identitarian grip of the maternal (without undermining real, existing mothers) and restore to itself a political project that values citizen action and struggles for democracy.[20] When and if this happens, perhaps feminism's reconciliation of theory and *praxis* can begin.

Chapter 3

Merely Combating the Phrases of This World

Liberalism, Communitarianism, and Recent Democratic Theory

Some books are important not because they resolve a puzzle or pose a problem in a new way but because they are symptomatic of certain deeply rooted and collectively shared patterns of thinking or conceptualizing within a particular moment in time. Such books are potentially illuminating insofar as they point to issues, even crises, in thinking or theorizing that far outweigh the subject matter that is immediately to hand. The books in political theory at issue in this chapter address the subject matter of Western democracy and citizenship.[1] I am pleased to report that none of them exhibit the alleged "strange silence" (Isaac 1995) toward the European revolutions of 1989, the dissolution of communism, or the end of the cold war that, a few years ago, provoked a spirited group symposium about the political relevance of political theorizing (including William Connolly, Kirstie McClure, Elizabeth Kiss, Michael Gillespie, and Seyla Benhabib) in the pages of the international journal *Political Theory*.

Quite explicitly, these books locate themselves within the historical and political context of the "collapse of Communism" (Mouffe 1993, 3; Zolo 1992, vii); "the dissolution of the Soviet Union" (Phillips 1993, 2); and "the end of the Cold War" (Bridges 1994, 14). Each recognizes the perils for democracy that accompany the subsequent rise of "destructive nationalisms [in] Central Europe" (Phillips 1993, 2); or the "recrudescence of nationalism" (Botwinick 1993, 3); and the fragmentation of "previously united multina-

tional political communities" (Beiner 1995, 3). If these introductory remarks do not exactly secure their authors' intentions to heed the symposium's call to open political theory "to the dramatic political experiences of our time," at least they encourage the reader to anticipate some sort of confluence between contemporary democratic theory on the one hand and what C. B. Macpherson once called "the real world of democracy" on the other, in the turbulent context of the third millenium (Isaac 1995, 650).

In the face of the post–cold war era, each of these authors also identifies particular political crises that face liberal democratic societies in the West and constitute what Ronald Beiner (1995, 3) terms "the problem of citizenship." Chantal Mouffe (1993, 4) and Anne Phillips (1993, 5), in their respective collections of previously published essays, link the defeat of communism to a "deep crisis of political identity" that confuses our understandings of friend and enemy and confounds our "yearnings for an undifferentiated unity" as the basis for democratic politics. Beiner (1995, 3) introduces his edited volume (of previously published articles by J. G. A. Pocock, Michael Ignatieff, George Armstrong Kelly, Richard Flathman, Michael Walzer, Iris Marion Young, Alasdair MacIntyre, Joseph Carens, Jürgen Habermas, and Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman) by noting a series of "political dilemmas"—ethnic and sectarian conflicts, mass migration and unemployment, economic globalization—that exacerbate already "jeopardized identities" and raise "anew deep questions about what binds citizens together into a shared community." Thomas Bridges (1994, 16) addresses what he calls "the most significant cultural task facing North Atlantic liberal democracies"—the precise formulation of "civic moral ideals." Aryeh Botwinick (1993, 4, 12, 59, 14) considers "the true globalization of democracy" and the possibilities of "participatory praxis" in terms of the reality of limited economic growth, "homogenizing technology," and the erosion of "modernist culture."

As Beiner's excellent and wide-ranging collection of essays makes clear, the crisis of identity/difference (in national and international, as well as group and cultural terms), the creation of shared yet diverse communities, the articulation of civic moral ideals, the meaning of civil society, the challenges of multiculturalism, the problems facing participatory social movements, the procedures of deliberative democratic practices, and, above all, the phenomenon of *citizenship*—whether as an "ideal" (Pocock), a "myth" (Ignatieff), or a "theoretical problem" (Beiner)—are the themes that animate much democratic political theory today. Kymlicka and Norman's "Survey of Recent Work on Citizenship Theory" (in Beiner) also provides a very useful overview of the state of the current literature. Insofar as the other books here under review also take up these themes in various ways, they offer a composite sketch of just how diversified the subject matter of democratic theory has become since the era when, in Flathman's words, "notionally scientific theories of citizenship" predominated (in Beiner 1995, 106), and economic models of party competition,

pluralist concepts of the democratic "market," and paradigms of "elites and masses" governed the field. The theorizing of citizenship, as Beiner's collection reveals, has come a long way since then.

Yet, at the same time, and despite the lively expansion and diversification of the problem of citizenship that they exhibit at the level of subject matter, I find in Bridges, Botwinick, Mouffe, Phillips, and Beiner's introduction (to his otherwise varied collection), a startling uniformity at the level of political theorizing. Upon close inspection, the uniformity appears to be built upon a shared conviction that is itself linked to a binary conceptual picture, which all of these theorists appropriate. The conviction and the conceptual binary so thoroughly pervade these texts that they constantly threaten to resolve the manifold problem of democratic citizenship into a shared formula that bears a single solution. To paraphrase Aristotle's shrewd criticism of Plato's *kallipolis*, it is as if you were to turn harmony into mere unison, or reduce a theme to a single beat. In this chapter, I want to examine more closely this shared pattern of thinking because I think it is symptomatic of a problem in theorizing democracy, and perhaps also indicative of certain political confusions of our time.

Polemics

Has anyone ever seen a new idea come out of a polemic?
—Michel Foucault

The conviction that unites Beiner, Bridges, Botwinick, Mouffe, Phillips, and Zolo (who is otherwise the exception in this group) holds fast to the idea that we must dismantle a modern Western juggernaut that is allegedly on its way to wreckage, but under whose wheels too many devotees continue to throw themselves. Zolo (1992, vii) calls this juggernaut "liberal-democratic theory *tout court* [as] established in the political culture of Europe." Mouffe (1993, 1) refers to it as "liberal thought" and "Western universalism." Phillips (1993, 15, 62) conceives of it as "liberal democracy" linked to the "abstract universals of the Enlightenment tradition." Beiner (1995, 16) calls it "liberalism" in contrast to an equally objectionable "nationalism." Botwinick (1993, 59) identifies the danger as "the historical era of liberalism," and Bridges (1994, x, ix, 8, xii) variously denounces it as "the world view of the Enlightenment," "modernist Western rationalism," "modernist liberal doctrine," and "a universalist world view that rejects the cognitive and moral validity of culturally particularistic beliefs and moral ideals." In short, whatever its various guises and manifestations, something called "liberalism" is the threat that must be controlled and contained.

