

## On the Micropolitical

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### **I. Introduction**

A turn to micropolitics appears to be going on in contemporary American political theory. Defined in its broadest terms, micropolitics is a politics of the ordinary that politicises habits, dispositions, feelings, the body, emotions, and thinking as potential sites of domination and resistance below the hallowed heights of liberal principles of justice. The claim of micropolitics is that justice talk, whether liberal, communitarian or otherwise, is insufficient if it remains narrowly confined to the ordering of basic institutions or of the idea of a political community as such. More everyday and ubiquitous practices and attitudes work to realize or hinder the potential of principles and institutions. And at this lower register, new conceptions of action, judgment, and responsibility are needed.

In a recent edited volume Jane Bennett and Michael J. Shapiro define the substance of this turn as follows, "In sum, to engage in micropolitics is to pay attention to the connections between affective registers of experience and collective identities and practices. The aim is to encourage a more intentional project of reforming, refining, intensifying, or disciplining the emotions, aesthetic impulses, urges, and moods that enter into one's political programs, party affiliations, ideological commitments, and policy preferences."<sup>1</sup> Defined as such, this could include a Foucaultian micropolitics of capillary power and arts of resistance, a Benjaminian micropolitics of capitalist phantasmagoria and redemptive critique, or even an Aristotelian micropolitics of the prior associations of the polis and virtuous self-cultivation. And while Foucault, Benjamin, and Aristotle may all provide perspectives on politics that could be called micropolitical, the master thinkers of this particular trend are none of the above, or at least not any of these thinkers alone. The turn to micropolitics in political theory today traces its genealogy back to the coiners of the term, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 'Introduction' in The Politics of Moralizing, eds. Jane Bennett and Michael J. Shapiro (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> The appeal to micropolitics in contemporary political theory is broad and diverse. The thinkers I am primarily concerned with in this essay are those that expressly link their project back to Deleuze and/or Guattari. That said, there is a much wider turn going on in post-structuralist political theory towards a language of ethos that this turn to micropolitics is only one species of. For examples of this broader turn to ethos-talk in contemporary political theory see George Kateb, 'Aestheticism and Morality: Their Cooperation and Hostility' Political Theory vol. 28 no. 1 (February 2000): 5-37; Patchen Markell, Bound by Recognition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Romand Coles, Beyond Gated Politics (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); Wendy Brown, Edgework: Critical Essays in Knowledge and Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Judith Butler, 'For a Careful

The concept of micropolitics finds its most elaborate articulation in Deleuze and Guattari's magisterial collaboration, *A Thousand Plateaus*. Much like the diverse appeals to micropolitics today, there is no singular definition of the term in Deleuze and Guattari's text. Instead, we have only the loose family resemblance that emerges from their various usages of the term. At one end of the spectrum, Deleuze and Guattari's micropolitics is presented as an "analytics" of power and subjectification analogous to Michael Foucault's description of the distinctive functions of power in modern societies. At the other end of the spectrum, Deleuze and Guattari present micropolitics as the study of politics from the perspective of a vital naturalism of flows and flux. Furthermore, micropolitics is presented as the activist enterprise of destabilizing and pluralising existing practices and attitudes. All of these senses of micropolitics – as an analytics of power, a vital naturalism, and strategies of becoming – have been picked up in different ways in contemporary political theory.<sup>3</sup>

What binds the difference aspects of micropolitics together is their shared attention to the distinction between the virtual and the actual. Micropolitics is a politics concerned with the virtual – a lower register of experience than the conscious and reflective register of ideas, doctrines, and interests. Emotions, memory traces, infra-sensible experiences, habitual gestures, and the unconscious exist "virtually" such that we cannot always articulate them at the level of language, yet they play a role in shaping our higher register experiences of the world. Micropolitics is a "political somatics" – the

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Reading' in *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange*, ed. Linda Nicholson (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 127-143; Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000). For a critical survey of this turn to ethos in political theory see Stephen K. White's insightful study, *Sustaining Affirmation: On the Strengths of Weak Ontology in Political Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> There is disagreement within the primary Deleuze and Guattari scholarship as to which of these characterisations best describes their own thought. Todd May, for example, argues that micropolitics is first and foremost a perspective on politics as flux of quantum flows; Paul Patton, by contrast, reads micropolitics in more Foucaultian terms of an analytics of the subjectifying power of *dispositifs* of power/knowledge. At least part of the ambiguity of pinning down their concept of micropolitics arises from the fact that this text is co-authored. Deleuze may have had more of role in penning the more Bergsonian vitalist passages, while the talk of subjectification, power, and militant resistance may be more attributable to Guattari. Trying to draw a fine line between them, however, is both beyond the bounds of this paper and against the spirit of their collaboration. Cf. Todd May, *Gilles Deleuze: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Paul Patton, *Deleuze and the Political* (New York: Routledge, 2000). These multiple senses of micropolitics have been less clearly differentiated in the contemporary usages of the term, and often overlap and intertwine as they do in Deleuze and Guattari's original text. For some contemporary iterations see Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Paul Saurette, *The Kantian Imperative: Humiliation, Common Sense, Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); John Tambornino, *The Corporeal Turn: Passion, Necessity, Politics* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002); Kam Shapiro, *Sovereign Nations, Carnal States* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); as well as the essays collected in two recent edited volumes, *Radical Democracy: Between Abundance and Lack*, ed. Lars Tønders and Lasse Thomassen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), and *The Politics of Moralizing*. Also notable is Jane Bennett 'The Force of Things: Steps Towards an Ecology of Matter' *Political Theory* vol. 32 n. 3 (2004): 347-87.

politicisation of this virtual register of thought and action in so far as it plays a role in influencing political judgment and collective action.<sup>4</sup>

A central trope in the turn to micropolitics in contemporary political theory has been the assertion that deliberative or communicative theories of democracy neglect the political force of the virtual. In this paper I offer a critical appraisal of the turn to micropolitics from the perspective of this trope. Do micropolitics provide a richer perspective on politics than deliberative models? And, if so, what should this mean for the role of justification and public reason in democratic politics? To answer these questions I look to the writings of William Connolly. Micropolitics has been a central category of Connolly's political repertoire for over a decade.<sup>5</sup> Taking an approach that highlights the interconnections between embodiment, affect, and culture, Connolly provides a rich set of concepts and arguments that do much to articulate the challenges facing democratic self-government today. But that said, his forced dichotomy between a progressive micropolitics and bland, flat deliberative rationalism appears problematic. Connolly's vision of micropolitics marginalizes the role deliberation can effectively play in the public sphere and in so doing misses the chance to think productively about an engagement between micropolitics and macropolitics, Deleuze and Kant, affect and democracy.

