strategy when he re-interprets the vulgarity of ordinary citizenship as second-class citizenship. See Green, *The Shadow of Unfairness: A Plebeian Theory of Liberal Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>164</sup> Locke, *Democracy and the Death of Shame*, 32.

cannot be squared perfectly with the simple opposition of the hierarchical domination and the aspiration toward its subversion. Shamelessness, in particular, is not merely that which underlings alone are accused of and they could or should flaunt in turn. Nor can we boost it without reservation worryingly lest we be trapped in a downward spiral of disregard and aggression.

On the question of impudence, I have instead attempted to offer a different theory that understands democratic citizens primarily as a participant in and a sufferer of competing presumptuous claims to superiority in the face of deep-seated differences and disagreements. My focus is more on this mundane conversational situation where citizens are encouraged to display impudent attitudes, regardless of their overall personal traits. Some may be thought to be a person of a placid disposition while another is much more temperamental and pugnacious. Some might be intellectually more sophisticated than others. But the point is that democracy offers plenty of occasions in which ordinary citizens hardly exercise a sufficient level of self-criticism, civility, and tolerance, especially vis-à-vis those who they are wont to disagree, and instead tend to shamelessly disdain, despise, or detest them—even when they acknowledge that what they are doing can be in part disgraceful. Then, it behooves us to think about how to induce and keep alive ordinary citizens' active participation and at once to prevent too virulent and embittering a politics without having recourse to the unrealistic and ineffectual normative calls to mutual respect and decorum.

In her recent seminal work, Teresa Bejan painstakingly secures the conceptual and moral space for what she calls “*mere civility*,” the gist of which is “its ability to

coexist with and even communicate our contempt for others' most fundamental commitments while continuing the conversation."<sup>165</sup> Bejan understands that calls for civility can often function as a subtly aimed twofold political message that is intended either for silencing, instead of facilitating, public disagreement for the sake of security and diversity (Hobbes's civil silence model) or for facilitating public debate only among those who are ready to appreciate the views of their opponents (Locke's civil charity model). In celebrating the ethic of civility, in other words, what we often do is to keep our differences private in fear of causing a series of stridently antagonizing disagreements, or to "[congratulate] ourselves on our open minds and sound views, while conversing exclusively with those who already agree with us."<sup>166</sup>

Bejan endorses neither. Nor does she abandon the ethic of civility entirely. Instead, she thoroughly defends civility of a peculiar kind: "mere civility" based on the model of Roger Williams. Williams, the founder of the famously inclusive colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, was a religious radical who openly loathed and condemned those whose religious views are dissimilar from his, which included many protestant sects, American Indian pagans, Jews, Muslims, and Catholics. Yet he at once tolerated those groups, bringing them to the conversation. What demands more than anything of democratic citizens with respect to the question of civility, according to Bejan's Williams-inspired theory of "mere civility," is not to keep quiet (*pace* Hobbes) nor to muster enough respect for our opponents (*pace* Locke), but simply to refuse to stop

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<sup>165</sup> Teresa M. Bejan, *Mere Civility: Disagreement and the Limits of Toleration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), 159. Emphasis added.

<sup>166</sup> Bejan, *Mere Civility*, 164.

the conversation with others from continuing. For that, she calls for “the *mental toughness* necessary to manage and mind the gap between what we would have others think—of us, and in general—and what they actually do.” It is the toughness, “requiring [us] to cultivate, among other things, insensitivity to others’ opinions[.]”<sup>167</sup>

I am deeply sympathetic with the Bejan’s project carefully attending to the problem of coexistence with confrontational others. Her main interests seem to overlap mine in terms of holding a realistic expectation that each democratic citizen cannot overcome his or her own partiality, and that democratic politics will always be rife with mutual disrespect, contempt, and hostility unless we proactively and prophylactically choose to extirpate the seed of real disagreements. What seems to be missing, or at least what remains underappreciated, in her work, however, is the question of what it means for ordinary citizens to be confident in front of others while being not overbearing to silence or provoke their disputants. My reappraisal of Aristotelian *pathos* of magnanimity calls more honest and careful attention to the sense of superiority in order to better address this very question.

Again, it is of utmost importance not to confuse or conflate my aim to cherish the sense of magnanimity in one’s mind with a much more aspirational pursuit of the idealistic virtue of “civic magnanimity” or “civic friendship,” which demands—often seasoned with Thomist or liberal deliberative spices<sup>168</sup>—liberality, politeness, a sense of

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<sup>167</sup> Bejan, *Mere Civility*, 50, 162.

<sup>168</sup> For the Thomist interpretation of Aristotelian virtue of magnanimity, see Mary M. Keys, “Aquinas and the Challenge of Aristotelian Magnanimity,” *History of Political Thought*, Vol. XXIV, No. 1 (2003) and “Humility and Greatness of Soul,” *Perspectives*

equality, and humility. I have argued that those ideals are too high in nature to be relied upon for actual political communities so that we need to arrange for a lesser goal.

Idealistic virtue can be easily felt as a burden to ordinary citizens, which would forestall rather than facilitate their active participation.<sup>169</sup>

My goal has been to seek a realistic solution. First, it is important to nourish the sense of superiority among democratic citizens so that they can stay motivated and inspired to entering the realm of antagonistic democratic politics. Second, what we can realistically hope for is to cultivate a decent assurance, which is the natural attendant of magnanimity distinguishable markedly from a more incendiary type of self-confidence shown in the comportment of impudence. My account of the *pathos* of magnanimity does not guarantee nor aspire to the situation in which ordinary citizens could celebrate differences without reservation and condemn disrespect outright. Instead, the sense of magnanimity, or a particular affective and moral-psychological condition it helps create, allows citizens—while aiming at showing their own superiority—to deal with daily conflicts and antagonism without forfeiting their composure. For the significance of superiority for the magnanimous persons lies in their tendency to making light of the

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*on Political Science*, Vol. 37 No. 4 (2008). For the liberal deliberative re-appropriation of the virtue of magnanimity, see Gutmann and Thompson, *Why Deliberative Democracy*, 82-87, 186-187. One example of this highest virtue given by Gutmann and Thompson is Nelson Mandela whose benevolence is indicative of his willingness to accept the perpetrators of injustices in the spirit of reconciliation. More modest version of civic magnanimity is described as “a commitment to seek a common perspective at a deeper level of morality” or that to seek “the rationale that minimizes rejection of the position [one opposes].”

<sup>169</sup> Montesquieu once aptly described the nature of virtue that weighs people down in his story of Troglodytes: “[O]h Troglodytes! Your virtue has begun to be a burden to you [*votre vertu commence à vous peser*].” Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu, *Persian Letters* (New York: Penguin, 1973), 60.

difficult situation by shrugging off those accusations and attacks coming from their opponents. This equanimity can suspend the seemingly inexorable spiral of impudence that would otherwise intensify and aggravate mutual anger and hostility.

## CHAPTER 3: The Symbolic

### The Sublime People:

#### A Kantian Aesthetics of Citizen-Sovereign

*I know of nothing sublime which is not some modification of power.*

Edmund Burke

*I never said that the vox populi was of course the vox Dei. It may be;  
but it may be, and with equal probability, a priori, vox Diaboli.*

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

*True sublimity must be sought only in the mind  
of the one who judges, not in the object in nature.*

Immanuel Kant

The concept of the people, however often misunderstood or traduced, is arguably the most important notion in contemporary democratic theory and practice. All that we have observed about democratic regime and culture—popular sovereignty, participation, representation, popular movement, or democratic equality—presuppose the framework of the democratic people.

Turning to the second mode of democratic frustration, this chapter focuses on the *symbolic* dimension of democratic politics in which individual democratic citizens find themselves as a *citizen-sovereign*, participating in “the continuing self-fashioning of the demos.”<sup>170</sup> To call this dimension of democracy *symbolic*, I aim to emphasize the centrality of the people and popular sovereignty in democratic imaginations; arguably, the people are the most authoritative idea, sign, and event of democracy. Due to the indefinite nature of the people, individual democratic citizens display what might be called a symbolic mind, a mind that is open and accustomed to references to the people that often remain allusive, allegorical, and rhetorical.

The term *symbolic* also intimates that my analysis engages in part with the conception of *the symbolic order* and its relation to the *real*, à la Lacan,<sup>171</sup> in the sense that there is the dimension of democracy centering on the languages of the people that shapes the ways in which individual democratic citizens perceive and perform their

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<sup>170</sup> Sheldon Wolin, “The Liberal/Democratic Divide: On Rawls’s Political Liberalism, *Political Theory*, Vol. 24, No.1 (1996), 98.

<sup>171</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book VII* (New York: Routledge, 1999), chapters 4 and 8.



subjectivity and agency, even while ‘the people’ itself remain indeterminate and inaccessible. In other words, the order of the people influences the vicissitudes of citizens’ democratic life, leaving them in a lurch between distinct sensibilities, attitudes, and imaginations.

This chapter begins with two observations. First, although ‘the people’ is an everyday term in democracy, it is easily obscured as soon as we start to speculate. For the people never appear in any immediate form. There can only be a *claim* of the people, as Jason Frank has aptly pointed out,<sup>172</sup> but no claim is tantamount to the people themselves. Its indefinite nature warrants a series of acts of representation in many forms: symbols, statements, movements, or stories as well as political representation. The necessity of representation implicated in the idea of the people or popular sovereignty seems to be at war with the unrepresentable nature of the people, thereby placing individual democratic citizens in permanent tensions with the people. These tensions can be characterized by the tense dynamic of the need of individual citizens to invite and invoke the people at the risk of betrayal and suppression by the despair emanating from the inescapably incomplete and possibly false representation. This is a particular condition of frustration in which *citizen-sovereign* are situated.

Second, there exist two predominating understandings of the people in contemporary democratic theory and practice: namely, a *reductionist* paradigm and its *aspirational* counterpart. These leading paradigms show, respectively, particular images

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<sup>172</sup> Jason Frank, *Constituent Moments: Enacting the People in Postrevolutionary America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 3.

of, attitudes toward, and assumptions about the democratic people. Whereas the former has reduced the meaning of the people to a minimum, the latter has proclaimed the transformative role of the popular power. One regards the people as an abstraction, thereby liquidating the unnecessary illusion around its register, the other celebrates its radical and rejuvenating effect. What we have been witnessing is the simultaneous presence of the reductionist obduracy *and* the aspirational call for oppositional popular politics that valorizes the manifestation of the people. Most extreme versions of each paradigm would be commonly understood as *minimalism* and *populism*, respectively. I take both to be more an impulse than an ideology.<sup>173</sup> Certainly, not every democratic theorist or citizen would readily endorse either minimalism or populism. Yet they nonetheless adopt one of the two paradigms easily without going too extreme in either direction.

It is important to remember that both paradigms often aim to neutralize the productive meaning of the critical distance between individual citizens and the people. The reductionist paradigm attempts to internalize the distance by dislocating the people in the realm of abstraction while the aspirational paradigm tends to erase the distance by prompting individual citizens to immerse themselves in the movement of the people. Both reductionist and aspirational paradigms rightly recognize the uniquely supreme power of the people. What each paradigm emphasizes, however, differs drastically. The former puts individual citizens in *awe* of the abstract people, instilling a sense of trembling fear of any unsettling popular forces of the claimed majorities. The latter is

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<sup>173</sup> This is Michael Kazin's basic view on populism. See his *The Populist Persuasion: An American History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

rather driven by, and riding on, a sort of *empathetic delight* and *restlessness* stemming from the valorization of the popular energy of ordinary people, while promoting a sense of self-righteousness. Each model shows its own affective foundation of what it thinks should be the mission of democratic politics.

The problem of the reductionist paradigm, as will be discussed to the full below, lies in its too much inhibition, or a preemptive aggression, on the radical potential of the people, which withholds individual democratic citizens from exercising their power as *citizen-sovereign* to participate in “the continuing self-fashioning of the demos,” to reiterate the phrase by Sheldon Wolin quoted above. The aspirational paradigm stimulates individual citizens to work on the “self-fashioning of the demos,” but lacks a heightened awareness of the tensions between individual democratic citizens and the people and of the significance of the critical distance between them, which in fact is the key to a critical, ongoing, and regenerating process of the “self-fashioning of the demos.”

What I seek to offer in the following pages is a particular type of *aesthetic*<sup>174</sup>—both reflective and affective—appreciation of the democratic people as an alternative to the two leading paradigms. Drawing heavily on Kant, among others, I argue that the

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<sup>174</sup> As I will argue in what follows, I suggest an aesthetic reading of the democratic people as opposed both to the rational reduction of the people to a minimum and to the intemperate celebration of the alleged presence of the people. By aesthetic I broadly mean that my approach concerns the way we imagine, feel, and make sense of the democratic people and its relation to our own political subjectivity. A. G. Baumgarten, who is deemed to be the father of modern aesthetics, coined the term *aesthetica* or *Ästhetik* for designating the critique of taste as well as indicating the science of perception by senses. See Paul Guyer, “18th Century German Aesthetics,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2007) [Electronic source: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aesthetics-18th-german/>]. The word itself comes from ancient Greek *aisthetikos*, which originally meant sense perception.

people can be seen as an object of *sublime*, and that *the sublime people* allows us to attend to the vexing yet dynamic—communicative, processual, and dialectic—relationship between individual democratic citizens and the people, and, therefore, better understand what it means to be *citizen-sovereign*. Put differently, the sublime people provides individual democratic citizens with some space in which they embrace frustration while harnessing the accommodating power of frustration to further generate and guide democratic aspirations. By highlighting the importance of the *interplay* between individual citizens and the people, I also demonstrate that the sovereign power of the *citizen-sovereign* should be exercised not by impetuously giving a sovereign outlook to the claimed people, but by keeping possibilities of the continuous regeneration of the people.<sup>175</sup>

#### BEYOND THE REDUCTIONIST AND ASPIRATIONAL PARADIGMS

Democracy “is nurtured by illusion,” writes Robert Wokler. He emphasizes that the unfulfilled promise of democracy is “mysteriously compelling,” which is “deemed both

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<sup>175</sup> For example, Bryan Garsten once argued that a prime concern of representative government is “to multiply and challenge governmental claims to represent the people.” He focuses on the “negative function” of the Rousseauian idea of popular sovereignty, which is “to remind us that governing institutions and officers are not sovereign.” Bryan Garsten, “Representative government and popular sovereignty,” in *Political Representation*, eds. Ian Shapiro, Susan C. Stokes, Elisabeth Jean Wood, and Alexander S. Kirshner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 91, 97. Emphasis is original.

unattainable in theory and at the same time inescapable in practice.”<sup>176</sup> Wokler’s observation is astute. For democracy to be accurately and realistically understood, we ought to pay special attention not only to the unattainable nature of democracy, but also to its inescapably enduring appeal.<sup>177</sup>

Among those seemingly unattainable yet inescapably appealing democratic promises does outstand its most fundamental principle that the people—and no others—rule. Democracy simply means that “the people hold power and exercise rule.”<sup>178</sup> This promise, however, is what democracy may not be able to fully deliver in part because it has never been entirely clear who the *people* are and what it means for them to *rule*. We need a legitimate collective body to establish fair and equal terms of a democratic rule. But they could only be legitimate through the system yet to be created. It is “a paradox of politics,”<sup>179</sup> often discussed under the rubric of “boundary problem.”<sup>180</sup> The problem has

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<sup>176</sup> Robert Wokler, “Democracy’s Mythical Ordeals: the Procrustean and Promethean paths to popular self-rule,” in Geraint Parry and Michael Moran eds., *Democracy and Democratization* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 21.

<sup>177</sup> To lay the foundation of a properly realistic democratic theory that does not defy idealism outright has been one of the overarching themes of this project. Here, I would like to emphasize yet again that a realistic account of democracy should not end with debunking those *unrealistic* democratic ideals such as popular self-rule. It ought to pay equal attention to how those ideals, despite their implausible nature, still gain wide currency as an aspiration in the everyday democracy. This is part of democratic *reality*. Empirical political scientists have long condemned the outdated unrealizable democratic ideals, but often overlooked the meaning of the enduring appeal of such ideals. See, for instance, the latest example: Christopher Achen and Larry Bartels, *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

<sup>178</sup> John Dunn, *Setting the People Free: The Story of Democracy* (London: Atlantic Books, 2005), 51.

<sup>179</sup> Bonnie Honig, “Between Decision and Deliberation: Political Paradox in Democratic Theory,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 101, Iss. 1 (2007)

attracted a number of philosophers to examine who comprises the people—or, in other words, who is included, and perhaps more importantly, who is excluded<sup>181</sup>—but the analytical and normative issues with respect to the boundary of the people are not my main focus. Nor is my primary concern with endorsing any of the commonly suggested methods of a democratic *rule* or ranking them—statist, pluralist, deliberative, participatory, plebiscitary, direct, to name a few.<sup>182</sup>

Instead, I bring into focus that ordinary democratic citizens more or less understand and enact popular sovereignty, and that the people are the central source of democratic imaginations and a range of widely varying practices in democracy.

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<sup>180</sup> For the boundary problem, see, among others, Allen Buchanan, "Political Legitimacy and Democracy," *Ethics*, Vol. 112, No. 4 (2002), Robert Goodin, "Enfranchising All Affected Interests and Its Alternatives," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (2007), Sophia Näström, "The Legitimacy of the People," *Political Theory*, Vol. 35, No. 5 (2007), Sarah Song, "The Boundary Problem in Democratic Theory: Why the Demos Should Be Bounded By the State," *International Theory*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2007), and Arash Abizadeh, "On the Demos and Its Kin: Nationalism, Democracy, and the Boundary Problem," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 106, Iss. 4 (2012).

<sup>181</sup> Margaret Canovan once stated that the notion of the people is far from clear, and is "boringly familiar but at the same time problematic in all sorts of ways." Recognizing the multi-faceted nature of the problems that concern the notion of the people, this chapter pays particular attention to a distinctive political and aesthetic relation of individual democratic citizens to the people as the most authoritative mark of democracy, especially the ways in which each citizen can make best sense of their democratic agency, engaging with the popular power. In this respect, it is beyond the scope of this chapter to investigate both spatial and temporal boundaries of the historically constructed people(s) determined by particular historical relations of gender, race, ethnicity, generation, et cetera. For the critical account of how narratives of "peoplehood" are constructed in identitarian terms initiated by political entrepreneurs, see Rogers Smith, *Stories of Peoplehood: The Politics and Morals of Political Membership* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). For the view of the people as an ongoing "process," playing out in time, See Paulina Ochoa Espejo, *The Time of Popular Sovereignty* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2011).

<sup>182</sup> See Patchen Markell, "The Rule of the People: Arendt, Archê, and Democracy," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 100, Iss. 1 (2006).

Individual citizens involve the politics of the people—both positively and negatively. They are confronted with the people both as an idea or a matter, in text or on street, and at a certain juncture or over time. In so doing, they perform their democratic agency. Their affective relationship with the people is presupposed in one way or another by their intentionally directed action or inaction. Their customary languages of the people are structured deeply in affective fashion, which would be exemplified by the two most widely shared explanations for the meaning of the people.<sup>183</sup>

First, there is a penchant for imagining the people as an abstraction, profoundly exemplified by what I call a *reductionist* paradigm.<sup>184</sup> The people at large in democracy

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<sup>183</sup> Jan-Werner Müller states that the term ‘the people’ denotes at least three distinct meanings: “first, the people as the whole (which is to say, all members of the polity, or what used to be called “the body politic”); second, the “common people” (the part of the *res publica* made up of commoners, or in modern terms: the excluded, the downtrodden, and the forgotten); and third, the nation as a whole, understood in a distinctly cultural sense.” See his *What Is Populism?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 22. For the purpose of this study, I focus on the first two meanings to which the third one is often supplementary.