Now, analyzing contemporary historical and political crises (such as the challenges of democratization) in terms of political, ideological, or theoretical perspectives (such as "liberalism") is the reliable stock-in-trade of much academic political theorizing and not, in and of itself, a *déformation professionelle.*

Botwinick's (1993, 2) observation that "history in the 1990s seems to be keeping pace with and embodying the latest insights of theory" captures at its surface the deeper assumption among political theorists that one not only can organize the processes of theory formation into a historical pattern but also understand history as variations in a theoretical pattern. Under this assumption, for example, the historical field of Western citizenship might be grasped as a kind of "unfinished dialogue" between "a duality of values" embodied in the Aristotelian *politikon zōon* and the Roman *legalis homo*, as Pocock does (in Beiner 1995, 34, 49), or as "two mutually contradictory interpretations" of the citizen's role that pit the Aristotelian communitarian against the Lockean individualist, with each vying for "pride of place," as Habermas does (in Beiner 1995, 261). The persuasiveness of such arguments depends, however, upon whether the theorist avoids polemics, or a polemical attitude, by conceptualizing and clarifying the perspectives or patterns at issue, putting them to the test, modifying them when necessary, and bringing them to bear exactingly upon the historical subject matter at hand. This sort of enterprise within "the order of theory," as Foucault (1984c, 374) puts it, requires "a demanding, prudent, 'experimental' attitude . . . at every moment, step by step, one must confront what one is thinking and saying with what one is doing."

The problem with much democratic political theory nowadays—to which Beiner, Bridges, Botwinick, Mouffe, and Phillips all succumb in varying degrees—is that polemics have taken over the task of determining the subject matter of citizenship, particularly in the confrontation with liberalism. "Polemics," Foucault (1984b, 382 f.) observes, "defines alliances, recruits partisans, unites interests or opinions, represents a party; it establishes the other as an enemy, an upholder of opposed interests, against which one must fight until the moment this enemy is defeated and either surrenders or disappears." Polemics "isn't dealing with an interlocutor, it is processing a suspect" (382). The polemics that afflicts so many current studies of democracy and citizenship is most evident at the level of discourse on liberalism, where this complex and multifaceted historical phenomenon has become little more than an ideational enemy, or a suspect to be processed and called forth for "rebuke" (Beiner 1995, 19). Given the power of polemical thinking, it is not surprising to find even a theorist as astute as Beiner (1995, 16) declaring that "theory typically involves radical simplification, in the interests of sharpening our sense of fundamental alternatives in the midst of complexity." Under the press of polemics, it is apparently more tempting to simplify the task of theory than to theorize the dangers of oversimplification.

The temptation to polemics in these works is aggravated by their shared recourse to a common conceptual binary that defines alliances, recruits partisans, and thereby undermines political theory's capacity to deal adequately with what Mouffe (1993, 35) terms "the legitimation crisis which affects the democratic system." The binary, which functions as a kind of principle of categorical analysis, positions the abstraction "liberalism" against an equally abstract adversary, namely, "communitarianism."[2] Over the past ten years the liberalism:communitarianism binary has come to reign supreme in the polemics of Anglo-American academic theory as the party identification "Democrat:Republican" and its "bipartisan" attendant "liberal:conservative" do in American politics (and with an equivalent and increasing amount of blurring within each of its two entities). Within academia at least, the representation of interests that operates under the respective "liberal" and "communitarian" banners still proceeds in a fashion that is somewhat more elevated than its ideological counterpart in American politics, but it is no less polemical for all that. At the level of the binary opposition, the opposing sides present themselves as follows: liberalism generally marks "the Enlightenment" which, in turn, encompasses the "universal" values of reason, impartiality, and objectivity, the ideal of universal citizenship, "rights," the "disembodied" or "unitary" or "autonomous" subject, and "abstract" individualism; communitarianism generally marks group identity and membership, the "embodied" or "encumbered" subject, the family, tradition, locale, virtue ethics, and situatedness in "community." The communitarian side of the binary often (but not always) gets the better of the liberalism side in this adversarial contest, if only as the friendly dupe that is exploited to expose all of the grand suspect's alleged crimes and misdemeanors.

Theorizing by Phraseology

> *Only because and insofar as man actually and essentially has become subject is it necessary for him, as a consequence, to confront the explicit question: Is it as an "I" confined to its own preferences and freed into its own arbitrary choosing or as the "we" of society; is it as an individual or as a community . . . that man will and ought to be the subject that in his modern essence he* already *is?*
>
> —Martin Heidegger

During the 1970s and 1980s, the Cartesian mode of thinking generated by the binary construct liberalism:communitarianism was more or less contained within the arena of Anglo-American analytical liberalism and specifically mobilized in philosophical responses to and critiques of the political philosophy of John Rawls (1971). After the world-transformative events of 1989, however, as the tendency to theorize democracy in terms of *liberal* democracy became more urgent and pronounced (perhaps in this case, theory in the 1990s was keeping pace with and embodying the latest developments in history), the conceptual apparatus of liberalism:communitarianism was simply transferred onto the terrain of democratic theory. There it resides today, threatening to subsume the latter into just one more subdivision of the by-now-vast

and monotonously repetitive literature on liberalism, communitarianism, antiliberalism, and anticommunitarianism.

As democratic theorists, Phillips, Mouffe, Botwinick, Bridges, and Beiner (and some of Beiner's contributors) all allow the liberalism:communitarianism binary to frame their approaches to democratic theory and set off their discussions of alternative modes of approaching the politics of citizenship. Phillips (1993, 59), for example, posits the dilemma of democracy as a choice between "the kind of abstract theorizing that deduces principles of rights or justice from metaphysical assumptions" (that is, "liberalism"), on the one hand, and "a perspective that grounds our moral and political beliefs in the experience of specific communities" (that is, "communitarianism"), on the other. Beiner (1995, 13) introduces his book by noting the "competing perspectives" between the liberal, "emphasizing the individual, and the individual's capacity to transcend group or collective identity," and the communitarian, "emphasizing the cultural or ethnic group, solidarity among those sharing a history or tradition"—against which he offers a third "republican" alternative.

Mouffe, Bridges, and Botwinick each devote a chapter to the liberal:communitarian "debate" and presuppose the challenge to democracy in terms of the same tension that Phillips and Beiner respectively identify between the (atomized or deracinated) liberal individual and the constituted or culture-bound member of a (habituated) community. Thus, the "radical-liberal-democratic political philosophy" that Mouffe (1993, 112) ultimately defends is set off by the dominating opposition of "Kantian liberals and their communitarian critics," while Bridges (1994, 56 f.) situates his discussion of civic culture in terms of the "Lockean and Kantian varieties of modernist liberal political theory," on one side, and a "communitarian identity" that he links to Charles Taylor's ethics of authenticity, on the other. Although Botwinick (1993, 34) allows that certain features of the "worldwide postindustrial socioeconomic context" introduce an "element of artificiality" into the distinction, he also situates his discussion of democracy as a response to liberalism and communitarianism, the "two salient types of political theory of the 1990s," except that now Rawls (team L) and Sandel and MacIntyre (team C) substitute for Locke and Kant (team L) and Taylor (team C).[3]