It should be noted that this is not an essay on Deleuze and Guattari per se, but rather on the contemporary uses and abuses to which their thought has been put by political theorists. I take Connolly's writings to be exemplary of this latter turn, but not representative of Deleuze and Guattari's thinking as such. Indeed, the critical ambitions of this essay are to raise some questions about Connolly's vision of politics, and I draw on Deleuze and Guattari only in so far as they provide context for the twists and turns of Connolly's arguments. I do not mean to imply by association that Deleuze and Guattari are at fault for any of the shortcomings of Connolly's critique of deliberative democrats. While their vision of a radical politics prefigures Connolly's position, it neither determines it nor bears responsibility for it.

## II. Deliberative Democracy and Intellectualism

The theory of deliberative democracy is familiar to criticism. Liberals, communitarians, feminists, and post-structuralists alike have objected to its unapologetic rationalism. Either the claims of public reason rely on too thin a conception of the self, or on a masculine or biased account of rationality, or on a blunt universalism that suppresses the conflictual nature of the political.<sup>6</sup> These criticisms are by now familiar, and, in at least

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<sup>4</sup> The term is Kam Shapiro's. See op. cit.

<sup>5</sup> Within Connolly's published corpus, his defence of Deleuze and Guattari's idea of micropolitics as an analytic and critical tool for democratic politics goes back at least to the mid-nineties. Cf. William E. Connolly, 'The Desire to Punish' in The Ethos of Pluralism (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), pp. 41-74.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Michael Sandel, Liberalism and the Limits of Justice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Iris Marion Young, 'Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy' in Democracy and Difference, ed. Seyla Benhabib (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 120-135; Chantal Mouffe, The Democratic Paradox (London: Verso, 2000).

some of their iterations, valid ones. The turn to micropolitics is could be said to be the most recent iteration of this critique of rationalism. Intellectualism, William Connolly argues, is the new sin of deliberative democracy. By intellectualism he means something different from these more familiar criticisms of rationalism. To say that deliberative democracy is guilty of intellectualism is not to say that it is blind to questions of power, or identity, or difference – or at least it’s not only to say this – but rather that deliberative models of democracy are working with a faulty conception of thinking. They have been captured by “the image of thought” – the idea that thinking is an autonomous, linguistically mediated process of mind that is oriented towards coherence and truth.<sup>7</sup> Deliberative thinking takes place at one relatively transparent register where our reasons for action can be compared, reasoned about, and revised through the force of the better argument. This image of thought is intellectualist because it fails to see how thought is a layered process of neural, perceptual, and embodied activity not reducible to conceptual ratiocination alone. “Attempts to give priority to the highest and conceptually most sophisticated brain nodules in thinking and judgment,” Connolly argues, “may encourage those invested in these theories to underestimate the importance of body image, unconscious motor memory, and thought-imbued affect” (2002: 10).<sup>8</sup>

Against the intellectualist image of thought, Connolly argues that thinking is distributed across multiple registers that make possible “visceral modes of appraisal” (Connolly, 1999: 27).<sup>9</sup> It is these deep, intensive, and reactive visceral modes of thinking and judgement that the deliberative image of thinking overlooks. Disgust, for example, is a visceral response that makes your stomach turn. It seems to swell up inside you without any volition of your own. The values and beliefs of others can sometimes stimulate this kind of feeling, say if they present you with a defence of cloning, or euthanasia, or gay marriage, as the case may be. You can’t always put are finger on what it is that strikes you as so disgusting about these proposals, but sometimes you just feel that they are wrong. You are unable to provide defensible reasons for our responses. Sometimes things just rub you the wrong way.

Connolly’s point is that visceral and embodied responses like disgust, shame, and hatred come to play a role in political decision – and they evidently do in political deliberations about matters such as cloning, euthanasia, and gay marriage – and that the deliberative approach is poorly equipped to deal with them. Deliberative democrats either require that these sorts of affective feelings are purged from the public sphere as unfortunate distortions of real communication, or they suggest that can be subject to deliberation and argument just as any other sort of belief, interest, or prejudice can be. Connolly thinks that both of these approaches are bound to fail. Visceral reactions are not conceptually sophisticated thoughts and as such are not amenable to deliberation, argumentation, or verbal persuasion. The exchange of validity claims alone is not enough to stop your stomach from churning when you think about the right to die. Deliberative

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<sup>7</sup> On the image of thought see Gilles Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia Press, 1994), pp. 129-167.

<sup>8</sup> William Connolly, Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

<sup>9</sup> William Connolly, Why I’m Not a Secularist (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

democrats need to learn “how much more there is to thinking than argument” and to begin experimenting with alternative forms of political engagement (Connolly, 1999: 148). Because political judgment is so often carried at this visceral or virtual register deliberation cannot provide a privileged or efficacious form of participation, justification, or transformation.

To corroborate these claims about the multiple registers of thinking, Connolly turns to recent findings in neuroscience that suggest a more intimate relationship between reason, the emotions, and the body than the intellectualist account assumes. Like some other political theorists, Connolly hopes that a closer engagement with neurology and cognitive science will provide grounds for a more adequate account of subjectivity, reason, and ethics.<sup>10</sup> The kind of thinking that intellectualists privilege – sophisticated, conceptual, reflective, deliberative, and linguistically-mediated thought – pertains to the activity of the largest part of the brain, the cortex. It is through the rich and complex layers of neural activity in the cortex that we can perform intricate activities like planning, speaking, reasoning and arguing. What recent finding in neurology suggest, however, is that cortical activity is not autonomous and is in fact in some ways subservient to the parts of the brain that control, emotions, memory and affect.<sup>11</sup>

