

Agonized liberalism

The liberal theory of William E. Connolly

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‘Democracy’ in the discourse of the ‘Free West’ does not carry the same meaning as it does when we speak of ‘popular-democratic’ struggle or of deepening the democratic content of political life. We cannot allow the term to be wholly expropriated.... Instead, we need to develop a strategy of contestation around the term itself.

Stuart Hall

In the last two decades, William E. Connolly has emerged as a significant figure in American academic political theory by framing his theoretical reflections on identity, difference and politics in terms of a ‘reworking of the democratic imagination’.¹ The novelty of these reflections mostly resides in his combination of post-structuralist motifs with the traditional concerns of Anglo-American liberal theory. Meanwhile, the radical/critical import of his reflections has been taken for granted both tacitly and explicitly, to the extent that one of his essays even found a home in the pages of this journal.² Connolly has simultaneously insisted that he is contributing to both the liberal and the democratic imaginations. Yet in his writings the compatibility of these two traditions is never addressed, let alone questioned. Rather, Connolly has constantly moved, almost interchangeably, from one to the other.

I shall argue that the tension between these two traditions emerges in his writings in a particularly revealing way. This tension raises several important questions about the status of democracy in liberal theory and in Connolly’s particular contribution. What is the role of democracy and liberalism in Connolly’s theoretical reflections? What, if any, are the possibilities of democratic renewal that his various formulations open up or foreclose? What limits does Connolly’s commitment to liberalism impose on his conception of democracy? By addressing these questions, this article presents a critical engagement with Connolly’s writings in relation to his professed adherence to democracy. Before I proceed, I shall state some of

the assumptions of this article in order to clarify the stakes of the argument.

Liberal democracy is awash with promises of freedom and equality but it is incapable of realizing them. This impossibility is largely due to the contradictions between the terms the formula pairs together. Their coupling in the formula *liberal democracy* notwithstanding, democracy and liberalism constitute two distinct historical traditions. In the West, at least since 1945, liberal democracy has come to signify the combination of an electoral regime with a popular base and a constitutional framework of rights, operative within a capitalist political economy. It is no surprise, then, that the articulation of this ideal is ridden with tensions. Gopal Balakrishnan has starkly formulated the current stakes in this coupling: ‘To the extent that neoliberalism is a liberal doctrine, the relationship between [democracy and liberalism] today is probably about as complex and antagonistic as it was during the Weimar Republic.’³

Alongside the march of liberal democracy in the twentieth century there has been a gross increase in inequalities of power and status, both locally and globally. The global configurations of economic and political power impose new demands of local governance. At the global level, a new cast of characters has emerged to replace the old bourgeoisie: indeed, in the contemporary scene, technocrats, CEOs and ‘financial buccaneers’ squash obstacles in ways the old bourgeoisie probably never dreamt of.⁴ The contemporary world is one full of asymmetries of power and status – political, cultural and economic. If the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie is no longer present as a visible oppressor, its counterpart, the oppressed groups and classes, has far from disappeared. This is a world where ‘the rulers have ceased to rule’, but where ‘the slaves remain slaves’.⁵

Politically, neoliberalism and the liberal-democratic consensus make few demands in terms of democratic

participation. Rather, there is what Sheldon S. Wolin has fittingly called ‘the citizen–spectator’, whose role is to cheer fervently in an outburst of abstract patriotism, like the one that emerged after 11 September 2001.⁶ Or, as Perry Anderson has put it, in the age of liberal democracy what often reigns ‘is not democratic aspiration from below, but the asphyxiation of public and political difference by capital above.’⁷ Moreover, the early twenty-first century has witnessed a relocation of the structural interdependency of the liberal state and capitalism from the national level to an interdependency of the leading national economy (the USA) with the global economy, in a relation of mediation that is far from consonant with the egalitarian and participatory aspirations of democracy.⁸ Connolly’s refashioning of the liberal imagination hardly transcends this predicament. On the contrary, it has sought to make it less stingy.