In all of these works the formulaic binary liberalism:communitarianism has somehow managed to invade and structure the subject of citizen in democratic theory. The two amorphous posits of "the atomized liberal individual" and the "situated communitarian self" serve as categories into which diverse thinkers or texts, often from vastly different historical periods, can be pigeonholed or made ready stand-ins for one another (as in the mixing and matching within team L and team C, above). Through the use of this formulaic binary, then, the democratic theorists before us secure, organize, and articulate "democracy" by way of little more than a war of phrases (occasional bouts of hesitation and expressions of theoretical or conceptual concern notwithstanding).[4] As Marx ([1845] 1978, 149) once observed in the somewhat parallel case of the Young Hegelians, "They forget, however, that to these phrases they themselves are only opposing other phrases, and that they are in no way combating the real existing world when they are merely combating the phrases of this world."[5]

But we have yet to see an even more dubious consequence of this sort of theorizing by phraseology. In the texts before us, the problem is not just that the idea of democracy is resolved into the adversarial phraseology of liberalism:communitarianism. At least here the problem is still posed politically, insofar as the two categories mark, however elusively, the identity of the subject-as-citizen. The more dubious consequence involves a parasitical binary that feeds off the original but at the same time reduces the political entity "citizen" to the philosophical entity "subject" (Heidegger's *subiectum*) and leaches out the content of some basically political concepts (liberal, communitarian) so that they become, we might say, vacuously philosophical. The offending parasitical binary is universalism:particularism.

The introduction of the vacuous phraseology of universalism and particularism (which rarely rises to the level of any truly philosophical discourse) further depoliticizes democratic theory by beckoning a philosophical entity—the subject and its "identity"—to come hither. As such, it asserts a claim that Beiner (1995, 9) terms "post-modern": "the philosophical universalisms that we know from the canonical tradition of the West all involve what we might call a 'hegemonic function,' which is to suppress various particularistic identities." Botwinick (1993, 6) supports the same linkage between postmodernism and particularism (and against the "fixity of meaning," "foundationalism," or "ultimate positions"), and adds "in a certain sense, we might say that with postmodernism we are back in the world of tradition." Bridges (1994, 62 f.), too, appropriates the term "postmodern" in his call for a "postmodern civic culture" that "turn[s] away from the universalism of the modernist rhetoric of pure theory." In this arena, where democratic theorizing has now transmogrified into the subject matter of so-called postmodernist critiques of Western foundationalist metaphysics (or philosophy), the *subject's* identity is what is at stake: caught by the hegemon of Western (abstract) universalism, but open to the possibilities of a postmodern (concrete) particularism.

What are these suppressive Western philosophical, abstract "universalisms" that threaten the particular citizen-as-subject? The answer is not very clear, for like its originary binary, the universalism:particularism doublet serves in these formulations as a kind of portmanteau category into whose two compartments some very sweeping claims are thrown and then hurriedly transported from place to place. Bridges's book (1994, x), for example, is framed as a "civic" response to the "wreck" of the Enlightenment and contends that universalisms include an entire ominous "cultural vocabulary" whose claim "was to provide a purely universal language for a universal humanity, a language purged of all

perspectives grounded in particularistic religious belief and the accidents of local history." Exactly which thinkers formulated this Enlightenment Esperanto, in what theories or context(s), and with what implications, Bridges neither specifies nor grounds in any particularistic critique. Mouffe (1993, 56, 71) refers to a "universalistic, individualistic and natural-right type of discourse" that she associates with the (early) Rawls (1971); and she also mentions a "universal point of view, made equivalent to Reason and reserved to men" that is affiliated with "the liberal conception of citizenship"—but neither the philosophizing creators of the universal view nor the particular characteristics of the universal "R" are systematically studied or addressed.

A chapter in Phillips's book is entitled "Universal Pretensions in Political Thought." Phillips (1993, 55, 56, 71) links its topic to "Enlightenment thinking" and the "transcendent" and "abstract" universals of morality, justice, and rationality, as well as to "pretensions towards a universal truth or universal humanity." "The tendency toward universality," she reports (58), "sometimes crops up as unthinking assumption, sometimes as grand aspiration, but in either case it should be firmly resisted." Exactly whose pretensions she has in mind (not to mention whose justice or which rationality), and how any particular theorist or theory in the tradition of Western thought articulates these pretensions as all-encompassing, is not further articulated, specified, or particularized. Given the impassioned claims in these pages that the "false abstractions of citizenship must indeed be challenged" on other fronts (14), this lack of specificity concerning "universals" is puzzling. (And is the phrase "concrete specificity" never itself an abstraction?)

The negative posit of "the Enlightenment," insofar as it is linked to the (equally negative) posit of "universalism" and opposed to particularism, is common to all of these works. In contemporary political theory, as Phillips (1993, 56) remarks in a phrase that reflects the level to which the matter has sunk, "the Enlightenment has been getting itself a pretty bad name." In Bridges's book (1994, 109, 147, 15, 116, 213), the Enlightenment (now a "wreck" in "demise") is repeatedly polemicized in phrases like "the defunct cultural vocabulary and world view of the Enlightenment," "the totalizing character of modernist Enlightenment culture in general," and "the rationalist world view of the Enlightenment." The "cultural vehicle" of Western global hegemony, Bridges (ix) writes, "was the universalist and secularist world view of the Enlightenment," wherein "the concepts of reason and knowledge spoke with the same authority as Western bombs and machines." Given the excess and hyperbole of such remarks, I fear it may be too late to reissue Foucault's (1984a, 45, 43) warning that "we must free ourselves from the intellectual blackmail of 'being for or against the Enlightenment,'" and remember that "we do not break free of this blackmail by introducing 'dialectical' nuances while seeking to determine what good and bad elements there may have been in the Enlightenment."

Whatever the term "Western universalism" and its accomplice "the Enlightenment" have come to mean, the verdict on them is more or less unanimous across these works: "Universalism is merely the cover for an imperialistic particularism" (Beiner 1995, 9), and itself "a form of Western cultural particularism" (Bridges 1994, xi), as well as "an obstacle in the path of understanding those new forms of politics" (Mouffe 1993, 11) that compel us to recognize that "multiple differences have become the focus of the day" (Phillips 1993, 145). Thus, a problem emerges that Beiner (1995, 12) identifies as follows: "So we are left with two competing visions—liberal universalism and antiliberal particularism—both of which tend to subvert, from opposing directions, the idea of a civic community. . . . Lying at the heart of this dilemma is what I would call the 'universalism/particularism conundrum.'" Mouffe (1993, 13) dons the same suit and calls for "a new kind of articulation between the universal and the particular"; Phillips (1993, 58, 51) seeks "a more middle route" between "abstract impartiality" and "concrete specificity"; and Bridges (1994, 6, 159, 34) wants to shift away from "the universalism and essentialism characteristic of the doctrinal claims of modernist liberalism" and toward a "rhetorical concept" that recognizes "particularistic cultural communities." Botwinick's (1993, 55) defense of a "postmodernist liberal communitarianism" is framed in terms of a skeptical, "generalized-agnostic" epistemological model that is itself an alternative to objectivist universals on the one hand, and relativist particulars on the other.