In particular, the cortex responds to information from the limbic system, the small curved part of the brain below the cortex that controls emotion and fine movement. Made up of the basal ganglia, the hippocampus, and the amygdala, the limbic system enables the fast, intensive, and reactive action of affects. The jolt of fear that makes your hair stand on end or the disgust that you feel in the pit of their stomach is the work of the part of the limbic system called the amygdala. The fast, intensive reactions governed by this system are an evolutionary necessity for a species that needs to appraise and respond to dangerous situations quickly and effectively without much deliberation. The reaction to jump out of the way of a speeding car needs to happen in a split second. It is not the sort of situation where you can really deliberate about the relative merits of your different options before acting. But this is not to say that the limbic system is entirely thoughtless. It is not concerned with sophisticated, conceptual, and deliberative thinking but its actions certainly are symbolically mediated or “thought-imbued” in some sense (the expression is Connolly’s). Which stimuli trigger these intense affective response are not entirely biologically determined, but instead take a fair deal of cultural learning. The limbic system in a sense learns or records cultural standards of what is dangerous and what is disgusting, and then turns them into an automated response.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Other notable contributions to this trend are George Lakoff, Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002; Leslie Theile, The Heart of Judgement: Practical Wisdom, Neuroscience, and Narrative (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). For a critical review of this trend and of the dangers of theory’s seduction by scientific naturalism in general see John G. Gunnell ‘Are We Losing Our Minds? Cognitive Science and the Study of Politics’ Political Theory vol. 35 n. 6 (December 2007): 704-731.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Antonio Damasio, Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain (Orlando: Harcourt, 2003); Joseph LeDoux, The Emotional Brain (New York: Touchstone, 1996).

<sup>12</sup> Despite his proclaimed naturalism, Connolly provides a surprisingly constructivist understanding of disgust that gives its biological and evolutionary aspects fairly short shrift. The result is that, as Gunnell points out, there exists a disconnect between Connolly’s claims about culture and physiology that his vague account about “networks” passes over too quickly. See (Gunnell 2007: 709). For a richer and more nuanced account of disgust that is more attentive to the overlaps and dissonances between its perceptual,

Between the cortex and limbic system there exists a “feedback loop” of mutual influence where these fast, affective, “proto-thoughts” of the limbic system shape the slow, reflective thinking of the cortex (Connolly, 2002 passim). The existence of these intensive, instinctive elements moving below the register of reflective judgment mean that human reason is not pure and autonomous, but rather is shaped in a complex way at the neural level by the influence of the emotions and affects.<sup>13</sup> David Hume, it would seem, was right to say that is in fact the slave of the passions. And what this means for politics is that the emotions and affects that shape and guide thinking are themselves deeply influenced by values and opinions that we may or may not actually want to endorse. Racist, sexist, homophobic, and ideological sentiments may lodge themselves deeply into this “body-brain-culture network” (Connolly 2002). Where this is the case, no amount of arguing in the world will dislodge them and citizens would be effectively unable to try to persuade one another to respect, tolerate, or trust each other in the ways that deliberation and cooperation require. Connolly explains:

Culturally preorganized charges shape perception and judgement in ways that exceed the picture of the world supported by the models of calculative reason, intersubjective culture, and deliberative democracy. They show us how linguistically complex brain regions respond not only to events in the world but also, proprioceptively, to cultural habits, skills, memory traces, and affects mixed into our muscles, skin, gut, and cruder brain regions. (Connolly, 2002: 36)

This all culminates into a critique of deliberative models of democracy where it is the inability of practical reason to influence these potentially dangerous or hateful “culturally preorganized charges” that points to its undoing.

### III. Visceral Politics

Before I say something about the merits of Connolly’s critique of deliberative democracy I want to first situate this talk of intellectualism within its political context. At its heart, Connolly’s objections to the deliberative turn in democratic theory boils down to his claim that too much focus on the terms of justification and legitimation ignores the everyday sensibilities expressed and reproduced the actions of citizens. These sensibilities are not identical to doctrinal beliefs or articulate reasons. Rather they are carried out unreflectively along this visceral register of judgement and thinking. Where these sensibilities have been cultivated to promote respect, responsiveness, and generosity a pluralistic liberalism can thrive. The political problem, however, is that in contemporary America this noble ethos is largely absent. Instead Connolly argues that this visceral register has become a vehicle for a “stingy” sensibility animated by resentment, fear, and a desire for revenge (1999: 7). The deep roots of existential resentment in an increasingly disempowered American working class today are then exploited by a destructive “evangelical-capitalist resonance machine” that threatens to roll-back the hard-won achievements of the liberal democratic struggles of the last

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physiological, evolutionary, and cultural elements see William Ian Miller, The Anatomy of Disgust (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

<sup>13</sup> For a physiological version of this argument see LeDoux 1996. For a more conceptual variant also drawing on cognitive science see George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Philosophy in the Flesh (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

hundred years.<sup>14</sup> And the demand for more deliberation seems poorly equipped to confront it.

Connolly's contention is that the failing of the Left in America today is due in part to their resistance to accepting the role of the visceral register in politics. Instead, they are still caught up in a potentially antiquated search for some better argument that would bring reason and truth together to serve the ends of justice. The American Right, however, have been much better students of the visceral elements of thinking and have crafted an array of strategies that seek to manipulate it to their ends. Amongst working class Americans who have suffered unemployment with the collapse of the industrial economy, cultural alienation from a powerfully secular and liberal cultural elite, and social fragmentation from the increasing speed, ethnic pluralism, and diversity of a globalizing world there exists a reserve of resentment to be tapped. Neoliberals and neoconservatives on the American Right have overcome their traditional antagonism to draw on this resentment and channel it into a politics of revenge that vilifies foreigners, immigrants, non-Whites, women, queers, liberals, and secularists.<sup>15</sup> Twenty-four hour news shows, aggressive and partisan pundits, and the constant fluctuation of terror alerts all combine to manipulate a visceral fear and anxiety towards conservative ends. The result is the proliferation of "ugly dispositions" that the powerful media machinery of the Right "can foment and amplify, installing them in habitual patterns of perception, identity, interest, and judgements of entitlement" (2005a: 878).

Micropolitics as the manipulation of embodied, intensive, affects along the visceral register of thinking has long been the repertoire of commercial capitalism and the state. Marketers and advertisers have long drawn on findings in psychology, neurobiology, and related fields to manufacture the desires their commodities satisfy. Branding is only the most recent affective techniques of assuring consumer loyalty in a long history of unconscious and unwilling consumption. Marketers now talk about "low involvement advertisement" that bypasses the higher-level cognitive functions of viewers to appeal to non-conscious mental processing. Similarly, the manipulation of intensive reactions and affect has been crucial in sustaining consent for America's open-ended 'war on terror.' The colour-coded terror alert system in place to warn Americans of the likelihood of terrorist attacks is functions as a perceptual marker to calibrate public fear and anxiety. The aggressive rhetorical tactics of conservative media pundits, as well as the explosive graphics, and fast cutting techniques of twenty-four hour news channels, all have the effect of expressing the spinelessness of the 'liberals' they browbeat.<sup>16</sup> And the

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<sup>14</sup> William Connolly, 'The Evangelical-Capitalist Resonance Machine' Political Theory vol. 33 n. 6 (December 2005): 869-886. Hereafter (Connolly 2005a).