Democracy as culture

We urgently need a new *modus vivendi* today....

What is called for is a rewriting of liberal ideals not their elimination.

William E. Connolly

From *Politics and Ambiguity* (1987) on, Connolly has presented a theory whose main goal has been a refashioning of the liberal-democratic imagination by rethinking the paradoxical relation between identity and difference. In the process, Connolly has taken several turns: from a brief flirtation with Habermas in the late 1970s and early 1980s, to an immersion in Foucault during the 1980s, then an idiosyncratic blend of Foucault–Nietzsche–Heidegger in the 1990s, to the new trend of Deleuze–Guattari, as well as a blend of neo-cognitive brain research and his latest label, ‘neo-Spinozism’. By somewhat hastily assimilating all these theoretical trends in his reflections on subjects such as identity/difference, democracy and ambiguity, pluralism and pluralization, secularism and rhizomes, Connolly has carved a distinctive place for himself in the landscape of recent American political theory.

Out of these engagements has emerged a theory that, according to its author, fosters generosity and responsiveness among different constituencies in a predicament in which final markers for politics and morality are not only uncertain but suspicious. In this vein, Connolly has emphasized the need for what he calls ‘agonistic respect’ and practices of forbearance among different identities and the differences that either dialogically or linguistically serve as their conditions of possibility.⁹ Accordingly, his theory seeks to foster an ethic of cultivation towards difference, an

ethic that is emplotted in a rhetoric of forbearance and reciprocity which, in turn, seeks to deflate antagonisms towards difference and reformulate these in an ethical stance honouring what he calls the ‘plurivocity of being’.¹⁰ Stated somewhat differently, the politics of ‘agonistic respect’ is one that seeks to translate the antagonisms of politics into an agonism of difference.¹¹ Connolly’s agonistic respect embodies an ideal of civility in a world marred by deep conflicts – an ideal of civility that I would suggest is more conducive to the establishment of a stable *modus vivendi*, a historically long-term liberal hope, than to a reinvigoration of democratic contestation. For as long as agonistic respect seeks *abstractly* to lessen the conflicts of politics, and to transform these in a more benign way, one of its byproducts is the lessening of any sense of crisis that could emerge from political antagonisms. A sense of crisis, however, has historically accompanied transformative political action even if it is sometimes at the price of stability. Once posited abstractly, agonistic respect also lessens the tensions ensuing from the unfulfilled promises of liberty and equality in liberal democracy. It thus becomes a release valve for the built-in tensions of contemporary capitalist–liberal-democratic politics.

But what is the role of democracy in this quest for a new *modus vivendi*? In one of his earliest formulations, in *Identity/Difference*, Connolly defends democracy as the best regime to confront and accept the contingency of our identities.¹² There is, to be sure, validity to this assertion: historically, democracy has represented the shattering of contingent institutions, cultural practices, and arrangements that impeded the demos’s access to meaningful participation in political power. In many instances, such shattering involved showing the contingency of social and political arrangements in order to challenge their claim to intrinsic natural order, or divine preordination, and, therefore, it significantly altered or eliminated entrenched dynamics of domination anchored in ideologies of class, race and gender, among others.¹³ Yet this is not precisely what Connolly’s writings suggest. By means of an increasingly culturalist conception of democracy, Connolly subtly but effectively downplays important aspects of the historical experience of democracy: namely, the centrality of meaningful participation in power, substantial political equality, and the subversion of linguistic and civic codes that impaired access to political power and equal status. For Connolly, as I show below, order and restrained partisanship seem to take precedence over democratic participation and equality. At this juncture, the liberal moment increasingly starts to take over.