What is going on? If I understand them correctly, all of these theorists have resolved the contemporary crises of democracy and the problem of citizenship into two things: (1) a matter concerning the identity of the subject (as framed by the philosophical binary of universalism:particularism), and (2) a task requiring the mediation, reconciliation, synthesis, or transcendence of the tension between individualism, equality, and liberty, on the one hand, and collectivity, community, and group membership, on the other (as framed by the political binary of liberalism:communitarianism). The role of theory in this enterprise is to settle or renegotiate the (artificially created) tension between the two (conceptually constructed) "traditions," by way of an alternative epistemology (Botwinick), language (Mouffe), vision (Beiner), route (Phillips), or vocabulary (Bridges). Thus, the task, as Mouffe (1993, 62) puts it, "is not that of replacing one tradition with the other but rather of drawing on both and trying to combine their insights in a new conception of citizenship adequate to a project of radical and plural democracy."

Next, I want to consider the five particular positions (in Phillips, Mouffe, Botwinick, Bridges, and Beiner) that emanate out of the generic-collective exer- of theorizing democracy as the transformative reconciliation of the oppositional binaries liberalism:communitarianism and universalism: particularism.

Democracy as Synthesis

Truth, in the great practical concerns of life, is so much a question of the reconciling and combining of opposites, that very few have minds sufficiently capacious and impartial to make the adjustment with an approach to correctness, and it has to be made by the rough process of a struggle between combatants fighting under hostile banners.

—John Stuart Mill

Iris Marion Young was one of the first theorists to underscore the complexities that identity, expressions of identity, and "group differentiation" pose for what she calls the "ideal of universal citizenship" (her influential essay "Polity and Group Difference: A Critique of the Ideal of Universal Citizenship" [1989] is reprinted in Beiner). Young (in Beiner 1995, 184) is interested in specifying a citizen politics that moves beyond the abstraction of "citizenship" as a universal ideal and toward certain principles that call for "a group differentiated citizenship and a heterogeneous public," within which the multiple differences and diverse perspectives of previously excluded others might be recognized, affirmed, and represented. She is, therefore, one of the first thinkers to contribute the concepts of "heterogeneity, diversity, and group difference"—in Walzer's terms, "a new sensitivity for what is local, specific, contingent" (Beiner 1995, 174)—to contemporary democratic theory. These ideas have now taken shape as part of a complex of elements that might be called the democratic theorist's working answer to the question "what does it mean to be on the left today?" (Mouffe 1993, 9). The working answer is: the new pluralism.[6] In brief, the new pluralism issues from combining, reconciling, or adding together the liberal's defense of equality and liberty and the communitarian's respect for particularities, cultures, and histories in a way that simultaneously circumvents both the laissez-faire detachment of the "atomized individual" and the custodial attachment of the "moral community" in the name of "individual difference" and "cultural heterogeneity."

Phillips (1993, 5) and Mouffe (1993, 131) appeal to (the new) pluralism in the wake of the disarray of European socialism, and as something that "actively celebrates heterogeneity and difference" and is (now) nothing less than "the whole question of modern democracy." Their works are animated by a set of sociological values captured in the term "difference": the multiplicity of individuals as social agents, the diversity of social relations, and the heterogeneity of society. Both Phillips and Mouffe contend that the assertion of these values is central to the project of escaping liberalism's universalizing tendencies.[7] Indeed, Phillips's various essays (on socialism, liberalism, consociationalism, and feminism) ultimately circulate around the same theme and the same phenomenon: "the recuperation of pluralism" as "the growing emphasis on the political significance of sub-groups that are defined through gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexuality, language and so on" (Beiner 1995, 144). Phillips (77, 71) compliments feminism for "redefining the political" in ways that "warn against the fruitless pursuit of a genuinely degendered universal" and guide us toward "a greater emphasis on sexual and other kinds of difference." Mouffe (1993, 13, 12) also acknowledges feminism's "unmasking of the particularism hiding behind . . . universal ideals" and dismisses the modern "rationalist concept of the unitary subject" as a "homogeneous and unified" entity, in favor of a theory that demands 'that we acknowledge difference—the particular, the multiple, the heterogeneous—in effect, everything that had been excluded by the concept of Man in the abstract."

Yet, Phillips and Mouffe also point to inadequacies in Young's formulation of group differentiation that ultimately liberalize their respectively pluralistic concepts of democracy and thereby distance them from Young's. Hence, Phillips (1993, 117) notes that Young's concept of differentiated citizenship tends to dislodge if not obliterate "the older language of civic republicanism" and the idea of a broader polity that encompasses without erasing individual groups.[8] Mouffe (1993, 86, 12, 87) persuasively charges that despite its apparent radicalism, Young's view of politics is static and immobile, insofar as it begins "with already constituted interests and identities," and thereby precludes the true aim of a radical democratic citizenship: the "construction of a common political identity" at the intersection of a "multiplicity of subject positions" and "various struggles against oppression."[9]

Even as they advocate pluralism, then, and the proliferation of particularities, heterogeneity, and difference, Phillips and Mouffe are concerned to bring to democracy some political principle that will, as Mouffe (1993, 57) writes, combine the defence of pluralism and the priority of right characteristic of modern democracy with a revalorization of the political understood as collective participation in a public sphere." The problem, as Phillips (1993, 160) es it, is "how to generate *that more comprehensive understanding* that validates the worth of each group" (emphasis added). Universal is out, comprehensive is in. The comprehensive political principles that Phillips and Mouffe recommend are derived from the very doctrine whose universal "philosophy of man" (Mouffe 1993, 150) they otherwise seek so strenuously to suppress: the liberal principle of political equality (Phillips 1993, 160) and the principles of the "liberal democratic regime," namely, liberty and equality (Mouffe 1993, 150). Thus, the reconciliatory project that is "the new pluralism" issues, for both Phillips and Mouffe, in something like a defense of heterogeneity, difference, and diversity in the name of a liberalism that is political, not metaphysical. Under "the new pluralism" in academia, it appears that the liberal convict being rehabilitated. By contrast, in the aftermath of Clintonite "new progressivism," the convict was not just apparently condemned to death but was ctually, as Wolin (1996b, 23) observes, "volunteering its own epitaph."[10]

Amid all of this combining and reconciling of opposites, one may well

ask: What has happened to democracy as a *politics*? Phillips's essays provide an instructive example of how the exercise of balancing binary oppositions, no matter how skillfully undertaken, can persistently impede the enterprise of theorizing politics, especially if the oppositions are taken as givens. For despite her repeated assertion that "the questions of democracy and difference are ones that lie at the heart of contemporary dilemmas in democracy," Phillips (1993, 117, 71) registers rather than resolves the difficulties of defending "a politics of greater generality and alliance" on one hand, and a politics of difference on the other. The reason for this, I think, has to do with her appreciation of some of the real dilemmas that face contemporary social movements rooted in the common yet divisive identifications of race, class, and gender that today preoccupy theorists of cultural pluralism. But Phillips's difficulties with resolution also involve her ambivalence about feminism (and feminist theory), which she positions in organized opposition to liberalism (and liberal theory) and about which she is equally ambivalent. In her account (66, 114), feminist particularism opposes liberal universalism, feminist difference opposes liberal equality, "female specificity" opposes "male abstraction," a feminist politics of participation opposes liberal democracy, and all of these oppositions presuppose a philosophy of subjectivity rooted in the terms of the by now familiar binary of women:men.