<sup>15</sup> See Connolly 2005a. An insightful alternative account of this recent collaboration of neoliberalism and neoconservatism in American politics is Wendy Brown 'American Nightmare: Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism, and De-Democratization' Political Theory vol. 34 n. 6 (December 2006): 690-714. Brown argues that these two political rationalities function sequentially with neoconservatism filling the gap after neoliberalism's effective roll-back of the achievements of the institutions and public culture of constitutional democracy. What is distinctive about Brown's account is that it is precisely the demise of deliberative self-governance, as well as the desire for it, in contemporary American that renders the whole situation a crisis of de-democratization.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *inter alia* Robert Heath, The Hidden Power of Advertising: How Low Involvement Processing Influences the Ways We Chose Brands (Oxford: Admap Publications, 2001); Brian Massumi, 'Fear (The

list goes on. Techniques of affective manipulation are ubiquitous and powerful in the modern world. The challenge of confronting them today, Connolly wagers, means learning to play their game. The Left is done arguing. It's time to learn how "fight fire with fire" (Connolly 2006: 74).<sup>17</sup>

#### IV. Tactics and Techniques

The appropriate response in this situation is to turn to micropolitics. Now Connolly's presentation of the relationship between micropolitics and deliberation is unclear and at times even ambiguous. On the one hand, the two differ in the sense that they operate on different registers of thinking, with micropolitics as an engagement with the visceral and deliberation the reflective activity of conscious thought. Given the way that Connolly presents the problem of the visceral register there does not seem to be much role for deliberation in his vision of democratic politics. While he often stresses that "intellectualism is constitutively insufficient to ethics" (2002: 111), Connolly strains to remind us that saying this is not the same as saying that it has no role to play. Through a series of caveats, Connolly reminds his readers that "nothing in the above carries the implication of eliminating argument, rationality, language, or conscious thought from public discourse" (1999: 36) and that he only means "to flag the insufficiency of argument to ethical life without denying its pertinence" (2002: 108). The goal of his turn to micropolitics is not to replace deliberation but rather to "augment intellectualist models of thinking and culture" (2002: 13). Given the role of affective modes of appraisal in politics, I agree with Connolly that our theories of public reason ought to be revised and amended. Yet, for all these caveats Connolly's vision of micropolitical engagement seems to leave little room left of deliberation. Indeed, his theory only announces their compatibility, but does not follow through in enacting it.

Deleuze and Guattari could be said to prefigure this denigration of political deliberation. It would be anachronistic to describe them as critics of deliberative democracy, or even worse, as denizens of the American culture wars. But that said, there are passing remarks concerning deliberation in their text that seem to connect with the Connolly's claims. More important than decision-making and deliberation are the molecular and unconscious forces that open us up to new ways of thinking and experiencing the world. Where they do mention political deliberation it is invariably to dismiss it as an example of arboreal, state thinking. Observe:

Politics operates by macrodecisions and binary choices, binary interests; but the realm of the decidable remains very slim. Political decision making necessarily descends into a world of microdeterminations, attractions, and desires, which it must sound out or evaluate in a different fashion. Beneath linear conceptions and segmentary decisions, an evaluation of flows and their quanta.<sup>18</sup> (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 221)

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Spectrum Said) Positions vol. 13 n. 1 (2005): 31-48; Bring 'Em On: Media and Politics in the Iraq War, eds. Lee Artz and Yahya R. Kamalipour (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005).

<sup>17</sup> William Connolly, 'Experience & Experiment' Daedalus (Summer 2006): 67-75.

<sup>18</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).



Micropolitics is more basic than deliberation because it concerns the boundaries of “the realm of the decidable.” The appeal of reasons can only function within existing narrow and rigid boundaries. Strategic appeals to affect, however, can help close or expand this realm and open up new issues to deliberation and participation. In this sense, Deleuze and Guattari consider micropolitics as essentially underlying deliberation. Creative becoming, not practical reason, is at the heart of their vision of politics.

The task then is devising means of “nudging” (2002: 77) or exerting “modest influence” (1999: 29) on the visceral register of the self and of public culture more widely. In some passages Connolly describes this as the search for “more expansive modes of persuasion” (1999: 8) while in others he appeals to the force of “mystical experience” (2002: 120). Two possible tactics exist for confronting such dark times. They are arts of the self and micropolitics. Combined, these two forms of technical and tactical intervention provide the means of provoking a more generous, responsive, and engaged kind of citizenship. The only hope we have for achieving a “public ethos of pluralism” to displace the stingy, vengeful one wreaking havoc on democracy is the cultivation of “civic virtues” of agonistic respect and critical responsiveness (Connolly 2005b: 65).<sup>19</sup> Whereas traditional arguments concerning the cultivation of virtue and character rely on the public institutions and civic education as the tools for making citizens, Connolly’s pluralism assigns the task of cultivating these virtues falls on individuals, as self-cultivation, or on collective action, through micropolitics.

### *Self-Cultivation*

Cultivating a personal ethos may be a noble task, and perhaps even a liberating one, but we may want to question its political efficacy. Techniques applied to one’s own inherited dispositions and gut reactions may open small spaces for both resisting manipulation as well as becoming responsive and attentive to others and the world. Connolly observes: “To cultivate an ethical disposition of connectedness across difference is to refine our capacities of feeling” (2005b: 92). What is problematic about this vision of self-cultivation is that it is essentially a pre-emptive or presumptive activity. One must cultivate a richer ethical sensibility in order to become open to the difference of others and the world. It requires that “each constituency engages an internal *counterpoint* to itself that tempers the *external counterpart* it provides to others... another voice in you worries about the indignity or suffering imposed on others...” (2005b: 124, 127 italics in original). If the work of politics aspires to more than a further round in a vicious circle of existential revenge, citizens must first cultivate a prior “micropolitical receptivity” (1999: 149). What this amounts to is a very demanding virtue ethics, without the institutional ballasts of classical virtue ethics, as a solution to politics. Virtue ethics without virtue politics, we could say.