Such displacements are manifest in Connolly's recent formulations, in *Ethos*, *Why I Am Not a Secularist* and *Neuropolitics*, where democracy is defined as

an egalitarian constitution of cultural life that encourages people to participate in defining their own troubles and possibilities, regardless of where these troubles originate and how narrow or broad they are in scope; it is, moreover, an *ethos* through which newly emerging constellations might reconstitute identities previously impressed upon them, thereby disturbing the established priorities of identity/difference through which social relations are organized; it is, therefore, a social process through which fixed identities and naturalized conventions *are pressed periodically to come to terms* with their constructed characters.¹⁴

or as 'a *distinctive culture* in which constituencies have a significant hand in modelling and moving the identities that constitute them'.¹⁵

Over the past fifteen years or so, I have sought to valorize productive tension in democratic life between, on one side, being, recognition, predictability, rights, governance, and tolerance, and, on the other, disturbance, becoming, critical responsiveness to the surge of the new, and a generous ethos of public engagement between constituencies honouring different final sources.¹⁶

The effort to foster a sensitivity to the cultural dimension of democratic life is praiseworthy, especially when contrasted to the electoral, market-oriented conception of democracy fashionable in American political science. Even so, there is something disquieting about these formulations, especially once they are historicized in the context of US liberal democracy, its theorists, and its often over-hyped *Kulturkampf*. Far from being an invigorating credo, liberal democracy, especially after its proclamation of the end of history, has increasingly evolved more sharply into an accommodationist ideology of power that tames potential rivals and subsumes substantial differences in a highly abstract, often prophylactic, consensual discourse of tolerance and plurality.

Once cast in this light, to formulate democracy as an *ethos* has important (anti-) political implications, especially in its subtle way of restricting the range of concerns traditionally associated with democratic experience. A 'political ethos' has more to do with 'modes of civic conduct' than with the mainstay of political theory: constitutional principles, democratic institutions, political economy. In a contemporary liberal democracy such as the USA, the stabilization of institutional juridico-political arrangements serves

as a condition of possibility for the limited forms of democratic participation, as well as for the dynamic stability of capitalism.¹⁷ What is more, as this ethos limits the range of concerns deemed political within the democratic imaginary, it might end up depoliticizing issues historically associated with democratic struggles. In a predicament marred by inequalities and injustices, a theorization of democracy cannot afford to bracket 'the mainstay of political theory'. Contemporary obstacles for democracy include class structures, bureaucratic–corporate power, the military–industrial power complex, an often reified constitutionalist–capitalist institutional order, and the quasi-despotic monopoly of public discourse by corporate power. In other words, the current concrete forms of the mainstay of the political are deeply anti-democratic. Connolly, however, fails to address these questions. It thus seems as if the structural role of political economy is unthinkable for Connolly, as it has been for most of the liberal orthodoxy.¹⁸ In this theory, there is a built-in failure to consider structural and institutional aspects of power in contemporary capitalist liberal democracies. This failure ultimately sabotages the possibilities of democratic renewal, while allowing for centralized and crystallized forms of power to operate unnoticed and unhindered.

Yet the explanation for these displacements is found in Connolly's insistence that he is crafting a new version of the liberal *modus vivendi*. The latter has historically entailed a reductive role for democracy in both classic and contemporary liberal theory from Hobbes to Rawls. By reducing the role of democracy to an ethos, Connolly is able to prescribe, among other things, rules of engagement and civility (agonistic respect), while severely taming the normative grounds for political contestations (framed by the language of selective disturbances) and instilling therapeutic practices to make life *less stingy* (self-artistry). Meanwhile, a democratic pluralism is flourishing, in which expanded 'sabbatical leaves' are more constitutive of an increasingly culturalist 'democratic utopia' than substantial equality and meaningful political participation. This is a democratic pluralism that seems better suited for an American Political Science Association panel with like-minded white-pluralism-loving liberals than for raucous democratic contestation.¹⁹