As we have seen, Phillips (1993, 71, 52) clearly wants to counter liberal universalism and abstraction with a politics of difference, but she wants to defend universality, abstraction, and liberal democracy, too. She also raises cautionary flags about the potential excesses of celebrating "femininity or female values" (160, 138) and radical forms of particularism. As a result, the chapters in her book keep getting caught between the very oppositions that they identify in contemporary political and feminist theory, and trapped in rhetorical cul-de-sacs that empty out in the form of mere exhortations to move beyond "either/or" (64) and search for a "middle ground" (67). It is not surprising, then, that Phillips's most decisive theoretical expressions are framed in the face of dual alternatives and alternate, ambivalently, between claims like "We need both the one and the other" (51) and we must "[recognize] difficult choices between what may be equally desirable but perhaps incompatible ends" (129).

Mouffe's new pluralism is more conceptually innovative and politically satisfying than Phillips's, partly because it refuses to begin where Phillips's feminism does—with fixed identities like "female specificity" and "male abstraction" that in turn give rise to "false dilemma[s]" (1993, 78) like "equality versus difference," that are difficult to escape. Whatever Mouffe's regard for "difference" as an aspect of collective identities, she wisely does not subscribe to the "difference" or "standpoint" feminism that appears to guide Phillips's thinking and assumes the given-ness of that other seemingly intractable sex-differentiated binary opposition: male and female. Mouffe (78) challenges the prior posit of "sexual difference" (and similar kinds of presupposed bifurcated signifiers) by posing instead the notion of a "multiplicity of social relations in which sexual difference is always constructed in very diverse ways and where the struggle against subordination has to be visualized in specific and differential forms." Her pluralism thereby begins with the reality of activity and struggle, or what she calls "the constitutive role of antagonism" (2) in political life. Social activity and political struggle construct identity (or "differentiated positions"); identity-as-such does not construct social activity. The advantage of this "agonistic pluralism" (4) is that it allows Mouffe to frame modern democracy as a context of antagonism, conflict, and struggle, and to ask a decisively political question about the sorts of institutions, practices, and structures that can channel democracy's "agonistic dynamic" (6), without evading, repressing, submerging, or obliterating "the ineluctability of antagonism" (7).

Mouffe's attunement to conflict, struggle, and politics as a world of combatants fighting under hostile banners thus appears to give her a way to theorize democracy and citizenship without constructing or presupposing the systematic support of the constant notational principle of liberalism:communitarianism. Yet, in political theorizing, as in political life, one should not underestimate the need for constants and the desire for reconciliation, even among thinkers who are otherwise not afraid to acknowledge the contingency of human affairs and the flux of politics. The desire for reconciliation in the face of flux might explain the tendency at the level of Mouffe's theorizing to oscillate between a (radical) account of democracy grounded in the rough process of struggle and antagonism and a (reformist) account of democracy attuned to the reassuring constant liberalism:communitarianism. The second point is where Mouffe (drawing upon both Quentin Skinner and Michael Oakeshott) seeks "a way of conceiving liberty which . . . includes political participation and civic virtue" (63), and therefore rejects the "false dichotomy between individual liberty and political community" (65). But it is at precisely this second point—where the binary conceptual picture reasserts itself—that Mouffe offers the illusion of a reconciled liberal communitarianism[11] as though it could be the real basis for the very politics that (at the other end of the oscillation) her agnostic pluralism declares resistant "to a final resolution of conflicts" (8) and the comforting presence of some underlying norm of reality. The theorist's need to reconcile oppositional givens thereby overcomes the theorist's recognition of the intractability of politics to any permanent solutions or final "adjustments."

In short, Mouffe's new pluralism is as vulnerable to the presence of presupposed opposites demanding reconciliation as is Phillips's, although in a different and more interesting way. For Mouffe's reconciliatory impulses are in struggle with her agonistic impulses; they constantly dilute her politics of antagonism (a volatile brew of Machiavelli and Carl Schmitt) with the pacifying additives of (an equally diluted) Rawlsian liberalism and Aristotelian republicanism.[12] To be sure, Mouffe's combinative theorizing goes somewhere;

there is a resolution to these efforts that is entirely lacking in Phillips. Yet, there is also a difference between a theory that is "sufficiently capacious" to absorb antipodes and one that is so accommodating that it loses its substance. The watery mixture that Mouffe (1993, 112) ultimately recommends comes closer to the latter and betrays itself by the very name that she is honest enough to give it: "a radical-liberal-democratic political philosophy."

Democracy as Solution

> *Once upon a time a valiant fellow had the idea that men were drowned in water only because they were possessed with the idea of gravity. If they were to knock this notion out of their heads, say by stating it to be a superstition, a religious concept, they would be sublimely proof against any danger from water. . . . This honest fellow was the type of the new revolutionary philosopher.*
>
> —Karl Marx

"What I am searching for under the title of citizenship," writes Ronald Beiner (1995, 8) "is an elusive middle term between opposing alternatives that I find unacceptable." Beiner's search ends with the promissory note of a mediatory republicanism of "civic bonds" (14) and "robust civic involvement" (19), but it begins with a visit to "post-modernism," which he summarizes as the theory that "*all* social reality is untranscendably local, plural, fragmentary, episodic, and infinitely rearrangeable" (9). Although Beiner's visit to postmodernism elicits the by-now-predictable, quasi-philosophical condemnation of universalism and Western rationalism (9), it is unproductive politically, since he maintains a healthy suspicion that "the more citizens become fixated on cultural differences within the political community, the more difficult it becomes to sustain an experience of common citizenship" (10). I doubt that it is coincidental that the Canadian Beiner, as well as the Canadians Ignatieff, Kymlicka, and Norman, all problemize rather than celebrate the prospects of "difference" and multicultural rights in a way that leaves them self-conscious about "the difficulty of conceptualizing the experience of citizenship" (Beiner 1995, 15) and uncertain about "what we can expect from a 'theory of citizenship'" (Kymlicka and Norman in Beiner 1995, 309) even if they have one to recommend.

No equivalent hesitations trouble the respective theoretical projects of the Americans Bridges and Botwinick. Unlike Beiner, both Bridges and Botwinick find in postmodernism a new, even revolutionary, philosophy that promises to help us assess the transformation of "modernist political society" into "postmodernist political society" (Botwinick 1993, 14) and the development of a "postmodernist civic culture" (Bridges 1994, 59, 114).[13] The question of whether postmodernism can live up to this promise notwithstanding, both Botwinick's and Bridges's rhetorical appropriation of it—as a unitary justificatory term and a solid legitimating category—is a sign of how even the most unruly and disparate theoretical positions are susceptible to homogenization-by-phraseology. Nowhere is postmodernism's incipient demotion signaled more decisively, however, than in the name of the general project both Botwinick and Bridges want to undertake. The general project reintroduces that by-now-familiar binary to which both Botwinick and Bridges grant lexical authority and into whose service they commend "postmodernism." For Botwinick (1993, 170, 57, 55), the project is directed toward "a coalescence (or merging) between liberalism and at least some forms of communitarianism," indeed toward a "postmodernist liberal communitarianism." For Bridges (1994, 57, 35), the project requires "lay[ing] the basis for a postmodern liberal democratic civic culture" that effects a "balancing act" between "two opposing standpoints," namely, the citizen's communitarian identity (shaped by "particularistic values") and his or her civic identity (as a free and equal individual).