But why should ethics be a solution to politics? Recall that Connolly’s critique of deliberative democracy relies on the claim not that it is wrong or violent, but rather that its narrow intellectualism renders it ineffective. Similarly, the call for the care of the self provides little in the way of resources for motivating any kind of civic engagement. It will depend on the ability of citizens to experience the moral pull of their distinctive

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<sup>19</sup> William Connolly, Pluralism (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005). Hereafter (Connolly 2005b).

moral sources as a prior motivation for such a venture. A desire to work on oneself has to be the occasion for such a venture, not the outcome of it. Where traditional models of civic education see institutions as having a hand in creating a desire for the public good where it is absent, Connolly's position seems caught in a circular argument. To work through the distorting and oppressive forces that hinder a more generous ethos, one must already have such an ethos in the first place.

Connolly's response is to acknowledge this shortcoming, and present it as only the first step among many others towards a more generous public ethos. But, even as a first step the pre-political ethical commitments this position requires raising the bar too high to motivate much political change. "Having a relatively fortunate childhood," Connolly perhaps reluctantly acknowledges, "helps" (2002: 197).<sup>20</sup> Public deliberation, by contrast, seeks to transform desires and preferences through the force of publicity. Rather than leaving the demands of justice to the potential *moral pull* individuals experience from their own conceptions of the good, public deliberation introduces a provocative *moral push* that has the potential to upset, publicise, and transform self-centered desires and prejudices in a more other-regarding direction.<sup>21</sup> Self-care may be a salutary exercise for those concerned with minimizing the unintentional oppression they subject others to, but there is not much to recommend it to those not already committed to an ethics of pluralization – namely, the theocrats, corporate bosses, and resentful jobless workers Connolly identifies as the source of America's crisis today.

Moreover, following Connolly's naturalist leanings, we might wonder whether the self is actually as malleable as Connolly makes it out to be. Connolly's vision of an ethics of self-care may, as one critic noted, "fit all too well with the subjectivist assumptions of a therapeutic age," yet there is notable lack of therapeutic insight in his own account.<sup>22</sup> Taking a cue from psychoanalysis, we may ask if we are more deeply attached to our libidinal investments and fantasies than Connolly assumes.<sup>23</sup> If the ordering and disordering of the desires and anxieties at work in our subconscious trace their genealogy to a history of suffering, discipline, and interpellation going back to birth itself, why should we assume the power of individuals to work through this past alone?

Crucial to psychoanalysis, and missing in Connolly's account, is the role of the other – the therapist. The therapist as alter provides a helpful but limited analogy to the role of publicity in deliberation.<sup>24</sup> If we carry out our visceral appraisals below the level

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<sup>20</sup> See the insightful criticisms of the motivational deficit of Connolly's idea of self-cultivation in Sharon Krause, 'Brains, Citizens, and Democracy's New Nobility' Theory & Event vol. 9 n. 1 (2006).

<sup>21</sup> I borrow the distinction between moral pull and moral push from Robert Nozick, Philosophical Explanations (Cambridge: Belknap Harvard Press, 1981).

<sup>22</sup> Dana Villa, 'Democratizing the Agon: Nietzsche, Arendt, and the Agonistic Tendency in Recent Political' in Politics, Philosophy, Terror: Essays on the Thought of Hannah Arendt (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 122.

<sup>23</sup> For an example of a Lacanian critique of Connolly's project see Jodi Dean, Zizek's Politics (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 44-45, 119-120.

<sup>24</sup> While critical theory has long since abandoned the model of critical theorist as therapist, there is still something to be said for the insight of the therapist in politics. By this I do not mean to defend the paternalism of Jürgen Habermas' original formulation of critic as therapist. Nor am I suggesting that the

of conscious reflection, it is crucial to have an alter, an observer, who can draw our attention to their manifestations where we cannot or will not recognize them.<sup>25</sup> The unreflective and seemingly natural sexist habits of men were not politicised by their own introspection, but rather through the critical publicisation of them by the women who suffer them. Only through the dialogical relationship between alter and ego can these sorts of pathologies be identified, interpreted, and worked through. Deliberative democracy, while certainly not therapy, is a critical practice in an analogous sense. Public deliberation subjects our reasons and self-understandings to public scrutiny, and provide the perspective of an alter to challenge the dissonances, distortions, and partialities from which we judge and act in the public sphere. If the visceral register manifests itself in our judgements, beliefs, and actions then it is crucial to acknowledge the role of others to draw our attention to them and provide us with the moral push to confront them.

### *Micropolitics*

If self-care or techniques of the self are the inward looking element of cultivating a public ethos, micropolitics are the outward or other-regarding part. It provides the lacking push of the self-cultivation approach, but this push is by no means an obviously moral one. As I mentioned above, the concept of micropolitics straddles descriptive, tactical, and normative sense of the political. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari introduce the concept of micropolitics in their analysis of political regimes. Against the received image of the state as a centralized, stable, and sovereign territorial entity, Deleuze and Guattari argue that the state is better described as a macropolitical assemblage that depends on more ubiquitous, fluid, and supple micropolitical assemblages. The molar organization of the state depends on a micro or molecular organization of forces such as affects, moods, memories, habits that sustain and propagate the state's ends. "In short," they write, "everything is political, but every

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political deliberation be modelled along the lines of transference between analyst and analysand. Rather, I mean to highlight the dialogical role of the alter as critical observer. For the shortcomings of critical theory's early reliance on psychoanalytic models see Thomas McCarthy, *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1978), pp. 193-212. My wager is that theorists of political dialogue still have more to learn from Freud than we often assume.

<sup>25</sup> One might respond that Michel Foucault's account of the care of the self, which Connolly is tacitly drawing on, provides ample evidence of the need for friends, guides, and communities in the arts of the self. This is true, but even Foucault's account conceives of friends as assistants or guides in one's own practices of self-cultivation, rather than inciting others who provoke the activity in the first place. See for example his remarks about the Hellenic conceptions of mastery as an element of self-constitution: "The individual should strive for a status as subject that he has never known at any moment in his life. He has to replace his non-subject with the status of subject defined by the fullness of the self's relationship to the self. He has to constitute himself as a subject, and this is where the other comes in... Henceforth the master is an effective agency (*opérateur*) for producing effects within the individual's reform and in his formation as a subject. He is the mediator in the individual's relationship to this constitution as a subject." *Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981-1982*, ed. Frédéric Gros trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2005), pp. 129-30. Note that Foucault describe the other as a "mediator" in the care of the self, not a catalyst or *provocateur*.

politics is simultaneously a *macropolitics* and a *micropolitics*” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 213 italics in original).