<sup>184</sup> The *reductionist* view is shared by a number of otherwise distinct groups of democratic theorists. Roughly speaking, minimalist democrats defend democracy only because democracy provides the best method for rotating rulers without bloodshed. Proceduralist democrats stress the very process as well, but they believe that the democratic process protects the political freedom of all members of society. Moralistic philosophers, on the other hand, endorse democracy as long as democracy promises some of the morally desirable values such as autonomy or justice. See respectively, Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (New York: Harper & Brothers), Karl Popper, *Open Society and Its Enemies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013) and *The Lesson of this Century: With Two Talks on Freedom and the Democratic State* (London: Routledge, 2000), Adam Przeworski, “Minimalist Conception of Democracy: A Defense,” in *Democracy’s Value*, eds. Ian Shapiro and Casiano Hacker-Cordón (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), Richard A. Posner, *Law, Pragmatism, and Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Hans Kelsen, *The Essence and Value of Democracy* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), Maria Paula Saffon and Nadia Urbinati, “Procedural Democracy, the Bulwark of Equal Liberty,” *Political Theory*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (2013); John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contribution to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996).

are thought to be the sovereign power, but that term is usually qualified by an impetus to restrict the extent of this sovereignty; the people are generally held to be the *constituent* sovereign, not the *governmental* one.<sup>185</sup> Democracy, updated in modern terms, takes a form of representation. In other words, modern democracy enacts democratic rule via representation at the price of reducing and abstracting the people to the mere justification of power. The people are, thus, “the ultimate source of political authority,” but not its “wielder.”<sup>186</sup>

The notion of the people, imagined as the constituent power, plays a double role. It first gives the perception of unity, and, second, a new modern outlook with which to escape blame for ordinary people according to which democracy was long condemned as the most unstable, vulgar, and potentially tyrannical form of rule. By making the democratic people recede behind the manifold ways in which representation is accomplished, in other words, the reductionist model successfully inhibits or places strict controls on ordinary people as popular political energy. Put differently, those reductionists have established the symbolic order of the people as an abstract foundation in fear of—or with disgust at—ordinary people who they believe can be the host of endemic democratic diseases.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Andreas Kalyvas, “Constituent Power,” *Political Concepts: A Critical Lexicon*, Issue 3.1 (Winter 2013), Daniel Lee, “Sources of Sovereignty: Roman *Imperium* and *Dominium* in Civilian Theories of Sovereignty,” *Politica Antica* (2012).

<sup>186</sup> Bernard Yack, *Nationalism and the Moral Psychology of Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2012), 98.

<sup>187</sup> This democratic disease has been widely discussed by different generations of scholars. Herodotus mentioned in *Histories*—through the mouth of Megabyzus—that “Nothing is more foolish and violent than a useless mob. ... how can [the people]



Second, since antiquity, there is a lasting tradition that conceives of the people as non-elites or commoners. I call this perspective, distinguished from the first one, an *aspirational* paradigm.<sup>188</sup> From this point of view, the greatness of democracy lies in its

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have knowledge, who have neither learnt nor for themselves seen what is best, but ever rush headlong and drive blindly onward, like a river in spate?" *Histories, Book III*, in *The Loeb Classical Library: Herodotus II* (London: William Heinemann, 1928), 107. Similarly, Plato singled out *license* [*exousia*] as one of the outstanding characteristics of democracy. Plato, *Republic*, 557b. Isocrates also regards it lamentable that democratic citizens enjoy the sense of entitlement to do whatever they please, listing, among others, *saying everything* [*parrhesia*], *license* [*akolasia*], and *lawlessness* [*paranomia*] as central features of democracy. *Aeropagiticus*, in *The Loeb Classical Library: Isocrates II* (London: William Heinemann, 1929). Modern political thinkers such as James Madison and Baron d'Holbach often accused democracy of its inherent propensity to chaos, tyranny, or anarchy, which should be tempered and prevented in advance. See James Madison, "Paper No. 10" in Terrence Ball ed., *Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay: The Federalist with Letters of "Brutus"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Likewise, John Adams in his letter to John Taylor once put conventional wisdom commonly shared among his contemporaries: "Remember Democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes exhausts and murders itself." John Adams, "Letter to John Taylor, December 17, 1814" in George W. Carey ed., *The Political Writings of John Adams* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 2000), 406. Even when "the undoubted advance of democratic political forms" took place in the mid and late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as Albert Hirschman once put, there existed "a diffuse mood of skepticism and hostility" against the people. See Albert Hirschman, *The Rhetoric of Reaction: Perversity, Futility, and Jeopardy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 19-27. See also Jason Frank, "Democracy and Disgust," *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (2017) and Rebekah Sterling, "Irregular Motions: Democracy and the Mob" [Unpublished; Presented at the annual meeting of the WPSA in April, 2014].

<sup>188</sup> The term 'aspirational' is from Melvin Rogers, "The People, Rhetoric, and Affect: On the Political Force of Du Bois's *The Soul of Black Folk*," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 106, Iss. 1 (2012). The *aspirational* camp includes populist democrats and radical democrats. The former group tends to emphasize the centripetal power of the people via—usually, although not always—a single charismatic leader, and thus is supportive of a strong presidency that transcends and unifies divided factional interests and political wills. The people as a unified entity may well be identified with this leader rather than to be mediated or reflected upon by him or her. See Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (New York: Verso, 2007), Benjamin Arditi, *Politics on the Edges of Liberalism: Difference, Populism, Revolution, Agitation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007). See also Nadia Urbinati, *Democracy Disfigured: Opinion, Truth, and the People* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), chapter 3. Notice that Michael Kazin, an American historian of populism, places emphasis on the positive aspect of populist politics by focusing more on the power from below. See Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion*. The latter group, on the other hand, is generally critical of the populist strategy and instead accentuates the transformative power of

proposal of an egalitarian polity that would dismantle—if not eliminate—the hierarchical rule of epistemic, political, and economic superiors over ordinary people. It ought to be ordinary citizens and not extra-ordinary elites who should rule. In fact, representative democracy or formal democracy can be seen at best as an unsavory compromise and at worst as an oxymoron.<sup>189</sup> For all the usual trappings of representative democracy—routinized horse-trading among elites, dominant cultures that shape citizens as passive recipients rather than active participants in politics, or sheer busyness of every day created by the division of labor between professional politicians and ordinary citizens—insulate ordinary citizens from democracy’s real and transformative possibilities.<sup>190</sup> Democracy, therefore, cannot function within the frame of representative democracy, at least not without serious impoverishment, as long as it keeps obstructing the exertion of

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the people by pointing to either the spontaneously emerging ensemble of acting *multitude*, marginalized ordinary people, or those who have no part. See Michael Hart and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004), Sheldon Wolin, “Democracy: Electoral and Athenian,” *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 1993, and Jacques Rancière, “Ten Theses on Politics,” *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics* (New York: Continuum, 2010).

<sup>189</sup> Jacques Rancière once put that although “today representative democracy may seem to be a pleonasm,” it is really “an oxymoron.” See his “Democracy, Republic, Representation,” *Constellations*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (2006), 298.

<sup>190</sup> For the theoretical analysis of how most advanced representative democracies have become more oligarchic than democratic, which invites radical reconsideration of the ideas and institutions of democracy, see John McCormick, *The Machiavellian Democracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), Jeffrey Green, “Liberalism and the Problem of Plutocracy,” *Constellations*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (2016), K. Sabeel Rahman, *Democracy Against Domination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). Among important empirical studies in the context of American democracy that could be paired with those normative works above mentioned include Larry Bartels, *Unequal Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008) and Lawrence Lessig, *Republic, Lost: How Money Corrupts Congress and a Plan to Stop It* (New York: Twelve, 2012). For an analysis in the field of economics, see also Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), where he documents the rising inequality originating from capital’s natural tendency to replicate much greater than overall economy.

popular political energy.

The proponents of this aspirational paradigm envision the image of the people as the true bearer of radical potential of democracy. Accordingly, democracy itself has to be redefined. A more real democracy comes to exist as *disruption* when the people long dismissed, marginalized, and suffocated by the powerful elites appear to challenge the existing hierarchical political order.<sup>191</sup> What the people so understood symbolizes is a popular anger against the allegedly inegalitarian order and those who safeguard and are safeguarded by the very order.

These two mutually conflicting paradigms have been dominating in contemporary democratic theories and practices. We might say that they are competing over ideological hegemony if that means the system of thought that determines the whole body of practices and expectations, including concerns about our senses and assignments of energy.<sup>192</sup> My emphasis is not, however, on the juxtaposition of the two views as absolute antithesis to each other as many theorists seem to have pointed out. For example, Paulina Ochoa Espejo has recently summarized those leading perspectives on the people by

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<sup>191</sup> See, amongst others, Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 581-606 and "Norm and Form: The Constitutionalizing of Democracy" in Peter Euben, John Wallach, and Josiah Ober eds., *Athenian Political Thought and the Reconstruction of American Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994). Wolin's theory of *fugitive democracy* centers on "the ingenuity of ordinary people in inventing temporary forms to meet their needs." This Wolinian democratic politics is normally repressed under the hierarchical rule but could emerge, at least on occasion, for the sake of redressing the grievances of ordinary people. For the recent account of global movements that call for a more direct democracy, see Marina Sitrin and Dario Azzellini, *They Can't Represent US!: Reinventing Democracy from Greece to Occupy* (New York: Verso, 2014).

<sup>192</sup> See Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 144-146.

naming them as “a *hypothetical* account of the people” that is “held by many liberals” and “the *historical* account of the people” that is often espoused by populists and others.”<sup>193</sup> Although I do not mean to deny the virtue of her succinct characterization that neatly sorts out the leading views of the democratic people, I would still disagree on calling them hypothetical and historical since the languages invite misunderstanding. On the one hand, it is one thing to regard the people as an abstract foundation and another to treat it as a construct of mere speculation, which the term ‘hypothetical’ seems to connote. On the other hand, to argue for the active role of the people as an impetus for a popular politics does not necessarily mean that the people have to be a factually documented—or ‘historical’—group of democratic subjects. Either way, the idea of the people is clearly part of democratic *reality*, which requires a particular *interpretation*. The people can never fully be ossified into pure abstraction, but can also never be embodied into mere literalness.

For the purpose of this chapter, it is worth noting that the two mutually unyielding sides, each of which is for the other a wrong interpretation of the people, serve as an enemy for the other whose growth each ends up encouraging. Why and how? First, the two paradigms share the most fundamental assumption that the people are the largest, and the most powerful entity ever conceivable in democracy. It is formidable. That which is formidable—by definition, as its Latin origin, *formidare*, indicates—inspires fear *and* respect or dread *and* reverence. Second, since, as Derrida once pointed out, there is no

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<sup>193</sup> Paulina Ochoa Espejo, “Populism and the Idea of The People,” in Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, Paul Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo, and Pierre Ostiguy eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Populism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 612-613.

signifier that can communicate a specific intended meaning without allowing a glimmer of other associations,<sup>194</sup> the idea of the people intended as the former carries with other significations as well, often provoking, unwittingly or otherwise, those who hold a different meaning. The reductionist paradigm centers on its fear of the norm-erosion-driven popular power,<sup>195</sup> which is really the driving force behind its taxidermy of popular sovereignty. The aspirational paradigm gives a new transformative and revivifying outlook to the popular energy while receiving, happily, the communion with the people. Its fear is rather about the disabling or paralyzing effect of the reductionist fear itself.<sup>196</sup> Each appears to the other to be the mere postulate of its counter-paradigm that aims at the revaluation or transvaluation, to use a Nietzschean term, of the negative characterizations of what their opponents are prone to fear. In so doing, each ends in proving further evidence of the criticism of their enemy without sufficiently understanding and attending to the critical contents.

My theory of the sublime people helps us to see these paradigms, taken together,

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<sup>194</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (London: Athlone Press, 1978), 354-367.

<sup>195</sup> They have respect for the form-giving power of popular sovereignty. What they fear is the fact that the popular power can "delegitimate those same forms." See Judith Butler, "'We the People': Thoughts on Freedom of Assembly," Alain Badiou, Pierre Bourdieu, and Judith Butler et al., *What Is A People?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 51.

<sup>196</sup> The reception of the popular power by Robespierre and his opponents can be one extreme example. Robespierre says: "A people does not judge as does a court of law. It does not hand down sentences, it hurls down thunderbolts; it does not condemn kings, it plunges them into the abyss ... The majestic movements of a great people, the sublime force of virtue." Maximilien Robespierre, "Speech to the Convention, 3 December 1792" in Michael Walzer ed., *Regicide and Revolution: Speeches at the Trial of Louis XVI* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 133 quoted from Kevin Duong, "The People as a Natural Disaster: Redemptive Violence in Jacobin Political Thought," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 111, Iss. 4 (2017), 794.

as conducive to the customary schemes and languages of the democratic people while pointing to the need for building an alternative perspective. Prior to discussing how the theory of the sublime people offers a novel understanding of the democratic people, we should examine the structure, mechanism, and dynamic of sublime, most meticulously analyzed by Immanuel Kant.

### THE SUBLIME: OBJECTS, PROPERTIES, AND EMOTIONS

The sublime is an old and massive concept. It has a long history going back at least as far as *Peri hypsous* written by Longinus,<sup>197</sup> an ancient text forgotten for a long time until it was reintroduced and became widely circulated among European men of letters, especially after the publication of its French edition by Nicholas Boileau Despréaux in 1674.<sup>198</sup> The Greek noun from which the idea of sublime originates, *to hypsos*, means height. In *Peri hypsous*, Longinus sets out to examine the height of *logos*—speeches and writings.<sup>199</sup> Although his treatise belongs to the tradition of didactic technical writing on

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<sup>197</sup> A manuscript of *Peri hypsous* is conventionally credited to the author called Longinus, a rhetorician and literary scholar of the first or third century because the name “Dionysios Longinos” is ascribed on the contents page in the reference transcript.

<sup>198</sup> Nicholas Boileau Despréaux is widely recognized as one of the central figures who brought Longinus back to light through his translation, although a number of Latin editions and at least one Italian edition already existed prior to his French edition. Costelloe states that “Boileau transforms the Latin evaluative qualifier *sublīmis* into a substantive neologism — *sublime/sublimité* — to reflect the original Greek noun[.]” Timothy M. Costelloe, “The Sublime: A Short Introduction to a Long History,” Timothy M. Costelloe ed., *The Sublime: From Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 3-4.

<sup>199</sup> Longinus, *On the Sublime*, trans. James A. Arieti and John M. Crossett (New York: The Edwin Mellon Press, 1985). What triggered Longinus to write this treatise was, as he indicates by citing a passage by an unknown philosopher, the fact that “the

rhetoric, it is not geared towards teaching the art of persuasion by speeches [*peithein tois logois*]. Instead, his primary focus is to address the ways in which the sublime is manifested as height and conspicuous excellence in great speeches and writings. By investigating a variety of texts from the most popular political speeches of the time such as Demosthenes's orations, Plato's philosophical dialogues, Herodotus's and Thucydides's histories, and the Septuagint, Longinus theorizes how the audience can be astounded and overwhelmed rather than merely persuaded by the force of the sublime.<sup>200</sup>

In the eighteenth century, during which time modern aesthetics emerged and flourished, however, there was a significant shift of attention from the sublime *style* to the sublime *materials* or *objects*. Notable were the contributions by British literary scholars and philosophers such as John Dennis, Joseph Addison, John Baillie, and Alexander Gerard, who sought out to analyze empirical properties of material objects related to the sublime experience rather than the stylistic qualities of speeches and writings.<sup>201</sup> In one of his famous *Spectator* articles, Addison, for example, directs much attention to the "stupendous works of Nature" such as "an open champaign country, a vast uncultivated

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infertility [of speeches and writings] has hold over our life." See section 44.

<sup>200</sup> Longinus was mainly concerned with style and the revealing power of language. For example, five kinds of sources for the sublime are, according to Longinus, "a solid thrust of conception," "an intense and enthusiastic emotion," "a sort of molding of figures, both figures of conception and those of style," "noble phrasing," and "the way things are put together in worth and loftiness." But, in short, what constitutes the sublime is the greatness of the mind [*megalopsychia*] of authors. See sections 8.1 and 9.2.

<sup>201</sup> An excellent introduction to the eighteenth century British aesthetic studies on the sublime is Emily Brady, *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy: Aesthetics, Ethics, and Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), Ch. 1. For the German counterpart, see Paul Guyer, "18th Century German Aesthetics" (2007).

desert” or “huge heaps of mountains[.]”<sup>202</sup> The central feature of these natural objects is characterized as their absolute *magnitude*. It is their incomparable vastness and unchallenged power that makes present of the sublime experience. Baillie makes a similar point when he states that

A flowery vale, or the verdure of a hill, may charm; but to fill the soul, and raise it to the sublime sensations, the earth must rise into an Alp, or Pyrrhenean, and mountains piled upon mountains, reach to the very heavens...<sup>203</sup>

No less attention is paid to sublime *emotions*. Baillie points out that the immensity of external objects, in fact, “dilates and elevates the soul,” exciting in us “a noble enthusiasm of grandeur,”<sup>204</sup> or what Longinus calls “an intense and enthusiastic emotion” [*sphodron kai enthousiastikon pathos*].<sup>205</sup> The sublime, therefore, involves a distinctive relation between the sublime object and a particular aesthetic experience in the subject,

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<sup>202</sup> Joseph Addison’s “On the Pleasures of the Imagination” [Monday, June 23, 1712], in Andrew Ashfield and Peter Bolla eds. *The Sublime: a reader in British eighteenth-century aesthetic theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 62. It does not mean, however, that the interests in the sublime style and language ceased to exist. For example, Rob Goodman has recently argued for the importance of the rhetorical sublime based on his close reading of Edmund Burke on the deliberative value of immoderate speech. See Rob Goodman, “The Deliberative Sublime: Edmund Burke on Disruptive Speech and Imaginative Judgment,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 112, Iss. 2 (2018).

<sup>203</sup> John Baillie, “An essay on the sublime” [1747], in Andrew Ashfield and Peter Bolla eds. *The Sublime: a reader in British eighteenth-century aesthetic theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 88.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Literally, *Enthousiasmos* means ‘to be in god’ [*entheos einai*].



evoking a particular set of emotions. This aesthetic field, engendered around the sublime object and subject, is worth special heed.

It is perhaps Immanuel Kant who developed the level of discussion of the sublime with the highest philosophical rigor. Kant's most extensive and matured theory of the sublime, demonstrated in his "Analytic of the Sublime,"<sup>206</sup> proffers the best framework according to which we later propose a particular way of understanding the democratic people as an object of the sublime.

Kant associates the sublime with emotions like awe and astonishment, but famously emphasizes the sublime emotion as "negative pleasure." The implication is twofold: first, it is an indirect or derivative feeling incited in the sublime experience; second, our mind is "not merely attracted by the object, but is also always reciprocally repelled by it."<sup>207</sup> This point, in fact, resonates with Burke's characterization of the sublime as "delightful horror."<sup>208</sup> It is well known that Kant's philosophical account of

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<sup>206</sup> Although Kant's "Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime" [*Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen*] came out much earlier (in 1764), it is really his "Analytic of the Sublime" that offers his fully developed account of the sublime. It ranges from twenty-third to twenty-ninth sections of his *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, which was published in 1790. All page references are to Paul Guyer's English edition, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), followed by the pagination of the standard German edition of Kant's works, *Kant's Gesammelte Schriften*, edited by the Royal Prussian (later German) Academy of Sciences (Berlin: Georg Reimer, later Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1900- ). All bolds are original. Italics are mine.

<sup>207</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 129/5:245.

<sup>208</sup> Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Idea of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). This negative valence of the sublime emotion was not properly developed in Kant's 1764 essay mentioned above, which signifies Burke's influence on Kant. Burke's *Enquiry* was originally published in 1757, but its German edition, which Kant read with great interest, came out in 1773. Notice that Baillie also recognized this unusual amalgam of pleasure and

the sublime is largely influenced by Burke's monumental study of the subject, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Idea of the Sublime and the Beautiful*. Kant explicitly cites and critically assesses Burke's *Enquiry* in his theory of the sublime, which is not always common in his writings. Burke's physiological theory of the sublime also points to the negativity of the sublime emotion.

Yet there are significant differences between the two thinkers. Burke accentuates the *physicality* of this aesthetic experience. According to Burke, there has to be some object "at certain distances" from the subject in order that the subject is ready for "delightful horror." Delight is conceptually distinct from pure pleasure as it is fundamentally associated with pain. When "danger or pain press too nearly they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible."<sup>209</sup> But if we recognize a physical threat from a certain distance where our safety is guaranteed, or, in other words, where we do not suffer the immediate danger, the very circumstance excites the *idea* of pain, danger, or terror.<sup>210</sup> Out of the absence or the removal of the immediate pain or danger does arise the sublime emotion. Hence the sublime as a "species of *relative* pleasure."<sup>211</sup>

Kant does not ignore the virtue of the Burkean empirical and corporeal account of the sublime. He also recognizes that "all representations in us, whether they are

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pain: "The sublime dilates and elevates the soul, fear sinks and contracts it; yet both are felt upon viewing what is great and awful." Baillie, "An essay on the sublime," 97.

<sup>209</sup> Burke, *Enquiry*, 40.

<sup>210</sup> Burke, *Enquiry*, 84-86.