The notion that Bridges (1994, 112, 103, 29) wants us to knock out of our heads, in the name of his postmodern liberal democratic civic culture—or simply a "postmodern civic culture"—is something he calls "modernist liberal political theory" and "modernist liberal doctrines." Following doggedly along the path already marked by Sandel (whom he never mentions),[14] Bridges (27, 101) argues that modernist liberal doctrine issued out of Lockean and Kantian liberal "types," "varieties," or "versions." It was shored up philosophically by (the early) Rawls (63) and relentlessly reinforced by "modernist liberal civic culture" (58). Modernist liberalism perpetuates an "essentialist interpretation" of citizenship that promulgates a myth of the free individual who is "unencumbered" by "membership in particularistic ethnic, class, or religious communities" (37). It mistakenly and modernistically grants priority to the right over the good and the universal over the particular (62, 51).

Bridges (1994, 141, 62) proposes to free us from the totalizing worldview of modernist liberal doctrine by summoning a "postmodern liberalism" that, in its "teleological" and "de-totalizing" modes, affirms "the ideal of citizenship as a particularistic moral ideal capable of giving life particularistic content and direction." This postmodern ideal is something that is augured, although not achieved, on the "new cognitive ground" of Rawls's *Political Liberalism* (1993), where "a concept of liberal morality [is] validated by a constructivist procedure" (Bridges 1994, 141). If Rawls is now "recommending his liberal theory to us on communitarian grounds," as Botwinick (1993, 48) succinctly puts it, then this is a move that Bridges wishes to endorse. Rawls's unfinished "rhetorical turn" is what Bridges (52, 125, 148) seeks to augment in the name of "a postmodern version of liberal doctrine" whose rhetorical aim is to "establish clearly the cultural limits of the public sphere."

Now, postmodernism may be a cat with nine lives, but when it is sum-

moned in the name of Rawls (even a constructivist, rhetorical Rawls), one can be pretty sure that this dog won't hunt. Bridges's postmodern prospects are doomed to defeat on conceptual and methodological grounds. "The project of inventing a postmodern civic culture," he declares (114), "is the project of inventing [a] new vocabulary [of citizenship]." Bridges undertakes this project against a background that he identifies in terms of the oppositional dualism between a (nearly dead) "modernist liberal civic culture," on the one hand, and a (nascent) "postmodern civic culture," on the other. His search for "rhetorical resources" (99) then proceeds at the level of conceptualization by way of multiplying many more dualisms, including modernist metaphysical liberalism versus political or rhetorical liberalism (115); the civic ethics of authenticity versus the civic ethics of autonomy (88); civic moral ideals as "secondary" moral language versus communitarian moral ideals as "primary" moral language (89, 122); the rhetorical turn versus the teleological turn (88, 160); civic freedom versus civic good; and civic friendship versus communitarian solidarity (241).

Full cultural citizenship in liberal democratic civic culture, Bridges (1994, 94, 124 f.) argues, requires a person "to develop the capacity to make a distinction between *communitarian identity* and *civic identity*," between the "*accidental*" and the "*humanly essential,*" while at the same time aiming to achieve "a balance of forces" between the "totalizing" drives of *communitarian* culture and the "detotalizing resources" of *civic* culture. Citizens must learn "to desire civic freedom . . . as a component of the civic good" (175), but the *communitarian good* is "comprehensive" while the *civic good* is merely "partial" (238). The citizen's civic duty "to cultivate equally both civility and communitarian solidarity can thus seem to be self-defeating," Bridges (250 f.) admits, and "to require the development and reconciliation of hopelessly contradictory and mutually undermining normative standpoints." Nevertheless, such reconciliation amounts to nothing less than a "civic obligation" (264). Bridges recommends "a Christian community" as a model for all other cultural communities who strive to cultivate "civic freedom and civic justice" through "life-narrational equalization" (264).

My purpose in recounting the veritable Noah's Ark of twosomes that populate Bridges's reconciliatory project and relentlessly organize his argument is to underscore an obvious but nonetheless telling characteristic of the mode of theorizing that completely defeats the so-called postmodern purpose of his book. To put the matter bluntly, Bridges's theorizing is fixated upon dualisms that proliferate out of the Ur-binary of liberalism (in the form of the concept of "civic identity") and communitarianism (in the form of the concept of "communitarian identity"). It is also seized, as the liberal:communitarian mentality almost always is, by the possibility of mastering these dualisms through the achievement of a harmonious synthesis of them. In the (oxymoronic) name of a "teleological postmodernism," Bridges (114) calls forth a "new vocabulary of citizenship" that "will be shaped by concepts of liberal moral ideals that emphasize their cultural particularism and their partial nature." But what lurks behind this supposedly "new vocabulary" is nothing new, much less anything "postmodern" at all. Here we find the same old dualistic vocabulary recirculating and reasserting itself, assuaging the theorist's urge for mastery-by-synthesis and producing yet another rendition of the persistent liberalism:communitarianism theme: A + B = C. Thus, even as Bridges (210) advises that "to attain full cultural citizenship, persons must learn to break open closed cultural worlds," his theorizing remains so utterly closed to breaking open the prison of his binary conceptual world that it seems indeed "sublimely proof," as Marx had it, against the danger of thinking politics at all.

Like Bridges, Botwinick is interested in plotting the transition between modern and postmodern society. But *Postmodernism and Democratic Theory* offers a far more copiously developed version of the new revolutionary philosophy under the claim of an "epistemological model" that reflects a "consistent pragmatism" or a "generalized agnosticism" (23). Construed "postmodernistically," as opposed to modernistically, Botwinick (1993, 32) serts, "postmodernism in the sense of a generalized agnosticism enables us to withdraw instantaneously from our skeptical and relativist affirmations . . . and thus to be consistently skeptical and relativist." An attitude of generalized gnosticism "affirms everything it denies and denies everything it affirms" (31). Combining philosophical insights from Quine, Davidson, and Nagel, Botwinick appears to construct generalized agnosticism into the following complex of epistemological elements: (1) a preoccupation with "the middle" that continually defers the fixity of meaning and therefore "recoils before any particular version of reality"; (2) an acceptance of circularity (our conclusions have no alternative but to replicate our premises); (3) an attitude of "consistent kepticism" that is itself skeptical of skepticism as a consistent scheme; and (4) a rejection of the *explanadum-explanans* distinction that is linked to a view that gns "philosophical centrality" to language rather than to "reality in the large ens ," or to causal factors in the world (6, 33).