According to Deleuze and Guattari even the most monolithic and centralized example of state power, the fascist state apparatus, is in fact a decentered plurality that depends on a micropolitics that sustain it. Consider:

The concept of the totalitarian State applies only at the macropolitical level, to a rigid segmentarity and a particular mode of totalization and centralization. But fascism is inseparable from a proliferation of molecular focuses in interaction, which skip from point to point, before beginning to resonate together in the National Socialist State. Rural fascism and city or neighbourhood fascism, youth fascism and war veteran’s fascism, fascism on the Left and fascism on the Right, fascism of the couple, family, school, and office: every fascism is defined by a micro-black hole that stands on its own and communicates with the others, before resonating in a great, generalized central black hole. (1987: 214)

This redescription of state power in terms of its molecular make-up opens up a new strategic awareness of the multiple sites of rupture, destabilization, and transformation available for citizens to challenge the state. The continuity of forces between the micro and macro registers of politics means that there exists a sort of feedback loop between the two, where action at one level makes for consequences at the other. Because power is not reducible to the authority of the state, local experiments and struggles by citizens, market forces, and media producers have consequences for wider patterns of cultural value and institutions.

To appraise Connolly’s turn to micropolitics it is important to understand what vision of political action follows from Deleuze and Guattari’s original formulation. For Deleuze and Guattari political action is fundamentally creative and reactive. Citizens act by unleashing new forces and energies that disrupt and deterritorialize received molar orders of power and desire. Social movements, thinkers, and dissidents create new practices, new identities, and new values that must struggle for recognition within established assemblages. This creative aspect of politics is the first step in destabilizing rigid and reified practices. Connolly calls these dynamic, creative movements a “politics of becoming” (1999: 47-72). To effectively decenter received identities, desires, and self-conceptions, however, these new values have to engage politically with the existing public culture that constrains them. Political theorists following Hegel have called this process a struggle for recognition. Deleuze and Guattari, however, recast it as “the flash of the war machine, arriving from without” (1987: 353).

Micropolitics as a model of political engagement is the combat of war machines. Nomadic war machines versus the State’s appropriation of the war machine, war machines of the Left against the resonance machines of the Right. The war machine works through “secrecy, speed, and affect” (1987: 356) and represents “another kind of justice” (1987: 352) than law or the State. War as armed conflict itself is not necessarily the object of the war machine, but its desirable power of displacement “institutes an entire economy of violence, in other words, a way of making violence durable, even unlimited” (187: 396). The war machine is the weapon of the herd or the pack to create “smooth space” against the “stratified space” of the State (1987: 384). It is continually reconstituted by minorities populating the edges and fringes the collective body of the State. With it, nomads and barbarians lays siege to the gates of empire.

What is this war machine? Deleuze and Guattari explain: “an ‘ideological’, scientific, or artistic movement can be a potential war machine, to the precise extent to

which it draws, in relations to a *phylum*, a plane of consistency, a creative line of flight, a smooth space of displacement” (1987: 422-23 italics in original). Violence and armed conflict are not the core concerns of a war machine, but instead the promotion of creative forms of becoming. That said, Deleuze and Guattari’s bellicose language here seems both unfortunate and out of place in a text that otherwise advocates cautious and delicate experimentation. The language of the war machine and their apparent praise of violence and another justice seem difficult to square with the allegedly egalitarian credentials of micropolitics. The creation of new identities and values certainly is a kind of ‘force’ citizens have the power to unleash on society, and certainly it is this semantic and disclosive sense of force rather than a necessarily bellicose and violent one that Deleuze and Guattari have in mind. For these reasons Paul Patton has argued that Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the war machine should better be thought of as a “metamorphosis machine” with a lineage going back to Nietzsche’s re-evaluation of all values rather than Clausewitz’s concept of total war (Patton, 2000: 109-115). Portrayed in these more gentle terms, micropolitics can be defended in the terms of Connolly pluralistic but critical liberalism. Patton gives the example of indigenous land claims as such a metamorphosis machine – creative political claims-making that destabilizes and transforms existing juridical structures of recognition.

The attempt to fold Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the war machine back into a liberal politics of recognition may be a promising adaptation of the concept, but it misses a key element of Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of the political: weaponry (1987: 400ff). Micropolitics aims to destabilize and transform subconscious, unreflective, and affective sensibilities that hinder the creative becoming of new identities and values. Unlike a struggle for recognition this process of transformation is primarily not a dialogical or reciprocal enterprise where the two parties exchange claims and concerns and attempt to come to some common ground. Instead, the war machine comes from outside as something external that attacks. Activists create war machines to be “plugged” in other collective machines and orders of discourse.<sup>26</sup> A machine, an order, a structure is destabilized by attacking the intensive energies and affects that sustain it. The war machine functions not at the level of reasons and discourse, but at the virtual level of affects and forces. “Weapons are affects and affects weapons” (1987: 400). Micropolitics concerns conflict at the level of affect, disposition, sensibility, ethos. And it is an intervention at this lower register of being that is strategic, intentional, and manipulative for the sake of higher ends.

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<sup>26</sup> In the plateau, ‘How Do You Make Yourself a Body Without Organs?’ Deleuze and Guattari provide a sustained account of enacting transformation that is generally more cautious and less bellicose than the discussion in the war machine plateau. That said, however, these parts of their text differ more in rhetorical style than in their substantive vision of politics. They advise: “We are in a social formation; first see how it is stratified for us and in us and at the place where we are; then descend from the strata to the deeper assemblage within which we are held; gently tip the assemblage, making it pass over to the side of the plane of consistency. It is only there that the BwO [Body without Organs – AL] reveals itself for what it is: connections of desires, conjunctions of flows, continuum of intensities. You have constructed your own little machine, ready when needed to be plugged into other collective machines” (1987: 161). Here the language is one of gently tipping rather than violent assault, but the idea of constructing your own little machine, a war machine, to destabilize and transform an existing social ordering of desire and power is the same.