<sup>211</sup> Burke, *Enquiry*, 34.

objectively merely sensible or else entirely intellectual, can nevertheless subjectively be associated with gratification or pain.” Nonetheless, Kant goes beyond Burke’s account because, strictly speaking, it is not correct “if we call some object of nature sublime” without considering the *conflicting interplay of imagination and reason*.<sup>212</sup> Burke certainly shifted “the discourse of the sublime away from the study of natural objects and towards the mind of the spectator.”<sup>213</sup> And he acknowledged the fact that it is only after having become an *idea* through a representation in the imagination does the terrible incite the feeling of sublime.<sup>214</sup>

But for Kant, Burke’s problem is that his sensorial account focuses primarily on the *physical* distance between the subject and the object as the constitutive condition of the sublime. While highlighting the sublime as “the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling,” Burke stresses the *external* condition in which the sublime experience would occur.<sup>215</sup> What is missing is a thorough account of the internal condition of the sublime experience, or, in other words, attentive reading of the inner dynamic between imagination and reason, which would offer a richer view on the dynamic between the subject and the object. Kant maintains that this negligence of Burke leads him to fail to understand how the sublime experience makes present the limits of the subject and its own efforts to meet the very difficulty. For Kant, what is essential in

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<sup>212</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 129/5:245.

<sup>213</sup> Philip Shaw, *The Sublime* (London: Routledge, 2006), 71.

<sup>214</sup> Burke, *Enquiry*, 17-19.

<sup>215</sup> Burke states that “whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the idea of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*[.]” Burke, *Enquiry*, 39.

the sublime experience is an introspective turn that ends up making the subject turn back to its own mind, which is the place in which the true sublime resides.

How exactly, then, does this conflicting interplay of imagination and reason take place? According to Kant, we call sublime “that which is absolutely great” [*schlechthin groß*]. When he says something is absolutely great, he means that is “great beyond all comparison.”<sup>216</sup> Not unlike Burke, Kant begins with a rigid distinction between the sublime and the beautiful:

The beautiful in nature concerns the form of the object, which consists in limitation; the sublime, by contrast, is to be found in a formless object insofar as limitlessness [*Unbegrenztheit*] is represented in it, or at its instance, and yet it is also thought as a totality.<sup>217</sup>

This succinct statement merits close attention as it bespeaks the gist of Kant’s theory of the sublime. For Kant, it is not the case that we find the beauty from small objects and the sublime from huge objects. As was shown above, what is properly sublime, which is absolutely great, “cannot be contained in any sensible form.” We are challenged by what is *absolutely* great since it is *formless*, which “surpasses every measure of the senses.”<sup>218</sup> Since it is insensible or supersensible, no quality is directly represented in the mind of the

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<sup>216</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 131-132/5:248.

<sup>217</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 128/5:244.

<sup>218</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 134/5:250.

subject. Instead, *limitlessness* is represented through the failure of the very presentation [*Darstellung*] of the quality. The sublime experience, therefore, begins with the experience of “the subject’s own incapacity” [*Unvermögen*] or inadequacy [*Unangemessenheit*].<sup>219</sup>

Kant distinguishes “the mathematically sublime” from “the dynamically sublime.” The former concerns what is absolutely great in magnitude, the latter in power. In the case of “the mathematically sublime,” when the faculty of imagination involves two actions, that is, apprehension [*Auffassung*] and comprehension [*Zusammenfassung*], it is the failure of comprehension, or the capacity to represent the object as a whole, that is revealed at the failure of imagination during its efforts to portray the absolutely great. In comprehension, unlike in apprehension, “there is a greatest point beyond which it cannot go.” The sublime object makes available to reflection this limit of comprehension. In this regard, because of the inadequacy of the faculty of imagination, the sublime concerns, states Kant, “only *ideas of reason* [*Ideen der Vernunft*].”<sup>220</sup>

This does not mean, however, that the sublime experience could and should be understood as solely belonging to the domain of pure concepts such as the Whole or Totality. A feeling of the sublime originates from the reflection of the sensible through its failure, where the imagination becomes frustrated yet expanded, by means of reason. As shown in the cited passage above, the concept of totality can also be thought, or, to be precise, *thought in addition to* it [*hinzudenken*]. In that particular way, the sublime experience involves an aesthetic representation of limitlessness. This experience of the

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<sup>219</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 142/5:259.

<sup>220</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 129/5:245.

limit and limitlessness ultimately produces “an emotionally moving satisfaction.”<sup>221</sup> That feeling is “a feeling of *displeasure* from the inadequacy of the imagination ... and a *pleasure* that is thereby aroused at the same time from the correspondence of this very judgment of the inadequacy of the greatest sensible faculty in comparison with ideas of reason[.]”<sup>222</sup> The overall satisfaction is indicative of the fact that “imagination and reason produce subjective purposiveness through their *conflict* [*Widerstreit*].”<sup>223</sup>

Much the same can be observed for “the dynamically sublime.” Kant also deals primarily with the representation of the sublime in nature, but here the major concerns are with what is absolutely great in *power*. His own examples are as follows:

Bold, overhanging, as it were threatening cliffs, thunder clouds towering up into the heavens, bringing with them flashes of lightening and crashes of thunder, volcanoes with their all-destroying violence, hurricanes with the devastation they leave behind, the boundless ocean set into a rage, a lofty waterfall on a mighty river, etc., make our capacity to resist into an insignificant trifle in comparison with their power. But the sight of them only becomes all the more attractive the more fearful it is, as long as we find ourselves in safety, and we gladly call these objects sublime because they elevate the strength of our soul above its usual level, and allow us to discover within ourselves a capacity for resistance of quite another kind, which gives us the courage to measure ourselves against the apparent all-

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<sup>221</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 136/5:252.

<sup>222</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 141/5:257.

<sup>223</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 142/5:258.

powerfulness of nature.<sup>224</sup>

The first half seems to be no different from Burke's account of "delightful horror" as a pleasure coming from the "removal of the immediate danger." However, in the last part of the passage, Kant attributes the reason we call such fearful objects sublime to the fact that our mind is uplifting when imagination, in spite of its failed attempt to present and face the fearful situation, ends up being enabled to entertain it. So, Kant's philosophy of the sublime, regardless of its difference in kind, underscores the peculiarity of the sublime experience as the affectively charged affirmation of our cognitive and existential limits *and* our own struggle to come to terms with those limits, which ultimately leads us into his important remark of *subreption*.

Kant contends that there is a certain subreption in action in the sublime experience. Subreption means a substitution of one with the other.<sup>225</sup> Then, what substitution does Kant discuss here? What exactly is ultimately revealed in his recourse to "the voice of reason," which is inseparable from, and also in fact essential to, the elevation of the imagination? It is the faculty of the mind itself that undergoes its own failing but at once surpasses the usual standard of senses. That said, when Kant defines that the sublime are that in comparison with which everything else is small, it is not his

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<sup>224</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 144-145/5:261.

<sup>225</sup> Strictly speaking, Kant distinguishes three different kinds of subreption in his "On the Form and Principles of the Sensible and Intelligible World [Inaugural Dissertation]," in David Walford ed., *Theoretical Philosophy 1755-1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). This subreption is the third kind, which concerns the transfer of "conditions which are peculiar to subjects" to objects. See sections 27-29.

primary point that there are absolutely immense and vast objects *exterior to* the subject, to whose sublimity the subject cannot help but submit itself in awe. Rather, Kant revises, or even inverts, the mismatch between the immense sublime object and the infinitesimal subject by arguing that “nothing can be given in nature ... which could not be diminished down to the infinitely small” in comparison with ideas of reason. Sublime is our own *vocation* [*Bestimmung*], demonstrated by our reason, awakened and galvanized by the incapacity and inadequacy of imagination at the *limit*.<sup>226</sup> The feeling of the sublime, often projected onto the object, then, is nothing but “*respect* [*Achtung*] *for our own vocation*, which we show to an object in nature through a certain *subreption*.” The sublime experience creates a field in which the latent faculty of the subject is revealed and confirmed, resulting in the empowerment and uplift of the subject. Hence Kant’s conclusion: “true sublimity must be sought only in the mind of the one who judges, not in the object in nature.”<sup>227</sup>

#### THE SUBLIME PEOPLE AND REPRESENTATION: A KANTIAN STYLE

Now that we have discussed Kant’s view of the sublime in general, it is time to address its application to the question of the democratic people. Although the sublime is often considered to be primarily germane to our experience of nature or the work of art, there is

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<sup>226</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy points out that what the sublime excites in us is “more than a feeling in the banal sense, it is the emotion of the subject at the *limit*.” See his “The Sublime Offering,” Jean-Luc Nancy et al. *Of the Sublime: Presence in Question* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 44. Italics mine.

<sup>227</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 139/5:256.



good reason to construct the very concept as a means for rethinking about the democratic people and democracy as well. In fact, any aesthetic experiences are already in part political in the first place, as long as such an experience involves a constitutive narrative that shapes the way we feel, imagine, and make sense of our own subjectivity in relation to others and the world. Aesthetics, as Jacques Rancière contends, refers to “a certain modality, a certain distribution of the sensible.”<sup>228</sup> Highlighting the aesthetic horizon that the democratic experience of the people opens up, therefore, can be a fecund way to establish an alternative framework with which we can better understand the affective structure of our democratic subjectivity and agency.<sup>229</sup>

My overriding emphases are on the ways in which we can judge the democratic

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<sup>228</sup> Jacques Rancière, “The aesthetic dimension: Aesthetics, Politics, Knowledge,” *The Aesthetic Turn in Political Thought*, ed., Nikolas Kompridis (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 263. For Rancière, politics “is aesthetic in principle.” *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 58.

<sup>229</sup> Notice that drawing upon Kant as a source of democratic theory, I do not aim to reinforce the traditionally recognized *Kantian* political philosophy if this means that Kant’s political philosophy is ultimately all about (practical) *reason*. The traditional view situates his political philosophy as an appendix in the context of his systematic metaphysics of morals. From that point of view, the place of the sublime is at best marginal, a mere passage that bridges between aesthetics and morality, and, by extension, politics. My democratic reading of Kant, however, focuses less on the nature of practical reason and its quintessential role of Kantian morality and politics per se. Nor do I take some of the common routes to a postmodern inversion of the traditional Kant, demonstrated by Jean-François Lyotard, and, to a lesser extent, Gilles Deleuze. Unlike Kant, who affirms the superiority of reason, Lyotard and Deleuze turn to the very rupture as a site for radical heterogeneity or the materiality of sensation. What is revealing for them is rather the absolute *alterity* (Lyotard) or the vital power of *rhythm* (Deleuze). See Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Experience of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), especially chapter 6 and Jean-François Lyotard, “Presenting the Unpresentable: The Sublime,” *Artforum*, Vol. 20 No. 8 (1982), “The Sublime and the Avant-Garde,” in *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994). Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), *Kant’s Critical Philosophy* (London: Athlone Press, 1984).

people as sublime by way of doing justice to, and reflecting upon, both fear *and* delight, or anxiety *and* excitement, that the people provoke, on how the liminal experience of the sublime can offer critical insights into the interplay between the subject (individual citizens) and the object (the people), and, finally, on how my Kantian rendition of the sublime people overall can help us to better attend to and come to terms with the indelible condition of frustration owing to the aesthetic representation of the people as unrepresentable.

What does it mean to judge the democratic people as sublime, and how can the sublime people as an interpretive framework deepen our understanding of democratic life, allowing us to critically assess the two prevailing paradigms discussed above? Let us begin with a simple acknowledgment that within the symbolic order of democracy, the people are *limitless* with regard to measure and *formidable* with regard to power, which makes the people perfectly qualified as an example of the Kantian sublime.<sup>230</sup> In democracy, the people are deemed to be the only legitimate foundation of power. It is the people that is the greatest and irresistibly forceful category ever conceivable in democracy. The people convey an impression of superiority and completeness. It is the superiority and completeness that spring from the status of the sole fountain of political power.<sup>231</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville once described the status of the people in the democratic world as “the cause and aim of all things, everything comes from them and everything is

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<sup>230</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 128/5:244, 144/5:261.

<sup>231</sup> See, for example, James Madison, “Paper No. 49” and Brutus, “Letter No. 1,” both in Terrence Ball ed., *Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay: The Federalist with Letters of “Brutus”*, 245 and 438.

absorbed in them.”<sup>232</sup> Kant, too, discussed the transfer of the supreme authority from monarchs to the people by noting that “[t]he consequence was that the monarch’s sovereignty wholly disappeared (it was not merely suspended) and passed to the people, to whose legislative will the belongings of every subject became subjected.”<sup>233</sup> The people appear to be supreme beyond all comparison to the eyes of “metaphysical democrats.”<sup>234</sup>

This vestigially metaphysical—or politico-theological—sense of the people has not vanished even in the reductionist paradigm. The people are normally understood as the sovereign—albeit rather colorless and lifeless in the reductionist rendition.<sup>235</sup> Here, the people need to be beholden. The implication, especially with respect to the relationship between individual citizens and the people, is twofold. First, the reductionist paradigm assigns the people—imagined and employed as an abstraction—a regulative function so that individual citizens stand in awe of the order that the people symbolize. Second, the concept of the people so understood is defined, designedly, by *not* being geared toward promoting the popular energy of actual ordinary people. The symbolic

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<sup>232</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 71.

<sup>233</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, in *Practical Philosophy*, ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 481/6:341.

<sup>234</sup> Marcel Gauchet, *La Religion dans la démocratie: Parcours de la laïcité* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998), 8, quoted from Warren Breckman, *Adventures of the Symbolic: Post-Marxism and Radical Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 176.

<sup>235</sup> Richard Tuck uses the metaphor of *the sleeping sovereign* in his new book, deriving from Hobbes’s discussion of a sovereign democracy in *De Cive* [*On the Citizen*]. The point is that for Hobbes, the governing activities of citizens—those which were considered essential for ancient democracies—are not central to democracy at all. See Richard Tuck, *The Sleeping Sovereign: The Invention of Modern Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

order of the abstract people rather helps arouse fear and disgust<sup>236</sup> in the minds of the citizen against any attempts of the appropriation of the people for the sake of those who are lacking the sense of complete wholeness. The interests of common people, even though they are most likely the majority population, can still be seen as factional and partial. To use a classical distinction, the sovereignty of the people [*ho dēmos*] should not be confused with the supremacy of the common people [*to plēthos*].<sup>237</sup> That said, it is not entirely correct to say that the reductionist paradigm urges individual democratic citizens to sever connections with the people. Instead, the citizen, as a beholder, is thought to be already actively *included* in the structure of the people. Or, in other words, the people, at this abstract level, incorporate every individual indiscriminately; popular sovereignty is taken diffusively.

This reductionism is driven by fear originating in a harsh confrontation with the people as an awe-generating sublime material. By choosing to revel in the reductionism, however, those who subscribe to the reductionist paradigm fail to recognize and attend to the people as a sublime object. They are unable to maintain critical distance necessary for the aesthetic experience of the sublime. Kant states that for an object to be judged as sublime, the subject should be able to consider the object as “fearful without being *afraid of it*[.]”<sup>238</sup> What it means is that one should fully acknowledge the formidable power of

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<sup>236</sup> This is, as Jason Frank once put, “order-preserving disgust” expressed at “the egalitarian challenge democracy posed to defenders of the inherited order[.]” See his “Democracy and Disgust,” 402.

<sup>237</sup> Richard Bourke, “Introduction” in Richard Bourke and Quentin Skinner eds., *Popular Sovereignty in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 6.

<sup>238</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 144/5:260.

the people that would make her resistance seem completely helpless—hence she still has fear of the people—yet should not be afraid of it, believing that she and the people are not necessarily hostile to each other. Only then can she experience the people as sublime. The reductionist paradigm does not allow this space befitting the subtlety of the sublime experience. The feeling of awe attributed to the abstract people would degenerate into the sheer terror once the people became released from the abstraction taken up by unruly ordinary people, tending to cause disruption. Here, the fear of the people effectively forecloses any possibilities of promoting the positive sensibilities of individual democratic citizens toward any concrete body of the people as the source of popular politics. Instead, they take the unitary version of the sovereign people—which symbolizes a unified community, the Constitution, the nation, or simply the political order itself<sup>239</sup>—as a means to contain the exertion of the popular energy of the common people rather than to galvanize and release it.<sup>240</sup> In other words, the reductionist paradigm provides citizens with a strong perspective from which they can be markedly skeptical and contemptuous of the popular outbursts that would likely disrupt the existing order. Reductionism, therefore, can easily take shape as passivity and turn individual democratic citizens into passive bystanders, leaving the terms of democratic politics

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<sup>239</sup> Sieyes once put, “in a political society, a people, a nation, are synonymous terms.” Emmanuel Joseph Sieyes, “Contre la ré-totale” quoted from Yack, *Nationalism and the Moral Psychology of Community*, 214. See also Rogers Smith, *Stories of Peoplehood and Political Peoplehood: The Roles of Values, Interests, and Identities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), especially chapters 5 and 6 on American peoplehood.

<sup>240</sup> One would remind us of Bertolt Brecht’s stanzas: “When it’s a notion/When it’s still vague/It is praised./When it looms big/When plans are in motion/Objections are raised.” John Willett and Ralph Manheim eds., *Bertolt Brecht Poems: Part Three 1938-1956* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1976), 423.

defined and imposed by political elites. It does not require citizens to abandon their belief in popular sovereignty. It only demands that they hold the belief in the broadest and the most abstract fashion. Therein lies the power and danger of this paradigm.

Consider a classic example from the early modern era. Thomas Hobbes once put that “in every commonwealth, the People Reigns.” In what exact sense can the people rule in *every* commonwealth? What about monarchical or oligarchic polities? The key to understand his point is his characterization of the people, which resonates deeply with the reductionist paradigm. For Hobbes, the people—as opposed to crowd—are “a *single* entity with a *single will*.” It is an abstraction. In monarchies, therefore, “the People” still “exercises power [*imperat*]”<sup>241</sup> precisely because “the *King* is the *people*.”<sup>242</sup> Likewise, Hobbes’s parliamentary contenders such as Henry Parker, the author of *Jus Populi*,

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<sup>241</sup> It could be translated into *will* as in the case of sovereign will [*summum imperium*].

<sup>242</sup> See Thomas Hobbes, *On the Citizen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 137. There are meaningful disagreements among scholars whether or to what extent early modern theorists of sovereignty can be considered democratic. For conflicting views on Hobbes’s account of democracy, for instance, see Richard Tuck, “Hobbes and Democracy” and Kinch Hoekstra, “A Lion in the House: Hobbes and Democracy,” both in Annabel Brett, James Tully, and Holly Hamilton-Bleakley eds., *Rethinking the Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Notice that Hobbes’s primary concern was not with endorsing monarchy per se, but with establishing a theory of absolute sovereignty. See his following statement: “... throughout my discourse it has been my aim ... *not to give the impression that citizens owe less obedience to an Aristocratic commonwealth or a Democratic commonwealth than they owe to a Monarchical commonwealth*. For though I have deployed some arguments in the tenth chapter to press the point that Monarchy has more advantages than other forms of commonwealth (the only thing in this book which I admit is not demonstrated but put with probability), I say everywhere explicitly that *every commonwealth must be allowed supreme and equal power*.” Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, 14 [emphasis added].

argued that the Parliament is, in fact, the people.<sup>243</sup> We can replace King and Parliament with the Constitution, the political order, the democratic norm, et cetera. The logic still stands. What we see is the pattern in democratic thinking that makes the people enshrined in the highest principle of democracy while at once draining it of its vital potentials. As an abstract justification for the legitimate constitutional norm, the people rather appear as figurative reference, reverential gesture, and historical commemoration. Appealing to the people still takes place in the reductionist culture. The terms, however, are always innocuous and consensual.

Holding the reductionist view, which seems to metastasize political passivity, can be self-defeating especially when the interests of entrenched elites are persistently furthered by institutional constraints on popular power in representative democracy.<sup>244</sup> The unitary and abstract notion of the sovereign people and strictly representative institutional arrangements can put individual citizens in an irritating situation as they see democracy secretly allowing the powerful and the privileged to dominate ordinary

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<sup>243</sup> Quentin Skinner, "Hobbes on Representation," *European Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 13, No. 12 (2005). See also Hanna F. Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), chapters 4 and 5.