Botwinick does not want to knock a notion out of our heads so much as formulate the sort of notion we should take toward what is in our heads. His in ntive construction and defense of generalized agnosticism delivers a kind of all-purpose "unitary epistemological model" (117) that is simultaneously dvanced as a comprehensive worldview (characterized by openness and the ptance of uncertainty); a political theory (linked to the practice of participatory democracy); and a critical hermeneutics deployed on a range of theorists from Rousseau, Habermas, and Strauss to Freud, Wittgenstein, and Lyotard chapters 4–9). As a critical hermeneutics, generalized agnosticism queries how rious theorists grapple with skepticism and relativism, assesses the nature of reflexivity (or "the requirement to be utterly consistent") in their writings, and nsiders the implications these matters have for their politics (90–91).

Although Botwinick offers some insightful, if debatable, secondary interpretations of the theorists he addresses (including an attempt to read Leo Strauss as a liberal democrat), these chapters do not do much to shore up his initial and expressly political assertion in the name of democratic theory, that a generalized-agnostic approach provides "an epistemological backdrop in which the naturalness and inevitableness of [political] participation . . . seem especially persuasive and compelling" (54). It is to this claim that I wish to return, for here Botwinick moves generalized agnosticism to the field of action and appears to be prepared at least to gesture toward the conditions and limitations of a "participatory and procedural" democratic politics in the real existing (that is, democratizing) world, without succumbing to the constraints of vacant conceptual distinctions and the deflections of philosophical binaries (5).

Despite these good intentions, however, Botwinick does not get there. Tellingly, his consistent skeptical (generalized-agnostic) approach, which is so assiduously constructed at the levels of epistemological formulation and hermeneutical deployment, deserts him when he shifts to theorizing actual (democratic) politics. I think this is because Botwinick's concept of participatory democracy is framed by what he calls the meeting of "two salient types of political theory in the 1990s" (34)—and there is no need, by now, to belabor the obvious. "The convergence of the epistemological limitations of liberalism and communitarianism," Botwinick (34) writes, "leads to primacy being assigned to participatory democracy as overcoming these limitations" (34). Generalized agnosticism is thus deemed to "be suggestive of a coalescence (or merging) between liberalism and at least some forms of communitarianism. . . . It might suggest a participatory democratic society" (170). The epistemological model thus arrives on the scene at an opportune "historical" moment of a "convergence," "coalescence," or "merging" between liberalism and communitarianism (57). What generalized agnosticism offers is a way for us to think ourselves through this convergence, into the new revolutionary mentality of a "postmodernist liberal communitarianism" (55) that carries with it a "real-world analogue" of "political participation" (89, 59).[15]

The idea that a participatory democratic society might emerge out of a generalized-agnostic approach to the theoretical coalescence of liberalism and communitarianism seems to me extremely problematic for at least two reasons. First, its underlying premise holds that once we get our epistemology right (even if it is an epistemology that harbors no illusions about getting anything right), we will get our *praxis* and our politics right. Botwinick registers this intellectualist assumption when he anticipates the "real-world analogue" of participatory democracy that will be forwarded by "epistemological investigations" that unearth the "deep continuities" between liberalism and communitarianism (57). We are now on the ground of complex questions concerning the relations among philosophy, political theory, and politics that I

cannot address here, and Botwinick is well aware of them. He acknowledges that "there is an inescapable move from 'pragmatism' to 'theory' and 'logic,'" if only for purposes of exposing their limitations and underscoring the virtues of pragmatism. "It is a question," he writes (31), "simply of what we want to leave hanging—whether pragmatism without foundations or theorizing that opens a gap between thinking and reality." Botwinick quite consciously chooses to go the latter route. Nevertheless, I think it highly improbable that a "logic" (31), even a sophisticated "multivalued logic" (69), can be fashioned for politics from Botwinick's call for "the suspension of the law of the excluded middle" and the "legitimizing of circularity" (69, 33). "The final term of a political logic," as Sheldon Wolin (1960, 65) observes in reference to Plato, "is not *q.e.d.*, because finality is the most elusive quality of a political solution." I submit that this insight holds for any attempt formally to "epistemologize" politics, no matter how open to fluidity the epistemology may be.

Second, I find Botwinick's generalized-agnostic approach to participatory democracy problematic because its political significance is nullified by a mundane but devastating fact: in the name of participatory *praxis*, the substantial epistemological apparatus of generalized agnosticism is placed in the service of the reductive formulation "liberalism *and* communitarianism" that bears about as much connection to political reality as refusing to believe in gravity bears to never drowning in water. At least Plato's Forms, built on an even more substantial epistemological apparatus and born of an even more resolute determination to order politics through epistemology, were mobilized in response to the real crisis of disintegrating concepts in everyday Athenian political discourse. The only "crisis" to which Botwinick's generalized agnosticism responds (and from which his participatory democracy issues) is that of a manufactured struggle between phrases that have precious little connection to anything except a narrow slice of the world of academic political theory discourse.

Oddly enough, Botwinick presents his epistemological model as an alternative to the very "false dichotomizations and distortions of . . . diverse arguments" that his concept of participatory democracy ends up presupposing under the dichotomy liberalism and communitarianism (xii). When even a theorist as self-reflexive, agnostic, and suspicious of dualisms as Botwinick uncritically accepts the construct "liberalism *and* communitarianism" as a starting point for theorizing democracy, we can be sure that this "false dichotomization" is hegemonic in our field. The consequences of recapitulating this dichotomy are not trivial for theorizing democracy. At the very least, the repeated invocation of this binary category effectively blocks access to the kind of freely creative, intellectually adventurous, and conceptually versatile explorations of politics that mark both first-order contributions to democratic theory of the sort we find, for example, in Tocqueville or Mill, as well as in superb critical reappraisals of historical and contemporary thought. Compare, for example, the historical richness of John Dunn's interpretation of Locke, or

the interpretive astuteness of Patrick Riley's studies of Kant, or the careful precision of Thomas McCarthy's recent commentaries on Rawls, to the polemics on Locke, Kant, and Rawls that so often masquerade today under the title of "liberal and communitarian theory."

Moreover, the fixation upon liberal:communitarian threatens to turn "democracy" into little more than the third factor of an *already* reductive conceptual binary that *already* suppresses the real problems involved in theorizing contemporary democratic social and political life rather than posing and specifying them. Making "democracy" the final term in a (now) trinary relationship requires the "combination" of dualisms at the level of concepts, the "convergence" of oppositions at the level of action, the "reconciliation" of contrary impulses at the level of psychology, and the "coalescence" of partisan standpoints at the level of politics. This triangularizing operation, insofar as it culminates in the resolution of previously supposed contraries, seduces us into believing that "having it all" is what democracy (and equality) are about—a belief that Tocqueville brilliantly assessed as one of the essential elements of, and the chief dangers in thinking among, democratic peoples. Conceptual triangularization also invites us into viewing democracy as some sort of "solution": the answer to our political ills, the achievement of the "center," the apex of bipartisan interaction, perhaps even the triumph of a progressive sort of "localism," if not the political moment that finally approximates in a politics of meaning as perfectly deliberative discourse.