While unacknowledged, these same themes of war machines and weaponry creep into Connolly's liberal micropolitics. Despite appearances otherwise, Connolly's micropolitics is one of affective war machines at battle. 'Resonance' replaces 'war', however, as the relevant adjective (cf. 2005a). A machine resonates if it has the power to infiltrate existing orders of power and desire, and forge new connections between dissonant elements. The conservative media apparatus that forges alliances between disempowered workers and the corporate powers that continue to disempower them provide just one example of this power of resonance. While he shies away from Deleuze and Guattari's bellicose language, Connolly's response to this micropolitics of the Right that foment division and distrust is the construction of new resonance or war machines that he calls "countertechniques of cultural-corporeal infusion" (2006: 74). New media-savvy countertechniques that communicate to the visceral register provide the resources to create resonances between the disparate interests of a fractured Left. New resonance machines are the key to a new coalition politics on the Left, not bound by any singular or united cause or mission. And the means of producing this new coalition is to infiltrate public culture to plant the seeds of a new generous yet critical ethos or sensibility. "The contemporary need," Connolly writes, "is to instill an ethos of bicameralism [civic virtues of agonistic respect and critical responsiveness – AL] into military, church, educational, judicial, corporate, labour, and executive institutions" (2005b: 147). This task is two-fold. Instilling this nobler sensibility into public culture requires a micropolitics that speaks to the visceral register at which such an ethos may become entrenched. And likewise this micropolitics needs to displace stingy or ugly dispositions at the visceral register that sustains them. Creating new venues for public reason may serve a role in the critical task of exposing and challenging existing practices of manipulation, but they are insufficient to task of "cultural-corporeal infusion." The intellectual demand that public persuasion can provide an alternative to the powerful micropolitics of the evangelical-capitalist resonance machine is a dead end. Political struggle today is taking place at the level of intensity, not concepts.

Just as Deleuze and Guattari's bellicose language may raise questions as to what extent their vision of politics can properly be called liberal or democratic, Connolly's apparent defence of manipulation should occasion similar worries. Connolly is aware of the dangers of manipulation and acknowledges that "[t]his is dangerous territory. But it is also unavoidable territory in a media-rich world, in which there is never a vacuum in the micropolitics of corporeal-cultural infusion" (ibid). In earlier writings he took the weaker stance that the aim of these micropolitics is to introduce the possibility – and only the possibility – of a more generous and less dominating sensibility into public culture.<sup>27</sup> As Nietzsche well knew, possibility itself has the power to disrupt and to throw received opinion and practice into sharp relief. As the production of possibilities, partisan but intentionally weak, war machines can be understood in an aesthetic sense as practices of rediscovery or redescription. Yet this aesthetic or disclosive understanding of micropolitics gives way to the more central trope in Connolly's later writings of a political war machine that is unleashed to manipulate public life and political culture more directly. Since *Identity\Difference* Connolly's emphasis has shifted from an appreciation of this ethics of generosity as a local form of resistance to the demands of

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. William E. Connolly, *Identity\Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox*. Expanded Edition. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), pp. 47-48.

identity and power to an account of this ethics in a much broader sense. With his turn towards the visceral registers of thinking, with all the complexity that the neurological findings and media studies introduce, the project becomes one of devising techniques to “instill” this ethos into the larger political culture in a more direct and less directly reflexivity provoking fashion. But once the political stakes have been depicted in such terms – the battle between the warring resonance machines over the visceral register of the nation – what’s left to this theory that makes it a specifically *democratic* one? What makes Connolly’s ends any nobler than those he seeks to unmask and displace? Why is a generous ethos more desirable than a stingy, conservative one, or is dichotomy between the two a forced one that pushes out other possibilities? And what makes the Left’s counter-techniques of manipulation any less vanguardist or objectionable than the Right micropolitics they challenge? Without some prior public dialogue and deliberation about what sorts of values and strategies those affected by these micropolitics could promote, there is no apparent *justification* for supporting one vision of micropolitics over another. Furthermore, there is no democratic *legitimacy* to Connolly’s micropolitical attack on stinginess. If war the war machine is understood in purely aesthetic or disclosive terms, these justification and legitimacy would not be relevant concerns. But once the project shifts to the wider ordering of values and public practices, even if not through the official organs of the state, the democratic deficit of Connolly’s micropolitics becomes clear.

This is not to say that there is no place for strategic action or manipulation in a genuinely democratic politics. Lobbying, organizing, demonstrating, letter writing, mobilisation, and civil disobedience are all part and parcel of lively politics of democratic contestation. But what makes all of these activities democratic is that they can all be seen as part of a contested yet cooperative process of self-government. Manipulation may be an unavoidable element of politics, but the ends to which public manipulation is enacted themselves need to be open to deliberation, argument, and accountability. Without some hard deliberation about what kind of culture we want and what sorts of war machines we want to unleash, it is difficult to see how such a venture could not degenerate into the worst kind of technocratic public manipulation.

But is this right? Are cultural politics the kinds of things we can deliberate about? Deliberative democracy primarily concerns the problems of legitimacy in state-civil society relationships, and not the more ubiquitous politics of cultural transformation. Culture is not a monolithic entity and it certainly is not the kind of thing that the state can shape and control through legislative means. Cultures of course are not amenable to human planning and organization. Technological revolutions, economic shifts, military interventions, and environmental changes have a stronger hand in the shaping and reshaping of human cultures. But still, local interventions and experiments by human beings do have consequences too. The introduction of municipal recycling programmes required a great deal of work in changing the way people thought about the environment and their consumption habits. Gay marriage was only possible after long and sustained campaigns to rally against the cultural norm of homophobia and heterosexism. The actors behind these shifts were not elected officials and were not accountable in the ordinary sense of the term. Was there work that of war machines manipulating the public’s ethos?

Perhaps. But along side that, and more importantly, was a good deal of arguing, publicising, and critiquing in the public sphere. The idea of the public sphere provides a resource for thinking about how deliberative change takes place at the cultural level.

What is distinct about deliberative democracy, *pace* Connolly's characterisation, is that it is a sociological theory of reason-giving.<sup>28</sup> Deliberation does not depend on the knock-down force of the better argument in a single-round, one-on-one, face-to-face bout of deliberation. Political debate is not a matter of logical demonstration. Rather, deliberation is the decentered and subjectless exchange of reasons across the network of voluntary associations that make up the public sphere. Deliberative democracy is a model of democracy that explains how ideas circulate in society, and how they bump into other ideas, transform them, and become transformed themselves in turn. This rhizomatic exchange submits reasons and beliefs to critical review, ultimately refining the stronger reasons, or the more inclusive visions of political community, and distinguishing them from the weaker ones. Seen as a molecular interplay of constantly flowing, shifting and transforming reasons, the circulation of ordinary talk in the public sphere can be read in a Deleuzian light. The public sphere is an example of micropolitics par excellence, understood in its descriptive sense as a politics of vital flows and becomings. It could even be described as a war machine in the non-manipulative sense: the opinion-formation of an insurgent public sphere functions "in the manner of a siege" (Habermas, 1996: 486) against the apparatus of the administrative state. The deliberative public sphere deterritorializes and smooths conceptual space, remains external to the state, and secures legitimacy and rationality all without the privileged manipulation, vanguardism, or forced distinction between reason and affect that Connolly's tactical micropolitics reintroduces.