<sup>244</sup> One of the reasons that ordinary citizens often find themselves frustrated at the haunting inability of representative democracy to secure the democratic ideal of power sharing is that there are always some elites, even while advertising more democracy in one way or another, who are continuously articulating and rearranging institutional structures that could favor their particular interests. Amel Ahmed aptly documents the ways in which the seemingly fair and just electoral systems are designed to protect the elites' interests by allowing exclusionary safeguards even while giving the governed some power of electoral control. See her *Democracy and the Politics of Electoral System Choice: Engineering Electoral Dominance* (2013). In this vein, David Bateman's recent study that focuses on the problems of exclusion particularly in "democratizing" contexts is also informative. See his "Democratic Exclusion: The Right to Vote in the United States, United Kingdom, and France," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania (2013).

citizens while failing to fulfill even the very minimum presumption that reductionists cannot but hold: democracy provides individuals with “a sufficient chance to win and a sufficiently large payoff in the future rounds.” This “prospect of alternation” is believed to make it possible that one “can be governed by different others *in turn*,” thereby being able to be “represented *some of the time*,”<sup>245</sup> which does not correspond to the everyday democratic experience of individual citizens. If they witness instead the glaring incongruity developed between their *de jure* sovereignty and *de facto* subjection, their respect for the formal democratic order—which is driven by their fear and disgust against the tendency of norm-erosion by popular uprisings—may have to be recalibrated. Otherwise, their somewhat legitimate fear can degenerate into blind deference to any authority as long as it is sanctioned by the norm of popular sovereignty broadly understood, irrespective of the exclusion of broad segments of the population from enjoying democratic agency. Their respect for the abstract people—popular sovereignty, the Constitution, the order, et cetera—can be deceptive, “[hiding] existential subjection.”<sup>246</sup>

The aspirational paradigm, on the other hand, aims to contest and challenge the undemocratic authority in the name of *actual* people.<sup>247</sup> Yet the actual people, too, are a

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<sup>245</sup> This “prospect of alternation” is believed to make it possible that one “can be governed by different others in turn,” and thereby is “represented some of the time.” Adam Przeworski, “Minimalist Conception of Democracy: A Defense,” 13-14 and “Self-Government in Our Times,” *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 12 (2009), 78. Emphasis added.

<sup>246</sup> George Kateb, “Arendt and Representative Democracy,” *Salmagundi*, No. 60 (1983), 38.

<sup>247</sup> Levellers who were contemporaneous with Hobbes and Parker objected to the abstract characterizations of the people and argued for the dependence of parliament



construction that commands a particular definition, delimitation, and characterization. This counter-paradigm cannot be immune from some figurative and synecdochical elaborations on the people. Their elaborations are anti-elitist, often led by anti-elitist elites. The people as “an aspirational category,” thus, become “a site for symbolic action where new configurations of self, society, and the characteristics of both might be re-imagined.”<sup>248</sup>

What the aspirational paradigm offers is a reconstruction of the image of the people. The people are deemed not merely as the “origin” of the existing political order, but rather its “undoing.”<sup>249</sup> Here, the idea of the people as non-elites intersects rather than opposes the idea of the people as the constituent power, forming a momentum for a lively popular politics. That comes with a sweeping reorientation of sensibilities toward ordinary people and popular energy. The main strategy is to argue for an overcoming of the consciousness of representation in opposition to the existing political authority. Individual democratic citizens are encouraged to think as if they can instantaneously experience the people as such by empathizing with, or even identifying themselves with, the actual people so created. All mediations appear to be superseded in the alleged

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on the people. See Philip Baker ed., *The Levellers: The Putney Debates* (New York: Verso, 2007). Carl Schmitt once cited G. P. Gooch’s work [*The History of English Democratical Ideas in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century*], saying that “the ideas of modern direct democracy appeared for the first time in the Levelers’ movement.” Carl Schmitt, *Constitutional Theory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 261.

<sup>248</sup> Melvin Rogers, “Race and the Democratic Aesthetic: Jefferson, Whitman, and Billie Holiday on the Hopeful and the Horrific,” in *Radical Future Pasts: Untimely Political Theory*, eds., Romand Coles and Mark Reinhardt, George Shulman (The University Press of Kentucky, 2014). See also his “The People, Rhetoric, and Affect.”

<sup>249</sup> Anne Norton, “Pentecost: Democratic Sovereignty in Carl Schmitt,” *Constellations*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (2011), 392.

presentness of the real people. In other words, representations are supplanted by an experience of communion.<sup>250</sup>

The aspirational paradigm rightly attends to the formidable and unparalleled power of the people—characteristics that would make the people a sublime object. At first glance, unlike its reductionist counterpart, the aspirational paradigm seems to secure the space where one can consider the people “as fearful without being *afraid of it*.”<sup>251</sup> Yet this approach, too, fails to maintain the critical aesthetic distance necessary for the sublime experience by nullifying the radical otherness that the people can provoke. Also, the presentness of the claimed people takes precedence over the infinite and inexhaustible characteristics of the people. Dispelling the fear of the people altogether by conjoining individual citizens and the people, the aspirational paradigm provides an opportunity for individual democratic citizens to feed on excitement and self-righteousness proceeding directly from their communion with the supposedly real (and therefore just) people. In so doing, however, the space of possibilities has narrowed.

As the aspirational paradigm conceives of people as essentially recalcitrant to the political establishment of representation, it calls for a *disruptive* and *immediate* politics that can suspend the motions of the everyday politics. This move may seem to be productive and even necessary especially when representative democracy largely remains

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<sup>250</sup> Elias Canetti famously noted how the most fundamental fear of human beings—the fear of being touched—can be transformed into its opposite when they are placed in a crowd, where they feel “as though everything were happening in one and the same body.” See his *Crowds and Power* (New York: The Viking Press, 1963), 15-16.

<sup>251</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 144/5:260.

centralist, elitist, non-participatory, and managerial.<sup>252</sup> Yet it comes with costs: the promotion of the mythical idea of the unmediated people, which would distract individual democratic citizens from the laborious democratic task of persuading other fellow citizens and shifting public opinion over time.

If reductionists in the end are likely to promote the highly individualist contemporary democratic culture by refraining from taking popular actions, their aspirational counterparts, unwittingly or otherwise, fall under the opposite yet similar myopic narcissistic spell by taking unreservedly assertive actions immersing themselves in the movement of the claimed people. The chances become higher especially in the current circumstances with the advanced technological and cultural outlets for both individualist hedonistic withdrawal *and* the various kinds of self-gratifying instant activism.<sup>253</sup> Whereas the hypersensitivity of the reductionist model toward the fear of the popular energy results in an allergic reaction to, and disengagement from, popular politics, the aspirational model rather makes the relationship between individual citizens and the people too much reflexive, instantaneous, and decisionistic rather than communicative, processual, and dialectic.

The sublime people attempts to harness the motivating power of the warranted fear both from the reductionist hypersensitivity and from the aspirationalist self-

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<sup>252</sup> Cf. Anne Norton, "Democracy and the Divine," *Theory & Event*, Vol 3 Issue 2 (2010).

<sup>253</sup> For a scathing indictment of the self-styled activism, see, among others, Adolph Reed Jr., "Martyrs and False Populist" and "Posing as Politics" in his *Class Notes: Posing As Politics and Other Thoughts on the American Scene* (New York: The New Press, 2000) as well as "Nothing Left: The long, slow surrender of American liberals," *Harper's Magazine* (March 2014).

indulgence. In order to clarify my distinct position, it seems necessary to examine the recent rediscovery of the sublime with regard to its relevance for radical democratic politics, perhaps most profoundly exemplified by Jason Frank's account of Burke and "the radical democratic sublime."<sup>254</sup> As I use the term sublime strictly in the Kantian sense and put much emphasis on what the sublime experience does to the democratic subject, such an analysis, albeit rather brief, seems indispensable.

Frank draws an important lesson from Burke that political authority is grounded in the affective bonds as much as it is held by the law and institutions. Although Burke's conservative political philosophy was based on his praise of a natural aristocracy against an unruly democracy,<sup>255</sup> both Burke and Frank share in common a critical view of the determined inattention of political rationalism to the aesthetic dimension. For both of them, the sublime, at the intersection of politics and aesthetics, functions as an affective

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<sup>254</sup> Jason Frank, "Delightful Horror: Edmund Burke and the aesthetics of democratic revolution" in Nikolas Kompridis ed., *The Aesthetic Turn in Political Thought* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014). Also see his *Constituent Moments*, especially chapter 6 on Aesthetic Democracy.

<sup>255</sup> "A true natural aristocracy is not a separate interest in the state, or separate from it. It is an essential integrant part of any large people rightly constituted. It is formed out of a class of legitimate presumptions, which, taken as generalities, must be admitted for actual truths. To be bred in a place of estimation; To see nothing low and sordid from one's infancy; To be taught to respect one's self; To be habituated to the censorial inspection of the public eye; To look early to public opinion; To stand upon such elevated ground as to be enabled to take a large view of the wide-spread and infinitely diversified combinations of men and affairs in a large society; To have leisure to read, to reflect, to converse; ...To be led to a guarded and regulated conduct, from a sense that you are considered as an instructor of your fellow-citizens in their highest concerns, and that you act as a reconciler between God and man ... These are the circumstances of men, who form what I should call a *natural aristocracy*, without which there is no nation. Edmund Burke, *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs, in Consequence of Some Late Discussions in Parliament, Relative to the Reflections on the French Revolution* (London: Printed for J. Dodsley, Pall-Mall, 1791), 129-130. Emphasis original.

device for legitimizing political authority. Certainly, Burke famously assigned the sublime eventually to “a story of continuity—a myth of traditional British Constitution dating back to Magna Carta[.]” Yet Frank is correct to point out that it is also true that revolutionary spectacles—in other words, “that which rupture[s] the continuity of experience and tradition”<sup>256</sup> that Burke so harshly criticized in his antirevolutionary writings<sup>257</sup>—contain the chief qualities of what Burke’s own earlier aesthetics attributes to the sublime: “novelty” and “astonishment.” Burke shied away from democracy precisely because he understood the way in which “the people’s authority ... might rely upon a pervasive sense of its own sublimity[.]”<sup>258</sup> Frank, after carefully documenting the evolution of Burke’s aesthetics of the sublime, formulates “the radical democratic sublime” as an affective and aesthetic foundation for the making of a radical democracy by locating the sublimity in the grandeur and spectacles emanating from the rupture as a new democratic beginning.

Frank attributes the radical democratic sublimity to the “polyvocality” of the people. Like Walt Whitman, he associates “popular voice with the sublime” and discerns “this sublimity as an aesthetic resource of democratic regeneration.”<sup>259</sup> His vision of “aesthetic democracy” firmly resists the dominant tendency of treating democratic life only as statistically recognizable and completely subordinated to the institutional process

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<sup>256</sup> Adam Phillips, “Introduction” to Edmund Burke, *Enquiry*, xv. Phillips also contends that Burke’s overall remark can be understood as “potentially on both sides of any argument.”

<sup>257</sup> Notably, Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987).

<sup>258</sup> Frank, “Delightful Horror,” 26.

<sup>259</sup> Frank, *Constituent Moments*, 182.

of representation. Relying upon Whitman's account of the "autopoetic" people, Frank highlights the sublime potentialities of "force and power of immediacy," which prove to be the only antidote to "the complicity of compromise, institutional mediation, and political deliberation."<sup>260</sup> The people so understood are multitudinous and spontaneous, and always in the process of becoming, while "remaining forever a people that is not ... yet."<sup>261</sup> This aestheticization of the people as an unmediated power seems to be an antidote to the reductionism that I mentioned earlier, or to what Whitman called "the growing excess and arrogance of realism,"<sup>262</sup> pervading the democratic theories and practices, then and now. However, Frank's celebration of the Whitmanian people as well as his left Burkean account of the sublimity of popular spectacles displays a problem that is similar to what I pointed out earlier as the major shortcoming of the aspirational paradigm.

The problem is not that he is replicating one of the popular strategies of resistance by flaunting the "vulgar" and "promiscuous" people and re-appropriating the pejorative

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<sup>260</sup> Frank, *Constituent Moments*, 187, 202. Whitman often expressed the deep-seated distrust of "institutional politics and institutions of all kinds." He once castigated professional politicians as "office-holders, office-seekers, robbers, pimps, exclusives, malignants, conspirators, murderers[.]" For him, therefore, democracy should be more than laws and institutions. That is why he contended that "[n]o institutions, no parties—We want a living principle as nature has, under which nothing can go wrong." He also stated that "For not only is it not enough that the new blood, new frame of democracy shall be vivified and held together merely by political means, superficial suffrage, legislation, etc., but it is clear to me that unless it goes deeper, gets at least as firm and warm a hold in men's hearts, emotions and belief, ... , its growth doubtful, and its main charm wanting." Walt Whitman, "The Eighteenth Presidency," 1337-8 and *Democratic Vistas*, 959, quoted from Frank, *Constituent Moments*, 186-7.

<sup>261</sup> *Constituent Moments*, 183, 185.

<sup>262</sup> Whitman, *Democratic Vistas*, 1009, quoted from Frank, *Constituent Moments*, 206.

for the radical position he intends to defend.<sup>263</sup> The real problem comes from his attempt to embrace the poetic *overcoming* of the representational limitation. Certainly, Frank understands that Whitman emphasizes the necessity of poetic *mediation* that can crystallize popular voices.<sup>264</sup> But the people so created are still thought to hold the power of immediacy, diametrically contrasted with the power created through the conventional representative mechanism. That said, Frank seems to simplify the difficult situation in which democratic citizens are placed, the situation he himself has earlier pointed out as a *dilemma* that “the people have been at once enacted through representation ... and in excess of any particular representation.”<sup>265</sup> But if we attend to this dilemma by assigning the sublimity to the presence of the unmediated people whose “autopoetic” power can express itself *directly* to individuals “without mediation, without conditions, without distance,”<sup>266</sup> we may end up evading the very dilemma by opening the door (perhaps unintentionally) for a more utopian conception of the immediacy of the people.<sup>267</sup>

How Frank constructs his version of aesthetic democracy by using the notion of

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<sup>263</sup> Frank pays careful attention to why and how Whitman actively embraced the vulgar characteristics of the people instead of establishing a vision of the detached lawgiver-like poet. The problem of reviving and reinforcing the anti-democratic frame, which is inherent to some of the radical democratic theories, see Sterling, “Irregular Motions: Democracy and the Mob.”

<sup>264</sup> On this point, I would like to thank Jason Frank for his comments on the earlier version of this chapter.

<sup>265</sup> Frank, *Constituent Moments*, 3.

<sup>266</sup> Frank, *Constituent Moments*, 198.

<sup>267</sup> Pierre Rosanvallon once accused the yearning for the immediate presentation of the people of its tendency toward “*l’impolitique*, the *unpolitical*, by which [he means] a failure to develop a comprehensive understanding of problems associated with the organization of a shared world.” *Counter-Democracy: Politics in an Age of Distrust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

sublime also merits critical assessment. His focus is almost exclusively placed on the awe-generating characteristic of the sublime *object*. For example, popular uprisings can be understood as sublime because of its massive scale and disruptive, and therefore, astounding spectacles. Therefore, Frank's theory of "the radical democratic sublime," while aiming at upending the conventional but debilitated institutional representative democracy, boosts the aspirational communion with the claimed people. In so doing, however, his radical resistance to the reductionist ideology can fall prey to being appropriated as a further development of the dichotomy that the very ideology is based on. He cares not so much about what the sublime experience *does* to the subject as what constitutes the sublime object. Frank's radical democratic sublime, in this particular sense, calms rather than expands and incites our democratic imaginations.

What my rendition of the Kantian sublime people demands is a *restoration* of the distanced stance. I claim that we need to underline the necessity of representation implicated in the idea of the people or popular sovereignty *and* its inevitably incomplete and infinite nature more carefully. We tend to think that writing, far from speech,<sup>268</sup> is only a secondary device for expressing what we already think and will, but it is often writing process itself that gives birth to our thoughts. We exchange different things, believing that they must share exactly the same values, but in fact it is our act of exchange itself that creates such values. Likewise, contrary to the belief that representation is a means to translate—or mistranslate—the pre-existing will of the

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<sup>268</sup> "Speech is immediate. It issues from a living body. Speech is said to be the utterance of an internal will, a will otherwise unknown." Anne Norton, *Republic of Signs: Liberal Theory and American Popular Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 155.



people, it is in fact the representational structure itself that gives rise to the democratic people. To understand that representation is necessary and it ends necessarily in failure requires us to abandon the misleading idea that the people somehow exist prior to and beyond the representative scheme of politics.<sup>269</sup>

Certainly, this is hardly a new idea. From Hobbes to Claude Lefort and Edmund Morgan, a number of political thinkers and historians have pointed out the problem in a wide variety of ways. Lefort famously states that in democracy, the “locus of power is an empty place.”<sup>270</sup> It resonates with Morgan’s rather blunt historical account. Morgan notes that unlike a monarch who is “a visual presence,” the people “are never visible as such.”<sup>271</sup> Thus, “[b]efore we ascribe sovereignty to the people, we have to imagine that there is such a thing[.]”<sup>272</sup> In other words, “the people do not exist except through *approximate* successive representations of itself.”<sup>273</sup> That is why democracy has to “[involve] the symbolic creation of an artificial body of the people.”<sup>274</sup>

Again, it may sound odd because representation simply signifies “a making present again,”<sup>275</sup> which presupposes the existence of *something* that is being represented.

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<sup>269</sup> David Plotke, “Representation is Democracy,” *Constellations*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1997).

<sup>270</sup> Claude Lefort, “The Question of Democracy” in *Democracy and Political Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 1988), 17.

<sup>271</sup> Edmund Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1989), 153.

<sup>272</sup> Morgan, *Inventing the People*, 153.

<sup>273</sup> Pierre Rosanvallon, Samuel Moyn ed., *Democracy: Past and Future* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 37. Emphasis original.

<sup>274</sup> Rosanvallon, *Democracy: Past and Future*, 42.

<sup>275</sup> Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, 8.

But, as Hobbes explained quite clearly, representation can be formative. The represented is preceded by representation. In the sixteenth chapter of *Leviathan*, he states that “A Multitude of men, are made *One* Person, when they are by one man, or one Person, Represented[.]” And it is “the *Unity* of the Representer, not the *Unity* of the Represented, that maketh the Person One.”<sup>276</sup> As far as our purpose is concerned, what is important here is not so much to about his notion of unity as about the fact that “the representation involved here is not so much mimetic, but actively imaginative as in drama and liturgy[.]”<sup>277</sup>

The sublime people directs our attention precisely to this imaginative element of representation. Every claim to the people—reductionist *and* aspirational, institutional *and* extra-institutional, legal-procedural *and* poetic—is an act of imaginative representation, which is attended by the experience of “the subject’s own incapacity” to fully make present of the people.<sup>278</sup> What that means is that when the individual citizen conjure up, encounter with, or participate in, the democratic people, there comes an opportunity of an aesthetic experience in which she see that the people are not entirely sensible, surpassing the limit of her imagination and conventional thoughts. It betrays that her ready-made picture of the people is utterly inadequate, coming to a realization that how incapable she is of representing the people as a whole. It is the failure of her imagination and comprehension.

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<sup>276</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 114.

<sup>277</sup> Daniel Lee, *Popular Sovereignty in Early Modern Constitutional Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 312.

<sup>278</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 142/5:259.

What is represented in the failure of imagination vis-à-vis what is absolutely great, as we learned from Kant, is their *limitlessness*. This failure—the failure of presentation [*Dastellung*—is due to the *limitlessness* [*Unbegrenztheit*] of the people. Here comes, first, “a feeling of displeasure from the inadequacy of the imagination,” alongside “a pleasure ... from the correspondence of this very judgment of the inadequacy[.]” This twofold aesthetic experience of the limit and the limitlessness eventually engenders “an emotionally moving satisfaction.”<sup>279</sup> This is a uniquely sublime experience to which the people can provoke. To be precise, this is what the sublime experience *does* to the individual citizen.

My theory of the sublime people permits a careful review of a vibration, “a vibration ... a rapidly alternating *repulsion from* and *attraction to*” the democratic people.<sup>280</sup> It calls for a drawing up a more accurate balance sheet of fear and delight. Unlike the two leading perspectives that encounter with the people either with fear or with excitement, but not in both ways, the sublime people proposes a reading that makes use of both sensibilities or attitudes and gives the democratic people its due while acknowledging the challenges it gives rise to. Insofar as the limitless magnitude and power of the people are concerned, the fear of the people can be well warranted. It cannot be dismissed outright simply as ideological manipulation. The boundless, abysmal, and unsettling nature of the people may incur authentic fear and anxiety, fear of uncertainty and anxiety about self-loss. On the other hand, the valorization of the people, which let

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<sup>279</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 136/5:252, 141/5:257.