But this notion of democracy as bipartisan solution is nothing but a mystification. Its promise of combination and reconciliation represents the fantasy of a nonideological stance from which politics can pursue "consensus" by means of "conversation."[16] Its promise of convergence invites the illusion of politics as a condition of finality and a state of being wherein, at long last, "we can all just get along." And its promise of coalescence does more to pacify and subdue the citizen than it does to specify democracy as a problem to be posed, and thereby engaged, by citizens themselves. Ultimately, of course, the fantasy states that accompany the triangular political theorizing of democracy also do much to secure the position of the powerful, especially, perhaps, those who are in positions powerful enough to make triangularization itself a practice of politics.

Democracy as Security

> *From a disputation. A: My friend, you have talked yourself hoarse.*
> *B: Then I stand refuted. Let us not discuss the matter any further.*
> —Friedrich Nietzsche

Let us dispense, then, with A and B. What would an analysis of democracy that did not theorize by binary look like? Zolo's work, which he characterizes as a "realistic approach," is one such example. *Democracy and Complexity* hearkens back to the "essential lesson" of the first generation of democratic pluralists in political science, as well as to Machiavelli, Hobbes, Weber, and the Italian elitists, namely, "that the salient characteristic of all political decision-making is its lack of impartiality, and the randomness of its morality" (ix). Zolo (1992, ix) thus eschews the entire train of contemporary theorizing that he finds represented in Habermas and Rawls, who are themselves the heirs of "the ethico-political prescription of classical democracy in the old European tradition." He is as unmoved by the ontology of rationality, the moral autonomy of the individual, and the concept of the sovereign subject as are the critics of liberalism. But he is also seemingly unswayed by the promises and possibilities of postmodernism or the new pluralism, or any "academic exercises incapable ever of making the transition from paper to reality" (73). The latter category appears to include a vast array of doctrines (including radical democracy and all forms of socialism), and thinkers (for example, Arendt, Macpherson, Barber, Pateman, and Poulantzas), whose "alternative models" are judged in light of "the increase of differentiation and social complexity in modern democracy" and found wanting (62).

Instead, Zolo proposes to rethink democracy by relocating it in the "neo-classical doctrine" of political science and reexamining its fortunes, particularly as they were defined in the theories of Schumpeter, Lipset, Dahl, Plamenatz, Aron, and Sartori. Presumably, this is a route to reality.[17] With this task in mind, he offers an effective crash course in the "descriptive" theory of democratic government for theorists who want to brush up on the so-called empirical theory of democracy that continues to play a leading role in political science. But Zolo is not out to engage in an exercise in nostalgia or a mere reaffirmation of neoclassical doctrine. His realistic approach appreciates certain basic premises of (Schumpeterian) political pluralism, including a "minimalist" definition of democracy that places its focus on the competitive nature of the procedure for access to political power, and an emphasis upon the function of leadership (or "elites"), while at the same time decisively rejecting the "epistemological fiction" of Schumpeter's neopositivist methodology (84).

Yet in the end, the neoclassicists really fare no better in Zolo's estimation than the defenders of direct or classical democracy. Despite the staying power of the theories of Schumpeter and his fellow revisionists, they are plagued by an "insufficient realism" that is aggravated by a defunct model of the polyarchic political market (113). The upholders of democratic pluralism, Zolo (150) argues, "can be seen today to be just as ambiguous, rudimentary and unrealistic as, fifty years ago, the classical liberal-democratic doctrine appeared to Schumpeter." The reason for this gets to the heart of Zolo's critique: in general terms, Schumpeter's weak realistic analysis does not take "clear note" of the "eclipse of citizenship" in modern technological societies, especially in the context of "the massive increase of the means of mass communication" (152–153). Zolo's particular call, then, is neither for a new pluralism nor an adventurous post-

modernism but rather for political philosophy to "turn its most central attention to the political effects of mass-media communication," and the problems raised by communication research (153). Under the Machiavellian title "the principality of communication," Zolo (156) begins the task of assessing the long-term political effects of the means of mass communication that are the agencies "not simply of political socialization, but also . . . of the production and social distribution of knowledge."

Unlike Marx's valiant fellow, Zolo believes in gravity. The "democratic system" is pervaded by the relentless processes by which media communication is produced, the subterranean operation of procedures that govern the forces of communication, and the heavy, distorting effects of the "functional code" that is the medium of electronic communication (159). These threats to citizenship are far beyond what Kelly calls "the expansion of the empirical state" (in Beiner 1995, 93). Instead of leading to new modes of participatory democracy—a kind of electronic agora—the new techniques of interactive communication (teleconferencing, automated feedback programs, two-way cable television, and so on) have served a "narcotizing dysfunction" whereby the "cognitive differential" between transmitting agents and receiving subjects multiplies rather than diminishes (166–167). In Zolo's world, the subject is as decentered and as detotalized as it is in Mouffe's, but with this significant difference: it is constructed not at an intersection of "new identities" but rather at an intersection of telematic forms, media forces, and symbolized stimuli that are generating something akin to an "anthropological mutation" in human affairs (170).

In this world, democracy is not a question of the recognition of differences, the celebration of heterogeneity, or the proliferation of "life-narratives"—we should be so lucky. The gravitational pull that long-term exposure to the media exerts upon the average citizen has induced, Zolo effectively argues (170), "narcosis, cognitive dependence, dissociation and 'political silence.'" The question is: What is to be done? Can a democratic polity, where narcotized, dissociated individuals learn to act as citizens, be extracted from a complex democratic "system" of the sort Zolo describes? Given the ubiquity of the power frameworks and media effects that constitute the internal dynamics of complex modern social systems and subsystems, it seems unlikely. Given the "external risks" of demographic explosion; mass movements of populations and the racist reactions they provoke; disparities among rich "democratic" and poor nondemocratic countries; the diffusion of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons; terrorism; ecological disequilibrium; and the persistence of a myriad of military threats, it seems almost impossible (178).

In the wake of such global circumstances, the only "fresh perspective" Zolo (181) can offer to theory is a model of the political system as "a social structure which fulfils the essential function of reducing fear through the selective regulation of social risks." This Parsonian spin on Hobbes may be

realistic, but it is hardly very edifying. Under its spell, we might anticipate, as Zolo does (181), the "dissolution" of Aristotelian political philosophy, as well as the end of the "organicistic and consensualistic model" of political community, which, he adds, "today is reduced to being the object of the futile academic nostalgia of the North American 'communitarians.'" But what do we get in return? A conception that ties democracy's crucial "promise" to "the protection of social complexity against the functional predominance of any particular subsystem" (182), and its "laical functions" to the "organization of particular interests, the mediation of conflicts, the guarantee of security and the protection of civil rights" (180). In this vision of gravity without grace (including the grace that marks the civic *virtù* of that other Machiavellian, the republican citizen), Zolo has produced a democracy effectively devoid of an action context of citizen politics and subordinated to the demands of security, administration, and organization. Perhaps, looking squarely into the face of the future, this is the price that a realistic approach to democracy must pay. But that is neither an excuse to return to the false blandishments of comforting phrases nor an invitation to deceive ourselves about realism's costs.