### **Negotiation?**

Tactics and techniques alone are insufficient for realizing democracy. Cooperation, deliberation, and collective action are needed first and foremost. But does Connolly really frame the distinction between the two in such stark terms? As I mentioned above, there is a collection of caveats he includes in his arguments that stress that he nowhere means to do away with deliberation or public reason. And, as we all also saw, his critique of intellectualism and his Deleuzian micropolitics leaves little room for dialogue and mutual understanding in his vision of politics. He foregrounds the multiple registers of thinking, an ethics of self-care and a micropolitics of manipulation, all the while downplaying the issues of the public sphere, publicity, and political dialogue. But there is another theme lurking in the background of Connolly's texts. Behind the celebration of ethics and micropolitics there are vague but regular appeals to another ingredient in his ethos of pluralism. It is something he refers to, all too in often in passing, as negotiation.<sup>29</sup>

An ethos of pluralism may come about through tactical interventions into the visceral, but also through a *modus vivendi* negotiated between interdependent parties who honour different final moral sources. Negotiation is an ideal of dialogue that Connolly distinguishes from deliberation. Rather than striving for an unrealistic and biased ideal of consensus or impartiality in public reason, negotiation is a thick account of dialogue. In negotiation, the parties bring their comprehensive conceptions to bear on

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Jürgen Habermas, Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy, trans. William Rehg (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996).

<sup>29</sup> See references to negotiation at 1999: 35, 92, 143, 185; 2002: 138; 2005: 65, 123, 125, 126.



issues of political disagreement. Instead of hiding behind a privileged Kantian account of right that magically floats above the messy world of competing conceptions of the good, political negotiation has to take place between these conceptions of the good. As opposed to Rawls' theory of public reason where what matters is the substance of the reasons exchanged, negotiation places emphasis on the sensibility or ethos in accordance with which they are exchanged. Thick negotiation means deeply held convictions about religion, the good, and so on are put on the table and are opened up to the scrutiny and critique of others. To hold endure the agon of opening oneself up in this way, all parties need to acknowledge the "comparative contestability" of their fundamentals (1999: 8); that is, citizens need to acknowledge that their conceptions of the good are just one amongst others and have no special privilege or insight to impose their understanding of the good on others. Embracing the comparative contestability of your political claims enables the critical yet respectful engagement is what Connolly calls agonistic respect: "An ethos of agonistic respect grows out of a mutual appreciation for the ubiquity of faith to life and the inability of contending parties, to date, to demonstrate the truth of one faith over other live candidates. It grows out of reciprocal appreciation for the element of contestability in these domains" (2005b: 123).

This idea of comparative contestability is a criterion of reciprocity that is ultimately akin to what Rawls calls the "reasonability" of citizens to accept the burdens of judgment in the exercise of public reason.<sup>30</sup> In fact, this idea of negotiation, despite the way Connolly introduces the dichotomy, bears a striking resemblance to the idea of deliberation propounded by thinkers like Jürgen Habermas, John Dryzek, Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson and others. All these thinkers agree that political deliberation in the public sphere, or across public spheres, must be a thick one where citizens are free to appeal to their diverse conceptions of the good. And all also believe that there are necessary cultural and ethical preconditions to ground the reciprocity that fair and equal dialogue requires.<sup>31</sup> Where Connolly breaks with these thinkers is not, after all, in his conception of dialogue but in his understanding of the visceral politics that take place before dialogue. Comparative contestability is itself an achievement, not a ready resource that can be taken for granted in the public sphere. Self-cultivation and micropolitics are meant to lay the foundations for this kind of exchange, not replace it. To be able to negotiate as respectful equals, prior work needs to be done to drain the latent resentment and hatred in public culture that inhibits mutual respect and critical responsiveness.

Yet, as we've seen, the claim that parties to negotiation must "both work on themselves" (1999: 144) presumptively and pre-emptively before cooperation is possible is an unrealistically high bar to rise. A more generous and responsive public culture would make deliberation more fruitful, but we cannot sit on our hands waiting for it to take place. And neither should we leave it to a vanguard to manipulate public culture in a more generous direction. Rather, the free exchange of reasons contributes the lacking

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. John Rawls, Political Liberalism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993)

<sup>31</sup> Habermas refers to this as the need for the lifeworld to meet "halfway", while Gutmann and Thompson outline a substantive set of ethical values (reciprocity, publicity, accountability) that citizens ought to maintain in deliberative exchanges. See Habermas (1996) *passim*; Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, Democracy and Disagreement (Cambridge: Belknap Harvard Press, 1996), pp. 52-164; cf. John H. Dryzek, Deliberative Democracy and Beyond: Liberals, Critics, Contestations (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

moral push to Connolly's politics of moral pull. The role of incitation and provocation to become more responsive depends on others and on their ability to demand reasons from us and give us pause over our received views of things. Deliberation may depend on a prior ethics or virtues, but it may paradoxically have the power to provoke and promote its own conditions of possibility. Deliberative democrats often account for such a hermeneutical circle through the vague language of learning processes that may warrant some scepticism. Even if we are unconvinced by such accounts, it seems sensible enough to acknowledge the experience of fair inclusion in dialogue over matters of mutual concern can itself be trust building exercise.<sup>32</sup>

Is all of this to say that Connolly's critique of intellectualism is of no consequence to deliberative democracy? Not at all. Connolly's diagnosis of the deeper, somatic structures of appraisal and judgement do raise tough questions for theories of deliberation that typically do rely on an all too flat moral psychology. As all good scholarship, his writing provides the occasion for more questions than it answers and provides a catalyst for further research and question asking. However, these questions do not need to lead to a rejection of deliberative democracy or a search for something other than dialogue to answer them. Instead, they suggest a rethinking of what it is that we do when we deliberate as citizens and how a richer vision of public dialogue and political communication can function to thematise, critique, and maybe even reform visceral or habitual forms of disrespect.

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<sup>32</sup> For an example of this hermeneutical circle argument see Seyla Benhabib, 'Towards a Deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy' in Democracy and Difference (1996), pp. 67-94. For a more nuanced study of how democratic dialogue, and rhetoric in particular, might function recursively to build trust and mutual respect see Danielle Allen, Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship after Brown v. Board of Education (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2004).