<sup>280</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 141/5:258.

the potentials of the people outrun the known limitations, inspires jovial feelings and restlessness. The theory of sublime people immunizes individual democrats against fantasies that the people can appear as overcoming of the representational limit. Such an endeavor runs a risk of falling, metaphorically, into “visionary rapture” [*Schwärmerei*], that is, “a delusion of being able to see something beyond all bounds of sensibility.”<sup>281</sup>

Whereas the reductionist paradigm intends to dispel the fear and direct the anxiety to cease by devitalizing the people, the aspirational paradigm focuses attention on amplifying self-indulgence in bringing transformative popular energies into existence. Yet what they fail to see, and, thus, fail to make use of, is the genuine pleasure of the sublime, which originates not from *attending* the event of the sublime per se, but from *uplifting* oneself through actively *coming to terms with* the partly unpleasant or difficult experience of the sublime. It is a salutary pleasure in proving one’s capacity *via* recognizing and overcoming one’s own limit. The sublime experience of the democratic people is important not because *what the people are often claimed to be* but because *what the claim of the people causes to be done*.

This point leads us back to the Kantian *subreption*. It is not the case that the people as an object deserve the full credit of sublimity. The sublime people, in the end, serve as an important *medium*, which stimulates and elevates the capacity of each individual citizen who is expected to gain prominence over the sublime object through the mechanism of subreption we discussed earlier.<sup>282</sup> Crosscutting the dichotomous

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<sup>281</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 156/5:275.

<sup>282</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 141/5:257.

conventional logic of democratic politics—holding the rather romantic<sup>283</sup> idea that they can neither fully celebrate nor do without the people, by which they are at once attracted and burdened—those individual democratic citizens can make the people *known* in their *absence* and make representation visible in its negation.<sup>284</sup> When the people become invisible at the usual site of representation, they should see this vanishing as at once their abiding. On the other hand, when they feel as though the people were appearing without mediation, they should be able to restore a distanced stance so that they can see the imaginative representation properly.

In other words, the sublime people calls upon the democratic subject to confront the people *communicatively* rather than enter completely into *communion* with it. What is suggested is to participate in the collective while using it as promoting her own singularities simultaneously. What the sublime people, therefore, proposes is a vibrant democratic politics, where individual democratic citizens are allowed and encouraged to keep invoking and engaging with the democratic people as an indispensable inspiring idea and real force while holding up against the tendency of endangering themselves to

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<sup>283</sup> I use this term with special care. Frank Ankersmit once argued that romantic mentalities or attitudes are the aesthetic foundation of representative democracy. Briefly speaking, he referred to a particular type of attitudes toward embracing and respecting for “multiplicity, for all the paradoxes, oppositions, and contradictions in sociopolitical reality[.]” See Frank Ankersmit, *Political Representation*, 99-132. In general, the post-Kantian *Romanticism* is often deemed as an attempt to overcome the tragic split between idea and nature or imagination and reason through artistic intervention. See Friedrich Schiller, *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry*, and F. W. J. von Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*. For an excellent (and balanced) study that portrays Kant as a legitimate precursor of his romantic followers, see Jane Kneller, *Kant and the Power of Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>284</sup> “I renounce my present life, my present and concrete existence [the I am] in order to make myself [a what I am] known.” Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 142.

lapse into uncritical passivity and the idolatry of the claimed people.

## CONCLUSION

Many advanced democratic societies, the United States as well as others, have been increasingly egalitarian on the one hand, but still stubbornly hierarchical on the other. Ordinary citizens have been markedly alienated from politics, but at once enjoying the growing number of chances for overly assertive activism. One would think that the idea of the people seems to fade into oblivion, but it is still widely circulated and invigorated. It often remains reflex and not thoroughly reflected.

One of the most important conclusions to be extrapolated from this chapter is that both the reductionist alienation of the people and the aspirational celebration of the people fail to attend to an affective foundation suitable for a critical and resilient democratic citizenship. Motivated by uneasiness with the contemporary democratic theory that the people are often *either* unduly abstracted *or* unwarrantedly celebrated, I aimed to establish a middle term, or a different perspective, which is excluded and distinct from the two extreme camps outlined above, seeking to construct the people as an object of *sublime*, especially of a Kantian kind.

The framework of Kantian sublime that I have developed affirms, amplifies, and cultivates the popular energy necessary for a lively democratic politics while at once avoiding any hint of the mirage of the immediacy of the people. This leads us to further develop the ways in which the people as an inspiring force can invigorate and tether our

democratic imagination to shape and alter political structures, programs and agendas, opening up different levels of horizons that have been often ignored or simplified by the dichotomous understanding of democracy and the democratic people. Without it, I contend, democratic politics would easily become distorted, either squashed into its torpid minimum or swallowed up by intemperate and uncritical assertiveness, populist or otherwise.

## CHAPTER 4: The Temporal

### The Time of Frustration: Suffering, Convalescence, and Growth

*My blood moves slowly.*

Friedrich Nietzsche

*Ich Bleibe.*

Joseph Beuys

*Real change is best understood by staying in one place.*

*When I travel, I see differences rather than change.*

*I resent traveling south in early spring in case I am away from home*

*when I see my first tree coming into leaf.*

*If this happens, I see the leaves, but not the growth or change.*

Andy Goldsworthy



Previously, I have paid special attention to the two distinct dimensions of democracy—*communicative* and *symbolic*—where the democratic subject takes the modality of *citizen-partisan* and *citizen-sovereign*, respectively. These distinctions are intended to emphasize that the distinct webs of relations are woven into the democratic world that citizens inhabit. Individual citizens qua citizens find themselves thrown *in* those webs of relations.

To be democratic citizens, as this study claims, means to enter into those relations. I have noted that there exist particularly frustrating problems concerning each of those dimensions of democracy. On the one hand, individual citizens form and perform their democratic agency in relation to *other fellow citizens*. The particular frustration attributed to this *communicative* dimension of democratic politics originates from two distinct conflicting pressures that individual citizens can hardly dispense with. First, they are thought to treat one another based on the principle of mutual respect. Second, they are striving for superiority as they come to interact with those whose opinions and views are dissimilar and even hostile to theirs within the context of partisan competition.

I argue that it would be futile to solve this problem by simply repressing the urge for superiority while making moralist pleas for mutual respect, civility, and tolerance precisely because it is not realistic—given ontological antagonism, epistemological one-sidedness, and, as a result, attitudinal impudence found in the everyday democracy—nor

entirely desirable as such an endeavor, even if it does become realized, would discourage democratic citizens from actively engaging in a series of conversations and contestations. Certainly, it is not desirable just to wink at if not promote the sense of superiority because it would result in nurturing mutual impudence, hatred, and aggression.

On the other hand, individual democratic citizens exercise their democratic agency in relation to *the people*. This concerns the *symbolic* dimension of democracy, where citizens adhere to, interpret, and enact the principle of popular sovereignty. The peculiar frustration with which these *citizen-sovereigns* are confronted proceeds from the indefinite nature of the people as well as the simultaneous presence of two distinct traditions that understand and define the people in quite different ways.

The first tradition, which I called the *reductionist* paradigm, understands the awe-generating constituent power of the people, but reduces the role of the people to a minimum abstraction as the legitimate foundation of the basic authority of democracy. It does so precisely in defiance of any attempts to support the release of the popular energy in the name of the people. The second tradition, which I called the *aspirational* paradigm, regards the people not as an abstracted symbol, but as commoners whose voices and interests often remain unheard and marginalized by the liberal representative scheme of democratic politics. Individual democratic citizens are exposed to these mutually conflicting significations with respect to the people, which arouse and promote the fear of the people, on the one hand, and the delight or collective effervescence of popular power, on the other. Both tendencies can go unduly and extreme so far as to fall into either minimalist passivity or populist over-indulgence, respectively.

My study for both problems aims to understand the democratic experience of individual citizens in relation to other fellow citizens and to the people, proffer a novel perspective from which to better attend to each of the frustrating situations, and finally show how a more persevering democratic citizenship can take shape. For the problem of the democratic subject as *citizen-partisan*, I propose the theory of *magnanimity*, arguing, based primarily on my reading of Aristotle, that we need to promote the sense of magnanimity as a non-destructive form of superiority, which can satisfy the citizen's urge for superiority for the sake of keeping motivation alive while at once foreclosing any possibility of incendiary mutual hatred and aggression. Apropos of the democratic subject as *citizen-sovereign*, I provide the theory of the *sublime* people by drawing largely on Kant's aesthetic. I demonstrate that by attending more closely to the *limitlessness* of the people, we can better understand the fear *and* delight or anxiety *and* excitement that individual democratic citizens may genuinely feel when they invoke, encounter, and engage with the claimed people. My theory encourages individual citizens to participate in the liminal experience of the sublime people without confusing any rigidly held construct of the pseudo-people with the immediate presence of the people. The experience of sublime could allow individual democratic citizens to see themselves elevated through recognizing and overcoming the limits of their own imagination, thereby paving the way for the ongoing regeneration of the people.

My views of *citizen-partisan* and *citizen-sovereign* tacitly suggest the third mode of democratic subjectivity or agency, which I call *citizen-becoming*. Both magnanimity and sublimity are proposed in a way to serve the maturation of the democratic self.

Certainly, these are not moralist prescriptions recommended to impose on democratic citizens. For my theories of magnanimity and sublimity are expected to steer citizens down the path by tapping their moral-psychological satisfactions and aesthetic pleasures. Yet my project, still, assumes that it is preferable and worthwhile for citizens to actively participate in a series of vital and pressing democratic activities in the communicative and symbolic dimensions of democratic politics on the condition that they sustain and further develop their capacities and motivation so as to secure maximum openness to the future engagement. Both magnanimity and sublimity require some temporal space to grow, which in fact presumes a particular understanding of democratic time and temporality. Now, I would like to turn the question of time and frustration.

#### DEMOCRATIC TIME BIFURCATED

Time is notoriously difficult to investigate. It is so shadowy, elusive, and unfathomable a concept, which often escapes simple articulation.<sup>285</sup> First, time seems to be a prerequisite

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<sup>285</sup> Saint Augustine famously confessed that “what, then, is time? I know well enough what it is, provided that nobody asks me; but if I am asked what it is and try to explain, I am baffled.” See his *Confession* (New York: Penguin, 1961), 264. Similarly, Thomas Mann’s Hans Castorp ponders upon the similar question: “What is time? A secret—insubstantial and omnipotent. A prerequisite of the external world, a motion intermingled and fused with bodies existing and moving in space. But would there be no time, if there were no motion? No motion, if there were no time? What a question! Is time a function of space? Or vice versa? Or are the two identical? An even bigger question!” Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain* (New York: Vintage, 1995), 339.

for our own existence, something we cannot not assume *a priori*.<sup>286</sup> Yet the category of time itself is a social product as well, which bears particular social and political determinations.<sup>287</sup> Time, in this manner, is a structure discernible only within a particular socio-political framework of temporality.

For instance, Emile Durkheim highlights the social origin of time-consciousness by pointing out that “[t]he division into days, weeks, months, years, etc., corresponds to the recurrence of rites, festivals, and public ceremonies at regular intervals.”<sup>288</sup> Time is objective, public, and orderly, defining the rhythms and regularity of our existence. We can hardly express our temporal existence without objective signs and methods whose bases are undoubtedly social and collective. The best graphic illustration of the connection between the temporal and the social (and the political) is perhaps Joseph Conrad’s description of anarchist resistance in his novel *The Secret Agent*. Mr. Verloc, the anarchist hero, takes a mission to explode the Greenwich Observatory. To blow up the symbol of centralized time is deemed to make the centralized political power

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<sup>286</sup> Kant’s view of time as the prime form of our entire consciousness is a good example. See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>287</sup> See Reinhart Koselleck, “Time and History,” *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 101-102; J. G. A. Pocock, “Time, Institutions and Actions: An Essay on Traditions and Their Understanding,” *Politics, Language, & Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 234-236.

<sup>288</sup> Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 10. Charles M. Sherover also states that: “our questions about time are not themselves timeless. The way we think about time comes out of a long temporal development, the historic development of the culture that has nurtured us.” Sherover, “The Concept of Time in Western Thought,” in Gregory R. Johnson ed., *Are We In Time? And Other Essays on Time and Temporality* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2003), 3.

shattered.<sup>289</sup>

On the other hand, however, time is deeply internalized and personalized, whose essence can only be grasped subjectively. As Saint Augustine aptly pointed out, time is *in* us as much as we are in time. Plenty of notable philosophers and writers, especially from the end of the nineteenth century onward, have drawn much attention to this authentic experience of felt-time. These are a group of people who embodied the kind of disorienting yet romantic atmosphere of fin-de-siècle evidenced by their resistance to the sweeping rationalization, bureaucratization, and acceleration in rates of production, transportation, and communication of the time. Perhaps it was the growing predominance of objectivity, as Georg Simmel once put, that triggered the fascination of them with the opposite.<sup>290</sup>

Examples abound across different genres. Edmund Husserl's phenomenology began with a rediscovery of the inner awareness of time. Henri-Louis Bergson redefined the notion of *duration* [*la durée*] as an authentic, unquantifiable, and non-spatial conception of time with which we better understand our experience of true freedom. Marcel Proust displayed the enchanting and captivating experience of "a fragment of time

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<sup>289</sup> This is Stephen Kern's point. See his *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 16. Joseph Conrad, *The Secret Agent*.

<sup>290</sup> Simmel made a broader point that the development of modern culture as "characterised by the predominance of what one can call the objective spirit over the subjective," which resulted in the "atrophy of individual culture through the hypertrophy of objective culture." He contended that this tendency in turn gave rise to a series of more authentic, subjective, and intense experiences. Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," ed. Donald N. Levine, *Georg Simmel: On Individuality and Social Forms* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 337-338.

in the pure state” [*un peu de temps à l’état pur*], and Walter Benjamin, who was deeply inspired by Proust, also laid stress on the revealing moment of awakening [*das Erwachen*].<sup>291</sup> These examples show the mounting interests of the writers in grappling with the temporal experience of inmost authenticity. By illuminating and attending to the field of subjective felt-time, these thinkers sought out a kind of deliverance from the relentless course of objective and mechanical time.

When it comes to democratic time, people tend to adopt the dichotomous pattern of time. But, here, the layers of bifurcation have been multiplied: objective and subjective, apathetic and intense, stretched out and short-lived, and ordinary and extraordinary.

For example, Max Weber once stated that “[we] are all ‘occasional’ politicians [*Gelegenheitspolitiker*].”<sup>292</sup> In the context of modern democracy, according to Weber, ordinary people may act politically, but they do so only sporadically. The extent of their involvement in politics seems markedly insignificant and its time span is fairly short. The implication is twofold. First, the everyday phenomenon that can best characterize the

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<sup>291</sup> Edmund Husserl, *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964); Henri-Louis Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (Mineola: Dover, 2001); Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time Vol. VI: Time Regained* (New York: Modern Library, 1993), 264; Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 884. Other important writers include Søren Kierkegaard, Alfred N. Whitehead, Thomas Mann, T. S. Eliot, Franz Kafka, Martin Heidegger, and Emmanuel Levinas. It can also be noted that this trend of illustrating authentic time was paralleled by the growing interests in the problem of time in physics, intensified by Einstein’s theories of general and special relativity and the development of quantum mechanics exemplified by Werner Heisenberg’s studies.

<sup>292</sup> Max Weber, “The Profession and Vocation of Politics,” eds. Peter Lassman and Ronald Speirs, *Weber: Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 316.

political life of ordinary citizens in modern democracy is rather passive acquiescence than active participation. Second, however rare and episodic, there still comes some occasion so impassioned and political that the inactive daily routine can be temporarily suspended. Weber's own proposal of leadership democracy [*Führerdemokratie*] highlights the need to undercut the tyranny of bureaucracy—manifested in the famous image of “iron cage” or “a shell as hard as steel [*stahlhartes Gehäuse*], to be more precise”<sup>293</sup>—while emphasizing an opportune time [*kairos*] of interruption in which the charismatic leader emerges in tandem with and by virtue of democratic plebiscitary participation.<sup>294</sup>

The similar contrast between ordinary and extraordinary time is pronounced in the political thought of Hannah Arendt as well. Although Arendt's first and foremost contribution to contemporary political theory centers on her denunciation of the Weberian paradigm of political rule and power as *Herrschaft*,<sup>295</sup> she nonetheless helps

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<sup>293</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism* (New York: Penguin, 2002), 120-121. For Weber's grave concern with the rule by bureaucracy, see his "Parliament and Government in Germany under a New Political Order," eds. Peter Lassman and Ronald Speirs, *Weber: Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 130-270. As for his critique of the expansion of the abstract, rationalized, chronometric temporality, see Terry Maley, "The Politics of Time: Subjectivity and Modernity in Max Weber," eds. Asher Horowitz and Terry Maley, *The Barbarism of Reason: Max Weber and the Twilight of Enlightenment* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 139-166.

<sup>294</sup> Certainly, Weber was skeptical of the idea of popular sovereignty or democracy understood in an idealistic fashion. But, as Tamsin Shaw rightly points out, he would still support the people participating "by proxy, through the Caesarist election of a charismatic leader." Tamsin Shaw, "Max Weber on Democracy: Can the People Have Political Power in Modern States?" *Constellations*, Vol. 15 No. 1 (2008). See also Jeffrey Green, "Max Weber and the Reinvention of Popular Power," *Max Weber Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2008).

<sup>295</sup> Notice that Arendt's etymological analysis of *archê* challenges the conventional Weberian understanding of *archein* as 'to rule' or 'to command' (*herrschen*). She



perpetuate, as it were, the binary of ordinary non-political and extraordinary political time. Arendt famously distinguishes political *action* from *labor* and *work*. *Labor* displays the temporality of sheer repetition that corresponds to the cyclical rhythm of life itself while *work* is a forward-looking project defined and determined by the linear progression of artificial human time. The temporalities of both activities amount to the time of the everyday. On the other hand, *action* is deemed to be rare, fleeting, and extraordinary. Insofar as *action*—the political activity par excellence—bears the qualities of true novelty and unusual theatricality that disturb the dominance of the regular progression of time, the temporality of *action* can be judged as truly extraordinary.<sup>296</sup> With her distinctive treatment of action, therefore, Arendt, not unlike Weber, accepts and reinforces the divided time-consciousness.

Contemporary democratic theorists seem to overemphasize relatively short-lived moments of higher register in one way or another. Some theorists interpret those

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claims that *archein* should be understood with its paired counterpart *prattein*; the former originally meant 'to begin' or 'to lead' and the latter 'to achieve'. Her account of *archê* suggests a more horizontal and egalitarian relationship among equal fellow citizens rather than the Weberian hierarchical relationship between sovereign master (*Herrscher*) and its subjects. See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958). See also Patchen Markell, "The Rule of the People: Arendt, Archê, and Democracy," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 100 No. 1 (2006).

<sup>296</sup> Andreas Kalyvas's fine work examines both Weber and Arendt under the rubric of *the politics of extraordinary*. See his *Democracy and the Politics of Extraordinary: Max Weber, Carl Schmitt, and Hannah Arendt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). As is indicated in the title, one other figure being studied in Kalyvas's book is Carl Schmitt who also draws special attention to "exception" as a locus of "the power of real life" as opposed to the day-to-day mechanism of "torpid repetition." Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 13-15. Part of his *Political Theology* was originally entitled "Sociology of the Concept of Sovereignty and Political Theology" [*Soziologie des Souveränitätsbegriffes und politische Theologie.*] and published as his contribution to a *Festschrift* for Weber in 1922.

allegedly authentic democratic moments as reinvigorating the monotonous institutional democracy, while others take those instants to be even more radical so as to fuel a more fundamentally transformative or oppositional politics. Margaret Canovan, for example, understands that democracy has both procedural *and* redemptive sides, which are conflicting but at once mutually complementing each other. Her complementary or reconciliatory thesis suggests that constant misrepresentation and failure of procedural democracy should be regarded as creating a fertile ground for a redemptive democratic politics, which would challenge but ultimately help keep animating the machinery of democracy.<sup>297</sup>

Sheldon Wolin also lays stress on two configurations of democracy. In democratic theory and practice, there are “two diametrically opposed notions that symbolize two equally opposed states of affairs.” “One is the settled structure of politics and governmental authority typically called a constitution, and the other is the unsettling political movement typically called revolution.” These two states of affairs are often taken to be mutually antithetical. For constitution is “the suppression of revolution” and revolution, “the destruction of constitution.” Albeit opposed, states Wolin, the two notions are connected by way of their respective relations to democracy. Hence democracy’s two configurations: constitutional democracy or “democracy housed within

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<sup>297</sup> Margaret Canovan, “Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy,” *Political Studies*, XLVII (1999), 9. Her distinction of the pragmatic (procedural) and the redemptive sides of democracy in fact comes from Michael Oakeshott’s earlier distinction between the politics of skepticism and the politics of faith. See Michael Oakeshott, *The Politics of Faith and the Politics of Scepticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996). For another informative account that supports Canovan’s point, see Benjamin Arditi, *Politics on the Edges of Liberalism: Difference, Populism, Revolution, Agitation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

a constitution” and “aconstitutional conception of democracy or democracy “as resistant to the rationalizing conception of power and its organization.”<sup>298</sup>

Apparent in Wolin’s analysis, again, is the tacit acceptance of the two diametrically opposed modes of democratic time. In other words, democracy is construed either as routine mechanical processes controlled and constrained by its constitutional and institutional forms or as rare and short-lived revolutionary movements energized by ordinary citizens’ spontaneous and intense actions. The greatness of democracy, according to Wolin, lies in its vitality, energies, and overflowing excesses. Only the latter, which is believed to suspend the normal progression of the everyday by creating momentary intervals of extraordinary egalitarian politics, can be called an authentic democracy. Here, Wolin, too, employs the dichotomous temporal frame by idealizing those fleeting yet exceptional moments of collective effervescence. Although Wolin’s proposal seems more dramatic and less associated with institutional practice than that of Canovan, they nevertheless all value the interruptive quality of those rare moments.

When it comes to democratic time, therefore, democratic theorists are prone to place much emphasis on relatively short-lived moments at which citizens find themselves acting as a ruling agent by expressing their wishes, desires, and opinions through various means of participation, electoral or otherwise. The rest of the ordinary time has hardly

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<sup>298</sup> Sheldon Wolin, “Norm and Form: The Constitutionalizing of Democracy,” in J. Peter Euben, John R. Wallach, and Josiah Ober eds., *Athenian Political Thought and the Reconstruction of American Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 29, 31, 37.

been recognized as a *democratic* time.<sup>299</sup> Put differently, it seems as though we simply assume that there are two dimensions or two axes of democratic engagement: *pitch* vertically and *duration* horizontally, if we use a musical analogy. Pitch concerns the intensity of engagement (high or low) while duration its elapsed time (short or long). According to conventional wisdom widely accepted in democratic theory and practice, an authentic democratic time is that which occupies only one quadrant reserved for *high pitch* and *short duration*—with reference to an overtly enthusiastic yet episodic time. This time of high intensity is sharply distinguished from and diametrically opposed to the low pitch and seemingly endless processes that embody languid ordinariness.<sup>300</sup>

The central question, therefore, is whether the life of democratic citizens can be fully captured and elaborated within this bifurcated temporal frame. This view of democratic time can go awry, but not because the differentiation between ordinary and extraordinary time in democracy cannot be discernible. To continue to use a musical analogy, there is an acoustical reason that we tend to focus more on (or hear more clearly) a melody that sits in the high range of texture. Likewise, it is understandable that

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<sup>299</sup> This statement might not do justice to a few theoretical attempts to ennobling the relatively under-appreciated ordinariness of democratic life. For example, Jeffrey Green's ocular model of democracy is based on his attentive observation on "the citizen-being-ruled" in the everyday democracy. While investigating and singling out a particular mode of engagement as befits the normal capacity of ordinary citizens, however, Green still focuses on the possibility of a set of activities of higher register (certainly not in the form of *voicing*, but that of *watching* such as watching the televised debates between Presidential candidates) to be taking place in the ordinary time. See his *The Eyes of the People: Democracy in an Age of Spectatorship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>300</sup> My use of musical analogies in this chapter goes beyond this particular case of pitch and duration. More fundamentally, music is a temporal art revealing the fact that it might be impossible to conceive of a time without implying a certain mood. In this respect, music allows us to better understand the mood-bearing and feeling-inducing characteristic of time itself.

we pay more attention almost naturally to the exceptional events of higher register. Nonetheless, the bifurcated view of democratic time can still be problematic because this frame can constrain the ways in which democratic citizens understand their political agency *temporally*. First, it would push citizens to a *false choice*, a choice between retreating into the humdrum routine of ordinary time *and* taking part in extraordinary spectacular events as if the only way they can experience democratic time is by conjuring it up as a series of ordinary proceedings drained of *élan vital* save just a few ebullient but rare and short-lived events. These two modalities are mutually constitutive and intensifying: the former appears to be mostly abstract, trivial, and monotonous only in the light of the latter, and vice versa. Second, it naturalizes the pattern of thinking about and organizing democratic life in terms of disruption, intensity, and instantaneousness rather than continuity, duration, and growth.

What is missing in this picture? Quite ironically, it is time itself that is absent. Again, I do not mean to underestimate the value of short-term but largely ephemeral extraordinary forms of democratic participation and mobilization—electoral or popular. It is understandable that those moments of higher intensity draw much attention. Elections matter. Critical elections matter to a greater extent. Fugitive moments of democratic action are of great importance. My point, however, is that all of them matter especially when they serve to inspire future action and help strengthen the ongoing methodical work of politics. The problem is that the overemphasis on extraordinary moments tends to increase the dependence of transformation on exceptional events, crisis, and

sensationalism.<sup>301</sup>

The exception attracts quick attention and crisis calls for radical change. As its etymological root—*krinein*, or to decide—indicates, crisis designates a particular *point-time* when a resolute decision should be made. What effect would this trend of highlighting momentary time have on ordinary individual citizens? At the moment of exception, time comes at us from ahead fast. It arouses the sense of urgency and promotes impatience. This situation itself may not be destructive. It could even be productive as it stimulates the urges for a far-reaching revolutionary reform that can extirpate the root of the problem. Yet it is also true that when the level of excitement is too high, people usually want to see a quick fix. They prefer an immediate improvement—which often comes as a merely temporary expedient carried out with less efforts or reflection—over a change that would take much more time and endeavors.

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<sup>301</sup> My point is that real change (good or bad) is almost always a partial change, which can be made even without the politics (and rhetoric) of crisis, and therefore we need to avoid to give too much emphasis on the exceptional or ecstatic quality of allegedly revolutionary politics. For example, three separate facts are worth noting. First, between 1965 and 1975, legislative gains of minority rights won by African Americans were extended to “a quite specific set of official ethnorracial minorities” in the “absence of both political mobilization from below and political debate from above.” Second, Reagan’s Tax Reform of 1986, “the most comprehensive tax reform legislation in modern American history,” was *not* an issue of campaign before and after the compromise was made. Third, at least in the United States, “incremental development of statutes, administrative interpretation, and political embedment” are no less important as some constitutional change in terms of governing and shaping the political life of ordinary citizens. See John D. Skrentny, *The Minority Rights Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), Amy Gutmann and Denis Thompson, *The Spirit of Compromise: Why Governing Demands It and Campaigning Undermines It* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), and William N. Eskridge Jr. and John Ferejohn, *A Republic of Statutes: The New American Constitution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

When the initial excitement passes, people become more careless<sup>302</sup> about a concatenation of non-sensational issues. In other words, democratic citizens, who do not necessarily think and act in strategic terms, often let themselves oscillate between impetuosity *and* carelessness. These are two different forms of inattentiveness, carrying with them too much excitement *and* boredom, respectively. Torn within the dichotomous temporal consciousnesses, citizens are excessively nervous and restless when they refuse to retreat into nonchalance, while being unable to allow themselves a time to fully *experience* what is really going on. Time shrinks in the former and it disappears into sheer mechanical movement in the latter.

#### NIETZSCHE AND DEMOCRATIC TIME

What needs to be restored is an alternative view of democratic time with which to conceptualize a temporal space suitable for ordinary but impassioned experience and a call for an art of *staying* in such a temporal space. This is a time that is intensely felt yet not compressed, passionate yet rather slow, and carefully attended yet not necessarily expressive. It is a time we can call a *journey* or *project*, highlighting its diurnity and invitation to undertaking. This particularly arduous and prolonged dimension of democratic time is where the citizen can exist as *citizen-becoming*.

*Citizen-becoming* is a mode of democratic subjectivity distinguishable from the other two categories I used previously, *citizen-partisan* and *citizen-sovereign*. The most

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<sup>302</sup> We might use a Heideggerian term, *Lässigkeit*, which is related to *Leergelassenheit*, being left empty.

remarkable difference is that there is no real or symbolic counterpart with or against which the subjectivity of *citizen-becoming* takes shape. It is obvious that *citizen-partisan* and *citizen-sovereign* are expressive of democratic agency. Their performance as a *doer* is clearly implicated. Yet *citizen-becoming* concerns the longing and realization of one's autonomy over time, which entails the questions of self-transformation, self-growth, and self-overcoming.

In fact, the actor, as Arendt once pointed out, "is never merely a 'doer' but always and at the same time a sufferer."<sup>303</sup> The democratic subject, just as the word subject originally meant, is essentially that which suffers, or is subjected. The democratic subject as *citizen-becoming* suffers that which is beyond her control—her own desires, others, and democracy itself. The open-ended texture of democracy shows its particular bias for change, which enables and prompts individual citizens to have a penchant for hope.<sup>304</sup> The things individual citizens have most hoped for, however, often do not happen. Even if their hopes do become realized, they usually do not in the way nor at the time that would have been considered ideal. Their desires are almost destined to be

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<sup>303</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 190.

<sup>304</sup> Notice that Athenian citizens are characterized as confident and sanguine by Thucydides's *Corinthians*. Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, Book I, Section 70. Barack Obama's campaign rhetoric epitomizes the democratic culture of hope: "Hope is the bedrock of this nation. The belief that our destiny will not be written for us, but by us, by all those men and women who are not content to settle for the world as it is, who have the courage to remake the world as it should be." Barack Obama's Iowa Caucus Speech, January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008 [Electronic Source: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/03/us/politics/03obama-transcript.html>]. For a more extensive study of hope in political theory, see Loren Goldman, "The Sources of Political Hope: Will, World and Democracy," PhD Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2010.



“asymptotic.”<sup>305</sup> Democracy’s intimation of its proclivities toward change, combined with the deferrals of the desires that citizens ordinarily experience, constitutes a particular discomfiture with respect to time. Moreover, as Stanley Cavell discusses in his seminal account of Ralph Waldo Emerson, “the democratic demand for consent” presumes “the training and character and friendship Emerson requires for democracy as preparation to withstand not its rigors but its failures, character to keep the democratic hope alive in the face of disappointment with it.” Cavell sees clearly the predicament that “we will be disappointed in democracy,” and that “the human individual meant to be created and preserved in democracy is apt to be undone by it.”<sup>306</sup>

The democratic subject thus is the one who endures frustration and resistance. She can take the initiative in renewing or rebuilding the situation, but only through self-transformation via attending to the time of frustration. Otherwise she would only be equipped with basic reflexes, blindly following the recurring pattern of extraordinary and ordinary time. The secured temporal space allows the citizen to involve the longitudinal engagement in those difficulties. The time of *citizen-becoming*, therefore, is a time of suffering, convalescence, and growth. This engagement brings a heightened perception of democratic reality, often overlooked by the clamor of the subject as a doer visible in the short-lived moments. In order to develop my theory of time as a journey, I turn to

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<sup>305</sup> Frederick M. Dolan and Thomas L. Dumm, “Introduction to Part Two: American Alterities,” Frederick M. Dolan and Thomas L. Dumm eds., *Rhetorical Republic: Governing Representations in American Politics* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 121.

<sup>306</sup> Stanley Cavell, “Aversive Thinking: Emersonian Representations in Heidegger and Nietzsche,” *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome: The Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 56-57.

Friedrich Nietzsche.

Much has been written about Nietzsche.<sup>307</sup> As far as Nietzsche's political theory is concerned, there are two predominating approaches.<sup>308</sup> On the one hand, the recent decades have witnessed a surprising turn in Nietzsche scholarship with regard to his

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<sup>307</sup> Nietzsche did not write any systematic political treatise, anything close to Plato's *Republic*, Hobbes's *Leviathan*, or Rousseau's *Social Contract*. "[T]he most profound level of Nietzsche's political thought," as Tracy Strong once mentioned, "cannot then be concerned with the erection of systems in the manner of classical political theory." Tracy Strong, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration* (Berkeley: University of California, 1988), 188-189. Although he might not be the keenest political mind of his time, his elusive yet extremely rich writings have had irresistible influence on a number of political theorists generation after generation. There was a time when Nietzsche was long accused of the fascist dispositions allegedly widespread in his work, due mostly to Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche, his sister, who infamously abused and misused his manuscripts, fostering the assimilation of her brother's philosophy to the right-extremist political cause. Elizabeth married Bernhard Förster, a fanatical anti-Semitic agitator, and the couple once moved to Paraguay to create a pure Teutonic colony. Their ambitious enterprise soon failed and Bernhard Förster committed suicide in 1889. Elizabeth stayed longer in Paraguay and returned in 1893. By the time Elizabeth came back, Nietzsche had been living as an invalid in the throes of insanity since his mental collapse in 1889. When their mother died in 1897, Nietzsche and his literary estate now came to be in the complete control of Elizabeth. She founded the Nietzsche-Archiv in Weimar and used her brother's growing fame for the sake of her own interests. Many scholars for a long time often began a study on Nietzsche's political thought with "a prolonged disavowal of his responsibility for fascism." Joshua Foa Dienstag, "Nietzsche's Friends and Enemies," *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 62, No. 2 (2000). That convention, however, seems to have died out. Walter Kaufmann's landmark study on Nietzsche helped rescue him from the charge of fascism, and thereby making him much less hostile to the mainstream of liberal democracy. Alexander Nehamas and others also contributed to the proliferation of the now well-accepted *cultural* reading of Nietzsche, which has been often taken as a handy pretext for silencing Nietzsche's particular assaults on modern political achievements. See Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974) and Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

<sup>308</sup> Of course, there are some scholars who do not regard Nietzsche as "political thinker." See Martha Nussbaum, "Is Nietzsche a Political Thinker?" *International Journal of Political Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1997).

contribution to and role for “an invigoration of democratic theory.”<sup>309</sup> Despite the fact that Nietzsche was an unapologetic elitist who never flinched from his abhorrence of modern democracy throughout his entire career, a number of democratic theorists have nonetheless sought democratic possibilities in Nietzsche’s allegedly non- or anti-democratic writings.

Those commentators tend to read Nietzsche in favor of agonistic struggle geared toward an ongoing pluralistic contestation against every attempt at conclusive closure. Nietzsche’s acerbic and consistent criticisms of the Enlightenment philosophy, dogmatic religion, morality, rationalism, and utilitarianism serve as important theoretical sources for their agonistic vision of democratic politics.<sup>310</sup> One scholar suggests that we view Nietzsche’s idea of *Übermensch* as an inspiring ideal type, claiming that “[every]

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<sup>309</sup> Mario Feit, *Democratic Anxieties: Same-Sex Marriage, Death, and Citizenship* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2011), 126.

<sup>310</sup> William Connolly has championed this agonistic reading of Nietzsche. See his *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), *Pluralism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), and “Nietzsche, Democracy, Time,” in Herman W. Siemens and Vasti Roodt eds., *Nietzsche, Power and Politics: Rethinking Nietzsche’s Legacy for Political Thought* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008) [The almost identical versions of the last piece are also included in his *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002) and in Jason Frank and John Tambornino eds., *Vocations of Political Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000)]. See also Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), Dana Villa, *Socratic Citizenship* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), Lawrence Hatab, *A Nietzschean Defense of Democracy: An Experiment in Postmodern Politics* (Chicago: Open Court, 1995), and Lawrence Hatab, “Prospects for a Democratic Agon: Why We Can Still Be Nietzscheans,” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, Issue 23 (2002).

individual should emulate this figure as an illustration of what one can become if only one were to engage oneself in the way of creation.”<sup>311</sup>

Amid this growing trend of democratic rendition of Nietzsche, on the other hand, we have heard some voices to the contrary as well. Frederick Appel and other scholars have reasserted the undeniably aristocratic political posture in Nietzsche’s philosophy. They take those democratic theorists to task for the selective reading of Nietzsche. They claim that Nietzsche’s elitist and authoritarian stance should be thoroughly understood, and if we do, it is hard to interpret his political theory as promoting democratic openness and difference.<sup>312</sup>

Although I, too, seek democratic possibilities in Nietzsche, my goal here remains local and therefore modest. I aim to offer a close reading of a number of passages for the purpose of conceptualizing the way that citizens can cultivate a novel view of democratic time. Nietzsche’s sensitivity toward time—both *tempo* and *temporality*—helps us form a revision that would demand the correction of many of the stereotypes of bifurcated time pointed out earlier. His view of time is intimately intertwined with his understanding of,

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<sup>311</sup> Christine Daigle, “Nietzsche: Virtue Ethics ... Virtue Politics?” *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, Iss. 32 (2006), 8.

<sup>312</sup> Fredrick Appel, *Nietzsche Contra Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999). Other extensive studies of the aristocratic nature of Nietzsche’s philosophy and politics include Bruce Detwiler, *Nietzsche and the Politics of Aristocratic Radicalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990) and Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut eds., *Why We Are Not Nietzscheans* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). Recently, Corey Robin also well recaptures the aristocratic *agon* that Nietzsche intended to revivify in the modern context by revealing interesting selective affinities between his ideas and those of the advocates of the Austrian school of economics such as Friedrich Hayek. See Robin, “Nietzsche’s Marginal Children: On Friedrich Hayek,” *The Nation*, May 27, 2013. See also Peter Berkowitz, *Nietzsche: The Ethics of An Immoralist* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).

or attitude toward, suffering. We can perhaps even say that his ideas of *becoming* and *self-overcoming* are ultimately about how to stay with and make most use of the negative.

Let me begin with proposing a critical assessment of one particular interpretation of Nietzsche. The prime example, especially as long as our purpose is concerned, is William Connolly's democratic reading of Nietzsche. Connolly stands out as strongest among others in that he uses Nietzsche's notion of time as a means to build his own theory of democratic time as a *rift*. Since my main concern is *not* with investigating whether or to what extent Connolly is (or whoever else can be) Nietzsche's most legitimate commentator,<sup>313</sup> my disagreement with Connolly is nothing to do with the fact that he has formulated a position that Nietzsche would never defend. There is no ambiguity about his departure from Nietzsche.<sup>314</sup> Like Connolly, I also aim to interpret Nietzsche as my guiding company in thinking about particular questions such as democratic time, without necessarily endorsing his overall positions. Yet the lesson I

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<sup>313</sup> Nietzsche once said in *The Antichrist* that "some men are born posthumously." He himself certainly enjoyed a renaissance posthumously in the postwar western world in the latter half of the past century. Ever since then, his powerful and elusive ideas have appealed to a wide spectrum of political opinions, from staunch Strassians such as Werner Dannhauser and Allan Bloom to leftist democrats, namely, Bonnie Honig and Connolly himself. Tracy Strong sees Nietzsche's principled resistance to "a master and mastering narrative" or "once-and-for-all-ness" as a warning for any definitive appropriation of his political theory.

<sup>314</sup> Connolly once stated that "There are plenty of ways I dissent from Nietzsche: his cultural aristocratism, which prizes becoming and plurality among a "noble" (though not necessarily moneyed) few while condemning "the herd" to a cultural dogmatism it is said to be predisposed toward; his (sometimes appealing) fantasy of residing on the margin of society beyond the reach of organized politics; his tendency (following from the first two themes) to neglect the *politics* of becoming in favor of cultivating individual distinctiveness; his profound ambivalence toward the basis and effects of gender duality; his periodic delight in petty cruelty against carriers of resentment; his occasional expressions of regret that people are no longer prepared to be "stones" in a cultural edifice; and so on." William E. Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 56.

draw from Nietzsche is quite different from that of Connolly.

Reading Nietzsche for his version of radical democracy, Connolly provides an interesting twofold claim, especially with regard to the question of time. First, not only did Nietzsche clearly recognize the accelerated pace of modern time, he also understood the very phenomenon as something deeply democratic. Second, despite Nietzsche's supposed abhorrence of democracy, his overall project—updated in Connolly's deft hands—could be in service of the provocation of democratic time as a disruptive rift.

The passage to which Connolly draws special attention is from *The Twilight of the Idols*:

[Democratism] has been the form in which the organizing force manifests its decline. ... The West in its entirety has lost the sort of instincts that give rise to institutions, that give rise to a future: it might well be that nothing rubs its 'modern spirit' the wrong way more than this. People live for today, people live very fast, — people live very irresponsibly: and this is precisely what people call 'freedom'."<sup>315</sup>

Connolly warns against the tendency of reading this passage as only displaying Nietzsche's lamentation over the democratization of the modern world. "Lurking within this lamentation," argues Connolly, "is the understanding that a quick pace of life and democracy are closely interwoven."<sup>316</sup> Democratic life so understood tends to be

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<sup>315</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Twilight of the Idols*, "Skirmishes," §39 in Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman eds., *Friedrich Nietzsche: The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>316</sup> Connolly, "Nietzsche, Democracy, Time," 121.

dismissive of a long and steady time befitting any teleological and traditional worldview.

Nietzsche's unflinching disdain for democracy notwithstanding, claims Connolly, it is misleading to believe that he would have absolute, deep-seated aversion to the "significant shift in the tempo of life" in democracy. According to Connolly, Nietzsche rather prizes the fragmented and disruptive temporality that democracy seems to presume because it is prone to engender a certain condition conducive to, rather than hostile to, his anti-foundational pluralism. Even while taking Nietzsche to task for his "aristocratic lamentation," Connolly reads him as a harbinger of democratic pluralism whose ideas of tempo and temporality, particularly, can guide us into thinking about the fractal present promoting "the possibility of improvisation and self-experimentation."<sup>317</sup>

Connolly's efforts to portray Nietzsche as a proponent of the disruptive temporality and fast tempo that he himself endorses continue unabated in his reading of Nietzsche's notion of the *eternal recurrence of the same* [*die ewige Wiederkehr des Gleichen*], arguably the culmination of his poetic vision of time and temporality. Like many of Nietzsche scholars, Connolly pays special heed to the section from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, entitled "On the Vision and the Riddle [*Vom Gesicht und Räthsel*]," where Nietzsche envisages an image of time as a gateway. This passage is meant for a dwarf who has been involved in a dramatized conversation with Zarathustra:

Behold this gateway, dwarf!' I went on: 'it has two aspects. Two paths come together here: no one has ever reached their end. 'This long lane behind us: it goes on for an eternity. And that long lane

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<sup>317</sup> Ibid.

ahead of us—that is another eternity. ‘They are in opposition to one another, these paths; they abut on one another: and it is here at this gateway that they come together. The name of the gateway is written above it: “Moment”. . . . ‘Behold this moment!’ I went on. ‘From this gateway Moment a long, eternal lane runs back: an eternity lies behind us.’<sup>318</sup>

At first glance, Nietzsche seems to underscore a magnificent moment [*Augenblick*]<sup>319</sup>, which suspends the linear operation of mechanized time. For Connolly, “the gateway Moment” is primarily the time of dissonance where two opposing paths offend each other. The “Moment,” says Connolly, is “a protracted present,” which creates an occasion ripe for “accidents” by suspending ordinary punctual time. This image of time portrays the vitality of life, which escapes the simple logic of causality. Here, eternal recurrence is not as much about “the repetition of long cycles” as about “the fecundity of the moment from which new twists and turns can flow,”<sup>320</sup> which intimates a Deleuzean open future.<sup>321</sup> The primary source of democratic possibilities that Connolly seeks in Nietzsche is this idea of time as a rift, rupture, or fracture, which is conducive to “a spirit of presumptive generosity” for a more active and agonistic democratic politics.<sup>322</sup>

For sure, Nietzsche’s aesthetic view of life could be read against the dissecting

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<sup>318</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), “Of the Vision and the Riddle.”

<sup>319</sup> One would translate this term literally as “glance of the eye.”

<sup>320</sup> William E. Connolly, *A World of Becoming* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 109-115.

<sup>321</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (New York: Continuum, 2002), 68.

<sup>322</sup> See his *Identity\Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), *Pluralism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).



and mechanizing course of time that reduces human life to dead matter. Connolly's rendition of Nietzsche, however, exposes two problems. The first problem is Connolly's negligence or mischaracterization of the complexity with respect to what he understands to be "the significant shift in the tempo of life." The other one is his ignorance of the kinetic element of Nietzsche's idea of eternal recurrence, not just of the idea itself, but of what this particular idea causes to be done. I will address the first problem here and the second one in the following section.

Let us first return to Nietzsche's comment from *The Twilight of the Idols*: "One lives for today, one lives very fast—one lives very irresponsibly: it is precisely this which one calls "freedom."<sup>323</sup> The reason that we cannot read this statement merely as a welcoming remark as Connolly did is not just because we see here Nietzsche's mockery of "freedom" (in quotation marks) as license quite conspicuously.<sup>324</sup> For Nietzsche, the decline of the power of organization—especially, of an older kind which was based on transcendent values, profoundly exemplified by Platonic metaphysics and Christianity—

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<sup>323</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Twilight of the Idols*, "Skirmishes," §39.

<sup>324</sup> Many since Plato have shown a particular intellectual propensity of likening democratic citizens to licentious people and democracy to anarchy. Plato thinks that in democracy, people tend to arrange their life "in whatever manner pleases [them]." In this respect, "the license" [*exousia*] is a quality commonly ascribed to democracy. He recognizes the attraction of democracy as it would nurture people to perform "whatever comes into [their] mind," and thereby making its polity "embroidered with every kind of character type." However, because of the same tendency of democratic people, claims Plato, democracy would also fall short of "order and necessity." Since there is "no requirement to rule ... or again to be ruled," democracy is believed to be extremely unstable and dangerous even while it can be "the finest or most beautiful." Plato, *Republic*, 557b-e; See also Herodotus, *Histories*, Book III, Section 80-83. The Persian Otanes, upon the rejection of his proposal of establishing a democratic polity, declares that he will not enter the lists of possible candidates for king since he desires "neither to rule nor to be ruled." See also Book VI, Section 43 as well.

marks a new beginning. But it is rather a challenge than a triumph. We need to approach to this new beginning with alacrity, but this does not mean that we can bear and bear with time as a rift and fracture wholeheartedly.

We can find Nietzsche's similar tone in his discussion of the demise of God as well. Nietzsche's concern there is not so much about declaring God's demise—for it is “an accomplished *fact* of recent Western history”<sup>325</sup>—as about the ways in which we think and feel about its demise. In *The Gay Science*, he attends to the problem without jubilation or lamentation. What he faces is rather a predicament:

God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him! How can we console ourselves, the murderers of all murderers?”<sup>326</sup>

The predicament that looms large is *nihilism*, or the radical repudiation of meaning. With the withering away of the otherworldly foundation of the old belief system, its structure of meaning has collapsed. It is daunting rather than liberating because we are now inclined to choose between a positivistic and a nihilistic embrace of meaninglessness.

“The significant shift in the tempo of life” is the tempo that could facilitate nihilism. Nietzsche finds it disturbing because people lose their touch with “the right time.”<sup>327</sup> This is why Connolly's portrayal of Nietzsche seems to go awry. Following Nietzsche's path, Walter Benjamin and Byung-Chul Han take into serious account the

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<sup>325</sup> Dana Villa, “Beyond Good and Evil: Arendt, Nietzsche, and the Aestheticization of Political Action,” *Political Theory*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (1992), 283.

<sup>326</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), §125.

<sup>327</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Book I, “On the Teachers of Virtue” and “On Free Death.”

issue of time without meaning. Benjamin sees this time as robbed of meaning because “[its] method” now has become merely “additive; it musters a mass of data to fill the homogenous and empty time.”<sup>328</sup> In the same vein of thought, Han distinguishes “the operation of a processor [*Prozessor*]” which “proceeds solely through addition” from “the procession [*Prozession*].”<sup>329</sup>

Both “processor” and “procession” derive from the Latin verb *procedere*, which means “to step forward.” The procession is harnessed by narration scenically. Scenography marks them. Because of their narrativity, a particular temporality inhabits them. Therefore it is neither possible nor meaningful to accelerate their *procedere*. Narration is not addition at all. The *procedere* of the processor, on the other hand, lacks all narrativity. Its activity has no image, no scenes. In contrast to the procession, it tells [*erzählt*] nothing. It simply counts [*zählt*].<sup>330</sup>

Han here captures the decline of temporal gravitation or temporal tension, which would transform time into “a mere sequence of point-like presences.”<sup>331</sup> The modern time, in a

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<sup>328</sup> Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” Hannah Arendt ed., *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken, 1968), 262. Charles Taylor also pays heed to this point. See *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 54.

<sup>329</sup> Byung-Chul Han, *The Transparency Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 30.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid. György Lukács beautifully captures the time of narrativity in the first page of his *Theory of the Novel*: “HAPPY ARE those ages when the starry sky is the map of all possible paths — ages whose paths are illuminated by the light of the stars. Everything in such ages is new and yet familiar, full of adventure and yet their own. The world is wide and yet it is like a home, for the fire that burns in the soul is of the same essential nature as the stars; the world and the self, the light and the fire, are sharply distinct, yet they never become permanent strangers to one another, for fire is the soul of all light and all fire clothes itself in light.” Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1971), 29.

<sup>331</sup> Byung-Chul Han, *The Scent of Time* (Cambridge: Polity, 2017), 6.

word, has become a disenchanting processor. The time, being deprived of its narrative quality, now “seems to overtake itself.”<sup>332</sup>

Here, Han makes a very important conceptual distinction between *experience* [*Erfahrung*] and *experiencing* [*Erlebnis*]. Whereas the former presumes temporal extension, the latter does not necessarily do so. We can say, for example, “[t]he significant shift in the tempo of life” makes people feel constantly hastened on. They are probably prepared, perhaps too readily, for momentary *experiencing* [*Erlebnis*]. What seems to be lacking is enough time for a genuine *experience* [*Erfahrung*].<sup>333</sup>

The experience merits special attention. As Giacomo Marramao rightly pointed out, the experience is experience-journey [*Er-fahrung*], which is like “taking a journey.”<sup>334</sup> Reinhard Koselleck also noted that the verb “*erfahren* (to have an experience) implies going from one place to another,” which involves “something like a journey[.]”<sup>335</sup> As will be discussed more in the following pages, *taking a journey* is in fact what Zarathustra displays with regard to the idea of *eternal recurrence*, not the

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<sup>332</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, “Time and History,” *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 113.

<sup>333</sup> Han, *The Transparency Society*, 30; “Erfahrung bedeutet Verwandlung.” Byung-Chul Han, *Psychopolitik: Neoliberalismus und die neuen Machttechniken* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 2014), 104. Certainly, Han’s analysis of *Erfahrung* and *Erlebnis* is indebted to Benjamin’s discussion of the subject in his “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” Hannah Arendt ed., *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken, 1968), 155-194.

<sup>334</sup> Giacomo Marramao, *Kairós* (Aurora: The Davies Group, 2007), 34. Marramao links *Erfahrung* to the Greek term *em-pería* and Latin *ex-perientia* as well.

<sup>335</sup> Reinhard Koselleck, *Sediments of Time: On Possible Histories* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018), 4.

indulgence in *eternal now* as Connolly seeks to demonstrate.<sup>336</sup> If fractured, ruptured, and accelerated time prevents us from, rather than invites us to, undertaking a genuine experience, Nietzsche would rather have us pause. He rather praises quite the opposite tempo of life. Two examples will suffice: one from *The Gay Science* and the other from *Ecce Homo*, his autobiographic essay.

In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche explains some “atavism” that “rare human beings of an age” represent. It is as though they appear suddenly as “late ghosts of past cultures and their powers” because they are so rare and extraordinary especially in the world everything “change[s]” too rapidly.” Here, he stresses the importance of preservation against the fast tempo. Hence his comments: “in our case, what is absolutely necessary is an *andante* of development, as the tempo of a passionate and slow spirit[.]”<sup>337</sup> Second one, which is from *Ecce Homo*, describes a passage from the earlier part of the second book of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.<sup>338</sup> Setting aside his apparent pompousness and generous use of figural languages—both of which are not unusual for him—we can see his high

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<sup>336</sup> Once Zarathustra uses a metaphor of river to describe his self-overcoming. “When Zarathustra was on dry land again he did not go directly to his mountains and his cave, but instead took many ways and asked many questions and found out this and that, saying of himself jokingly: “Look at the river that flows back to its source in many windings!” For he wanted to learn [Denn er wollte in Erfahrung], what had transpired in the meantime *among human beings*[.]” Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Book III, “On Virtue that Makes Small,” 133.

<sup>337</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §10.

<sup>338</sup> The passage is as follows: “The figs fall from the trees, they are good and sweet; and as they fall, their red skin ruptures. I am a north wind to ripe figs. Thus, like figs, these teachings fall to you, my friends: now drink their juice and their sweet flesh! It is autumn all around and pure sky and afternoon.” Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Book II, “On the Blessed Isles.”

praise of the tempo of the speeches: “a tender *adagio*.”<sup>339</sup>

It is not unusual for Nietzsche to emphasize a medium or rather slow tempo—he even asserts that his blood “moves slowly”<sup>340</sup>— precisely because one of the most important and overarching themes for him—both Zarathustra in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and himself in *Ecce Homo*—is *convalescence*, which should be understood in the context of a self-overcoming journey.

Why do we need an *andante* or even *adagio* in democracy? Why and how is the accelerated and fractured tempo and temporality detrimental to our democratic life? One answer is given no other than Sheldon Wolin. Wolin takes the question of time and tempo in his opening essay for *Theory & Event* entitled “What Time Is It?” He demonstrated that the accelerated pace of modern life has been a real threat to both democratic theory and practice. Wolin is concerned with “a pervasive temporal disjunction that has contributed to serious political difficulties and helped to make the task of the theorist daunting.”<sup>341</sup>

By that temporal disjunction he means the discrepancy between the tempo of democratic politics (and theory) and that of economy (or popular culture and war). Whereas the latter is mostly “dictated by innovation, change, and replacement through obsolescence,” claims Wolin, democracy “requires ... a leisurely pace.” The same applies to theory as well. He laments over the fact that our daily life has become more vulnerable

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<sup>339</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo* in Walter Kaufmann ed., *On the Genealogy of Morals* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 219.

<sup>340</sup> Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 223.

<sup>341</sup> Sheldon Wolin, “What Time Is It?” *Theory & Event*, Vol. 1 No. 1 (1997).

to the accelerated turnover times of capital, fashion, et cetera. He clearly acknowledges that the current temporal mode of political existence whose characteristic volatility and ephemerality have failed to preserve and foster a fertile condition for democratic politics and theory: democracy has “thus exchanged the tempos of deliberation and contemplation for the temporal rhythms of contemporary culture and economy.”<sup>342</sup>

Wolin’s firm resistance to the disjunctive and accelerated temporality may surprise some readers. It would even provoke those who otherwise admire his radical democratic position to displeasure. As I briefly sketched Wolin’s view on democracy earlier, he normally understands democracy “as resistant to the rationalizing conception of power and its organization” or what he defines as “a constitutional conception of democracy.”<sup>343</sup> His notion of fugitive democracy is rather disruptive, transgressive, and demotic. The tempo of fugitive democracy does not necessarily have to be extremely hasty, but does not sound so leisurely either. But, here, in this essay, Wolin sounds more like Max Weber for whom politics means “slow, strong drilling through hard boards[.]”<sup>344</sup>

Yet my call for a Nietzschean passionate and slow tempo does not just mean to appreciate the time of deliberation and contemplation. It must be geared toward the journey of self-overcoming. Before we delve more into the question of self-overcoming, I

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<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

<sup>343</sup> Wolin, “Norm and Form: The Constitutionalizing of Democracy,” 37.

<sup>344</sup> Max Weber, “The Profession and Vocation of Politics” in Peter Lassman and Ronald Speirs eds., *Weber: Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 369.

would like to note that the mischaracterization of the Nietzschean tempo by Connolly and the likes might have proceeded from their confusion of *being fast* and *being lively*, only the latter of which is almost always approved as commendable by Nietzsche. In order to elucidate this point, I would make a short excursion into Robert Schumann.

#### INTERLUDE: ALLEGRO, NOT PRESTO

Robert Schumann's G-minor Piano Sonata (No. 2 Opus 22) begins with a lively movement. Schumann indicated a tempo on the score: "as quickly as you can" [*so rasch wie möglich*]. Interestingly, what follows later in the coda is Schumann's seemingly unrealistic direction: "faster" [*schneller*], and then, "even faster" [*noch schneller*]. Without acknowledging two different *kinds* of tempo implicit in these directions, one may misunderstand Schumann's point and thus be left wondering what his direction could possibly mean other than an embroidering overstatement that nobody can actually execute.

The confusion is first caused by translations. Following Beethoven, Schumann at the time believed that the notations on music should be written in German. The term "rasch" refers to *allegro* while "schnell" indicates *presto*. Perhaps quite different from what we currently believe, there were originally only two terms indicating tempo with regard to its *speed*: *adagio* or slow and *presto* or fast. *Allegro* was originally an indication signifying the *mood* of a piece of music: *cheerful* and *lively* as opposed to solemn [*grave*] and languid [*lento*]. For example, we can say "*allegro e presto*" for an expression mark



demanding a particularly cheerful mood [*allegro*] and the fast speed [*presto*].

Schumann's original notations, therefore, can be interpreted as indicating two separate messages: the nuance of the movement of notes [*rasch*; *allegro*] and the rate of the beat [*schnell*; *presto*].<sup>345</sup>

This revealing example of *allegro* and *presto* helps us to think further about the question of time and tempo entangled with its moods. Nietzsche is precisely important because he seems to understand a particular way of living with time, that is, *taking a journey slowly yet cheerfully*.

## BECOMING AND SELF-OVERCOMING

Connolly sees Nietzsche “as a prophet of time as becoming in a world without God.” He contrasts “the experience of punctual time” to “becoming” in favor of the latter which he identifies as “real time.” Real time is a time ripe for “divine accidents.” It is the “Moment” so fecund and pivotal as to make “new twists and turns” that exceed efficient causality. Connolly, in so doing, perpetuates the popular opposition of the ordinary and the extraordinary time, hoping for the “paradoxical coincidence of fulfillment and interruption,”<sup>346</sup> opened up by the pure moment.

The problem of this overemphasis on the *divine* aspect of *becoming* is that it may

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<sup>345</sup> For the Schumann piece and the question of tempo, I am indebted to Jahbom Koo, the former principle conductor at the State Opera House in Hannover, Germany. [Electronic Source: <http://hani.co.kr/arti/culture/music/654288.html>]

<sup>346</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 71.

blind us from seeing its *human* aspect. For Nietzsche, first and foremost, *becoming* simply refers to change, or the fact that everything changes. Nietzsche affirms the dictum of Heraclitus, *panta rhei*: “Heraclitus will always be right in thinking that being is an empty fiction. The ‘apparent world’ is the only world: the ‘true world’ is just a *lie added on to it [hinzugelogen]*.”<sup>347</sup> And “[c]hange does not stop.”<sup>348</sup> Time, or change, however, arises by and for perspectives. For Nietzsche, we are not disinterested spectators with respect to our change. The sensitivity toward motions and changes cannot be separated from the heightened interests in growth and degeneration.

The basic temporal structure of *becoming* is determined by *will* or *striving*.<sup>349</sup> Willing or Striving involves a reach toward the future, and this movement, “that which gives the forms which are the pathos of any life,”<sup>350</sup> is also famously called *will to power* [*Wille zur Macht*]. The will to power is first explained as a process of organism, applicable to all living creatures. What all of these would mean to an *individual* is that she could and should reflect upon herself in terms of her striving, suffering, overcoming, and growth. This requires a backward look as well. For in order to understand her own aims, she “must uncover the processes that shaped the drives working in [her].” In other

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<sup>347</sup> Nietzsche, *The Twilight of the Idols*, “Reason in Philosophy,” §2; “It must certainly be possible to demonstrate that at some time everything present and existent did not exist and hence that at some time it again will not exist.” Friedrich Nietzsche, Richard Gray ed., *Unpublished Writings from the Period of Unfashionable Observations, Vol. 11* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 41.

<sup>348</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, Walter Kaufmann ed., *The Will to Power* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), §688.

<sup>349</sup> “But willing:= willing an end. End includes an evaluation.” “[T]here is no ‘willing,’ but only a *willing-something*: one must not remove the aim from the situation.” Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §§ 260 and 688.

<sup>350</sup> Tracy B. Strong, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 234.

words, she “must grasp what *function* the drive plays in her, by seeing why she has it.”<sup>351</sup>  
This is in fact what *genealogy* is for.<sup>352</sup>

Here I pay attention to the relationship between the will to power, self-overcoming, and suffering, or how Nietzsche sees suffering intimately tied to both what we have become and what we might become. Echoing the doer/sufferer duality I quoted from Arendt earlier, Nietzsche understands that “every action calls forth suffering” and “[all] suffering calls for action.”<sup>353</sup> What is obvious in the human condition is that “the more we get involved in the active dimension of our existence, the more keenly we feel its passive dimension or our vulnerability to suffering.”<sup>354</sup> As long as we keep on acting, we cannot avoid our suffering. As T. K. Seung emphasizes, “[to] suffer is to be passive, which is the meaning of the Greek word *pathe*[.]”<sup>355</sup> The will to power entails suffering.

For Nietzsche, two strategies are starkly juxtaposed with each other with respect to the question of suffering: “abolishing suffering” [*Leiden abschaffen*] and “constructing suffering” [*Leiden schaffen*].<sup>356</sup> According to Nietzsche, traditional moralists, scientific

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<sup>351</sup> John Richardson, “Nietzsche on Time and Becoming” in Keith Ansell-Pearson ed, *A Companion to Nietzsche* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 218. Cf. Ruth Abbey, *Nietzsche’s Middle Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), Ch. 2.

<sup>352</sup> Cf. Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” in D. F. Bouchard ed., *In Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977).

<sup>353</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, Richard Gray ed., *Unpublished Writings from the Period of Unfashionable Observations, Vol. 11* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 65.

<sup>354</sup> T. K. Seung, *Nietzsche’s Epic of the Soul: Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2005), 59.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>356</sup> See Friedrich Nietzsche “Nachgelassene Fragmente Juli 1882 bis Winter 1883-1884,” *Nietzsche Werke: kritische Gesamtausgabe VII-1* where he declares that

determinism, and nihilism all represent the former. They all hold the view that “suffering is something that needs to be abolished.”<sup>357</sup> As far as our purpose is concerned, the most serious problem of this approach is its determined inattention to the *formative* element of suffering. They see suffering as either something we have to avoid, or something that we have to passively accept while hoping for the final compensation. Nietzsche challenges both. Defending the discipline of suffering [*Die Zucht des Leidens*] instead, Nietzsche contends:

[Don't] you know that this discipline has been the sole cause of every enhancement in humanity so far? The tension that breeds strength into the unhappy soul, its shudder at the sight of great destruction, its inventiveness and courage in enduring, surviving, interpreting, and exploiting unhappiness, and whatever depth, secrecy, whatever masks, spirit, cunning, greatness it has been given:—weren't these the gifts of suffering, of the disciple of great suffering?<sup>358</sup>

This passage does not just affirm the truistic idea: no pain, no gain. It rather shows how the movement of the will to power takes a variety of forms and the need for us to recognize it. Suffering is an unhappy and frustrating site for self-overcoming via reflecting upon the will to power.

Self-overcoming [*Sebsüberwindung*] is arguably the central theme of *Thus Spoke*

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“Leiden schaffen—sich selber und Anderen—um sie zum höchsten Leben, dem des Siegers zu befähigen—wäre mein Ziel.”

<sup>357</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, § 41. Emphasis original.

<sup>358</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), §225.

*Zarathustra*. Perhaps contrary to the conventional wisdom, I view Zarathustra primarily as a sufferer, not as a *Übermensch*. By that I am less interested in the highest ethical and aesthetical values that Zarathustra as value-creator displays—often pictured as the Dionysian rapturous superabundance—than in the journey he cannot but undertake. While not underestimating the heroic stature of Zarathustra, I point out that *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is primarily the story of him “going under,”<sup>359</sup> not of his ascent to zenith.

Self-overcoming requires temporal space, envisioning a particular temporality. Right before the section called “On Self-Overcoming” in the second book of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, we see Zarathustra recalling and musing on his losses and sufferings. He cries out to his enemies, or it could just be a soliloquy: “More evil you did to me than all murder of human beings. You took from me what was irretrievable[.]” What was taken away from Zarathustra? Those include his youth, wisdom, yearning, and pledge. He meditates: “How did I bear it? How did I overturn and overcome such wounds? How did my soul rise again from these graves?”<sup>360</sup> He knows how far he has overcome.

Three points are important here. First, it is unclear who exactly his enemies are. But what seems obvious is that Zarathustra clearly sees, and possibly casts his bitter accusations against, the power of time. What he has lost is that which he once possessed and enjoyed. Thinking of those things he held so dear, Zarathustra is now looking backward. The tension between his autonomous will and the brutal necessity of time appears on the surface. Second, his overcoming is his convalescence. It includes the

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<sup>359</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Book I, “Zarathustra’s Prologue.”

<sup>360</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Book II, “The Grave Song.”

process of healing wounds. In fact, it is the beginning and ending of the self-overcoming process. Third, it is his “invulnerable” and “unburialable” “*will*”<sup>361</sup> that has made possible of his self-overcoming, which is therefore a good preparation for the discussion on the subject of self-overcoming and the will to power.

In “On Self-Overcoming,” Zarathustra talks to the “wisest ones.” The wisest are truth-seekers, believing that they are driven by their conviction, morality, or “will to truth.” Yet Zarathustra points out that their alleged “will to truth” is in fact nothing but “a will to power” in disguise, implying that the most fundamental driving force of life is the will to power even though like the wisest, we may not be full aware of this half-hidden motivations. The people, who are unwise, are deemed to be better in that they know, perhaps intuitively, the basic premise that life moves lively by virtue of its will to power.

Zarathustra’s teaching on the will to power continues. He recounts what he has learned from “life,” or “the living.” The lesson is threefold. First, “all living is an obeying.” Second, “the one who cannot obey himself is commanded.” Third, “commanding is harder than obeying.” Zarathustra opposes commanding to obeying, but at once complicates the relationship between the two. He understands that the power to command is predicated on the capacity to obey. He urges us to see the intricate working of the pleasure coming from the will to be master. Zarathustra implies that self-overcoming is an ongoing struggle against oneself. It involves a temporal extension. We

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<sup>361</sup> Ibid. Emphasis original.

have “crooked paths” to “walk.”<sup>362</sup>

Here, I propose a political reading of “On Self-Overcoming.” The lesson that we can draw here is rather political, or even democratic. Zarathustra’s insights into the relationship between commanding and obeying evoke the classic definition of democratic rule by Aristotle. What distinguishes a constitutional rule [*politikē archē*] from a rule of a master [*despoteia* or *despotikē archē*], according to Aristotle, is the democratic principle of power sharing.<sup>363</sup> The citizen performs his agency both as a ruler [*archon*] and the ruled [*archomenos*]. “The excellence of the citizen,” states Aristotle, includes both “ruling and obeying.” The ruler in a constitutional rule “must learn by obeying.”<sup>364</sup> That is the meaning of to be part of “the free” [*eleutheros*].<sup>365</sup>

Zarathustra says that “all commanding ... is an experiment and a risk[.]” Self-commanding or autonomy is a risky and burdensome experiment in part because in so doing, we make ourselves “the judge and avenger and victim of [our] own law.” What is

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<sup>362</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Book II, “On Self-Overcoming.”

<sup>363</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1252a9-1255b30 (emphasis added). Aristotle made it clear that it is a mistake to think that there are only differences in “the number of their subjects” among the rule of “a statesman [*politikos*], of king [*basilikos*], of householder [*oikonomikos*], and of master [*despotikos*].” The power relations of political community [*politike koinōnia*] are different from but analogous to those of household [*oikos*], and vice versa. For example, the least *constitutional* type of political ruling, *pambasileia*, is described as “the control of a household” while the most *equal* relationship within a household, a rule of husband over his wife, is depicted as “a constitutional rule.” See his *Politics*, 1285b30-31; 1259b1-2.

<sup>364</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1277a26-b10 and 1290a1-2.

<sup>365</sup> Stathis Gourgouris in his recent philological and philosophical essay emphasizes that “democratic *archē* can only be shared.” He argues that the *archē* becomes a shared space of mediation that thereby disrupts the constitution or reconstitution of absolute, singular (literally, monarchical) rule/origin.” See his “Archē,” *Political Concepts: A Critical Lexicon*, Issue 2 (2012).

required of us is a heightened awareness of the intricate movement of the will to power. Both the strong *and* the weak exercise the will to power in a variety of ways. Since commanding is harder than obeying, people might aspire to command via obeying, and vice versa. We should be able to see what we are doing when we are ruled as much as when we are ruling. To invoke the earlier passage on *the discipline of suffering*, this is the time when the suffering of the frustrated gives rise to “inventiveness and courage in enduring, surviving, interpreting, and exploiting unhappiness[.]”<sup>366</sup> Zarathustra also mentions the possibility of “the weaker who sneaks into the fortress and straight to the heart of the more powerful—and there ... steals power.”<sup>367</sup> In addition, we need to consider the opposite case as well: whether we choose to exercise the will to power against us. One illustrative example is given by Montesquieu.

Montesquieu once deftly described the cunning of the will to power in his story of Troglodytes.<sup>368</sup> Troglodytes were a group of primitive people who once were subject to a fierce rule by a foreign king. After conspiring to kill the king and wiping out the entire royal family, Troglodytes were able to choose their own government. They tried many different forms. First they selected magistrates but became annoyed too soon and

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<sup>366</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, § 225.

<sup>367</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Book II, “On Self-Overcoming.” Perhaps the successful transvaluation of values by what he calls slave-morality, of which the modern reinvention of democracy can be part, is a good example. The weak might think that their valorization of love and benevolence is natural to their good-hearted intention, but this morality is in fact based on their *ressentiment* against the strong, and thereby showing their will to power. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* in Walter Kaufmann ed., *On the Genealogy of Morals* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989).

<sup>368</sup> Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu, *Persian Letters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 15-22.



slaughtered them all. Then, they chose to let their savagery rule the society, agreeing to refuse to obey anyone. Everyone welcomed the idea, but absent of sympathy, fairness, and justice, most of them suffered from famine, flood, property disputes, diseases, and eventually perished.

Only two virtuous families survived the collapse of their community, and they continued to thrive while establishing and practicing a virtuous democratic rule. Then, at the peak of their prosperity and virtue, they suddenly decided to choose a king. The man who was chosen as king by the assembly was an old, virtuous, and respectful citizen. He said to the deputies of the assembly that “if you are absolutely determined to [bestow the crown upon me] I must perforce accept it; but you may be certain that I shall die of misery, having at birth seen the Troglodytes free, and today seeing them subjects.”<sup>369</sup> The lamentation of the new king well summarized the problem of the Troglodytes:

I can see exactly what is happening, Troglodytes; *your virtue is becoming burdensome*; in your present situation, without a leader, you have to be virtuous in spite of yourselves, for otherwise you could not survive, you would fall into the misfortunes of your earliest forefathers; but you find this yoke too heavy to bear, you prefer to be subject to a prince and to obey his laws, which would be less strict than your own customs; you know that then you will be able to satisfy your ambition, amass riches, and live a life of ease and self-indulgent pleasure; and that, as long as you avoid serious crime, you will have no need of virtue.<sup>370</sup>

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<sup>369</sup> Montesquieu, *Persian Letters*, 22.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.* Emphasis added.

This is a colorful illustration of the will to power, which resonates deeply, rather in an inverted way, with the comment of Zarathustra: “even in the will of the serving I found the will to be master.”<sup>371</sup>

Against the overemphasis on the Nietzschean non-punctuated divinely accidental time, I have underlined the *human* side of his notions of *becoming*. Becoming is the will to power, aiming at self-overcoming. Self-overcoming requires the discipline of suffering, which demands an astute attention to oneself within the extended temporal space. It is a journey, or, as Zarathustra put, a walk on a crooked path. Both Stoic peace of mind [*apatheia*] and Epicurean tranquility [*ataraxia*] cannot be Nietzsche’s ideal.<sup>372</sup> It is even harmful to expunge suffering from our experience. He rather follows the tragic tradition: *pathei mathos*.<sup>373</sup>

#### CONVALESCENCE: A JOURNEY TO HOME VIA FRUSTRATION

A striving for self-overcoming requires a genuine *experience* [*Erfahrung*]. If we can talk about the democratic subject as *citizen-becoming*, she would be the one who undertakes a journey of self-overcoming. Such an experience marks the maturation of the democratic self, and this journey defies the desire for adhering to the dichotomous time-

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<sup>371</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Book II, “On Self-Overcoming.”

<sup>372</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §61.

<sup>373</sup> Cf. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 176-183: “(Chorus) Zeus, who sets mortals on the path to understanding, Zeus, who has established as a fixed law that “wisdom comes by suffering.” But even as trouble, bringing memory of pain, drips over the mind in sleep, so wisdom comes to men, whether they want it or not. Harsh, it seems to me, is the grace of gods enthroned upon their awful seats.”

consciousness. The operative dualism emphasizes the unusual and excessive excitement about the extraordinary moments, which is predicated on or even demands the distinctive monotony of the everydayness. Two distinct times are thought to be interruptive and offensive to each other but ultimately mutually interdependent. In other words, citizens can easily be trapped in the recurring oscillation between inertial apathy and untrammelled dedication to the momentary events. They leave their ordinary time largely unattended and uncultivated, which further intensifies the dichotomous understanding of democratic time. Being easily drawn into the vicissitudes of the ordinary and the extraordinary, citizens likely keep the mundane everyday at bay.

Yet the citizen would hardly see her own *growth* unless she becomes a true *dweller* in the everyday.<sup>374</sup> As Nietzsche worried, she could remain far less accessible to herself. Essential is to learn how to *stay* or *tarry* in the ordinary time. To pay due attention to the ordinary, however, does not mean to simply indulge in daily trivial pleasures by completely surrendering to the present. It rather means to build or restore the narrativity of *becoming* and *self-overcoming* by way of facing, attending to, and bearing witness to—rather than avoiding—one’s own suffering and difficulty. Suffering has a cognitive and psychological value. The restored narrative resists the opposition of tense, disruptive, yet fleeting moment and lengthy, mechanical, yet disinterested process in favor of a carefully nuanced cooperation of the two for the sake of the reclaimed and

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<sup>374</sup> Andy Goldsworthy once made the following observation: “Real change is best understood by staying in one place. When I travel, I see differences rather than change. I resent traveling south in early spring in case I am away from home when I see my first tree coming into leaf. If this happens, I see the leaves, but not the growth or change.” Goldsworthy, *Time* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2000), 7.

revitalized everyday. Instead of escaping from the pettiness and monotony of the ordinary, the democratic subject as *citizen-becoming* can and should propel herself to return to the quotidian everyday to make the ordinary time more endurable and alluring. It is a journey to investigate how what we have been affects what we are, and perhaps more significantly, what we might become.

To live in such a way is in fact closer to what Nietzsche would aspire to do: namely, one uses oneself up to the full. Nietzsche's famous epigram, *amor fati*, is "neither narcissistic hubris nor fatalistic masochism, but rather the courage and the composure to accept one's own life in all its reality and potentiality."<sup>375</sup> That love [*amor*] might be misleading. As it may indicate that what is needed is an explosive and volatile type of excitement that passes quickly. Instead, the Nietzschean *amor* is like what Dostoevsky once described as "love in action." Unlike "love in thought," which is greed for an immediate effect, "love in action" secures temporal space. It is "labor and fortitude."<sup>376</sup>

Here we see the connection between *amor fati* and his notion of *eternal recurrence*, about which we yet to discuss much. Like Alexander Nehamas, I am far less interested in examining this idea as a cosmological theory of time.<sup>377</sup> It is not just because Nietzsche once made it clear that each one is in the world only once and "no imaginable chance will for a second time gather together into a unity so strangely variegated an

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<sup>375</sup> Peter Sloterdijk, *Thinker on Stage: Nietzsche's Materialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 90.

<sup>376</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* (New York: Penguin, 2003).

<sup>377</sup> Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, Ch. 5.

assortment as he is.”<sup>378</sup> We can find other evidence to imply otherwise, especially in his notebooks. What I am most interested in is the meaning of posing a truly “abysmal” thought itself such as the idea of eternal recurrence.

*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* illustrates that Zarathustra severely suffers from the idea of eternal recurrence. He is stuck between determinism and voluntarism, necessity and freedom, or Spinozan Nature and Faustian Will. In “The Convalescent,” particularly, Zarathustra “collapsed like a dead man,” lost his appetite, and remained ill “for seven days.”<sup>379</sup> In fact, as Paul Loeb reminds us, Zarathustra himself never “seems to fully express, explain, prove, endorse, teach, or definitely affirm the thought of eternal recurrence.”<sup>380</sup> This ambiguity has sparked a plethora of interpretations.<sup>381</sup>

What is most revealing, though, is the sharp contrast between Zarathustra and the allegedly unqualified characters such as dwarf, animals, and the likes. Those characters are incapable of understanding the depth of the idea of eternal recurrence, but do not hesitate to reiterate the sketchy phrases of the grave thought. Zarathustra, on the other hand, makes himself the object of his learning in the face of the abysmal thought, and *live*

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<sup>378</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, “Schopenhauer as Educator,” §1.

<sup>379</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Book III, “The Convalescent.”

<sup>380</sup> Paul S. Loeb, *The Death of Nietzsche’s Zarathustra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1-3.

<sup>381</sup> Studies on this topic abound. For example, Berkowitz, *Nietzsche*, 207-210, Robert Gooding-Williams, *Zarathustra’s Dionysian Modernism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 213, Richard Schacht, “Zarathustra/Zarathustra as Educator” in Peter Sedgwick ed., *Nietzsche: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 232-245, Peter Levine, *Nietzsche and the Modern Crisis of the Humanities* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 122-130 Stanley Rosen, *The Mask of Enlightenment: Nietzsche’s Zarathustra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), Bernd Magnus, “Eternal Recurrence,” *Nietzsche-Studien*, Vol. 8 (1979).

with the very thought. Here, the Moment [*Augenblick*] is not the temporal form of Zarathustra. He needs some time for a genuine *experience* and *convalescence*. He takes a journey to himself.

That Zarathustra is the convalescent is a significant reminder. “To convalesce” [*genesen*], states Heidegger, “is the same as the Greek *néomai, nóstos*. This means ‘to return home’; ... The convalescent is on the road to himself, so that he can say of himself who he is. In the passage referred to, the convalescent says: I, Zarathustra, the advocate of life, the advocate of suffering, the advocate of the circle[.]”<sup>382</sup>

For those who do not have or care much about their autonomous will, the notion of eternal recurrence would not matter much. If they abandon the perspective of autonomous agents and choose not to fight against the necessity, they might even take pleasure in renouncing their agency. It is those who cherish freedom who feel real terror in facing their infinitesimal power against the cosmic rule.

In democracy, we routinely meet the problem of heteronomy,<sup>383</sup> but not everyone fully *experience* and make most use of it. Grudgingly or not, citizens often submit

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<sup>382</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche: Volume One and Two* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 412.

<sup>383</sup> Here, my use of *heteronomy* is not entirely Kantian in any orthodox sense. According to Kant’s *moral* philosophy, heteronomy points to the state in which one acts in accordance with one’s inclination [*Neigung*] rather than moral duty, which is contrary to the state of autonomy. Yet Kant also stressed on the kind of heteronomical situation occurring in the political realm, especially in democracy: “[democracy] establishes an executive power in which all decide for and, if need be, against one (who thus does not agree), so that *all, who are nevertheless not all, decide[.]*” Immanuel Kant, *Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Project*, in Mary J. Gregor ed., *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 324 [8: 352]. Emphasis mine.

themselves to the decision made by the collective, of which each of them is only a small part. Of course, democratic citizens should not be obsequious; but they cannot be too cantankerous either. Democratic freedom and autonomy are intertwined with the genuine experiences of loss, submission, or heteronomy. To live up to the promise of democracy means to inherit a certain sensibility of suffering and frustration, constantly asking the question how carefully we attend to our suffering and frustration.

*Citizens-becoming* should see themselves as an agent of self-overcoming. They must keep themselves from being overtaken and overexploited by the fast-paced eventful time, the time that demands their instant reactions and aggravates their addiction to distractions. They need to secure some temporal space for exploring and reflecting upon their sufferings. Delving into the profound depth of suffering is crucial precisely because there they can find their frustration clearly as the meeting-place of converging two sides: hope *and* despair. Hope and despair do not just meet but form an angular extremity at the site of frustration. Frustration is a corner where those two can become explicit as they intersect. This is a kind of in-between time in which they are pressured to accept their failures and losses while at once not necessarily abandoning their initial hopes in its entirety. Besides they may find something else while lingering in frustration, something that they were not seeking in the first place. It is the time in which they make sense of frustration and make most use of it for convalescence and potential growth.

Learning about themselves—learning, in part, that their desires and hopes are never absolutely clear, distinct, and precise—citizens can better come to terms with the

condition of being undefined.<sup>384</sup> What *citizen-becoming* experience is not just a momentary acceptance of loss or failure. It requires a pivotal tract of time during which citizens can grow more attached to reality, not less, and become more attentive, inventive, and determinant, as Nietzsche's discipline of suffering aspires to do, even while teetering in a liminal realm of tensions and bearing up against an uneasy tug between too much impatience and languid resignation.

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<sup>384</sup> Weber is quite right when he states that "the eventual outcome of political action frequently, indeed regularly, stands in a quite inadequate, even paradoxical relation to its original, intended meaning and purpose (*Sinn*)."  
Weber, "The Profession and Vocation of Politics," 355.



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