By framing democracy in this way, Connolly has significantly altered the concerns traditionally associated with it. In their place, he offers a new 'fast-paced' version of the liberal quest for a *modus vivendi* as the primary focus. Stated differently, rather than offering a democratic critique of the tensions between democracy,

liberalism and the ideas he cherishes, Connolly has proceeded to cast democratic pluralism in a liberal light. This might merit renaming his enterprise as a *reworking of the liberal imagination in a fast-paced world*; a renaming that is perfectly consistent with Connolly's sporadic confessions, or perhaps self-reassurances, throughout his books.²⁰

Caring colonization

The limits imposed on democracy by Connolly's reinvigoration of liberalism can be more clearly discerned in the Rawlsian connotations of his notion of an 'ironic consensus' and a *modus vivendi*. Historically, in the aftermath of European religious wars and revolutions, liberal quests for a *modus vivendi* and its surrogates, stability and cooperation over time, have been yearnings for repose. But after 1991, this has been the yearning of a fatigued doctrine that has sought repose while proclaiming its triumph at the same time. It is important to note that in these quests for a *modus vivendi* liberal theorists have traditionally overlooked the histories and memories that are coalesced in the institutions that serve as a background for the liberal resting place. This attribute is especially evident in the contractarian versions of liberal theory where the theorization of the *modus vivendi* involves a theoretical suspension of the structural inequalities of power and status already in place, while presenting a reified and ephemeral moment of equality.²¹

Connolly's self-image notwithstanding, there is an equivalent of this rhetorical move at work in his liberal ethos. Whereas in Connolly's reflections there is a professed sensitivity to the way in which theoretical devices (such as originary social contracts, ideal speech situations and veils of ignorance) silence the voices of some constituencies and exclude, frequently in advance, from the public sphere voices whose modes of expression are articulated in terms that are alien to the rational thinker, his liberalism shares some of the most fastidious and anti-democratic aspects of these formulations. It presupposes, mostly tacitly but also explicitly, the willingness to enter into dialogues of agonistic respect, whose entry point is adopting the language of contingency; it asks constituencies to frame discussions bounded by selective disturbances; it asks participants, irrespective of their backgrounds, histories and subject positions, to accept the contestability of their views, no matter how intrinsic these are considered to be, and, presumably, to 'laugh together', even if only in principle. The cumulative effect of this discourse is not only to neutralize alternative idioms and the modes of speech of those who do not share

the vocabulary privileged by Connolly (the language of contingency and contestability); it also silences historically constituted modes of speech that demand retribution for past injuries and resist framing their concerns as contestable.

Connolly would most likely object to this account of his position. He might point out that he has a metaphysical disposition, and also how he does not expect these metaphysical encumbrances not to bear on the public sphere. In other words, contra Rawls, comprehensive doctrines are welcomed in Connolly's *modus vivendi* – an assertion that surely introduces a sense of historicity into Rawls's otherwise fixed secular conception of persons. Also, Connolly admits a sense of fluidity that resists the fixity that the secular imagination imposes on prevalent cultural understandings by means of its interplay of remembrance and forgetfulness. Accordingly, Connolly's ethos of critical responsiveness presumably cuts deeper than Rawlsian ideals of tolerance. Even so, his alternative is not free from the dangers he ascribes to Rawls, since, by positing an ahistorical agonistic ethos of engagement, he at once *silences* the history behind some of these soon-to-be agonistic combatants, and, in doing so, undermines the openness he otherwise seeks. As he imposes the language of contingency and contestability, Connolly is imposing a new set of imperatives, especially when silencing the language of most forms of democratic public discourse: from school boards to town meetings, labour assemblies, or coalitional politics. None of these is articulated with the ambiguousness Connolly invites.

In good liberal fashion, Connolly has sought to colonize potential rivals. To be sure, to enter into the agonistic encounter, or to live up to the Connollian ethos of engagement, participants do not have to endorse the abundance of life and being. Instead, they are expected *merely* to accept the contingency of their identity and the contestability of their views and articles of faith. In a formulation that either attests political candour or plain disingenuousness, Connolly writes:

Appreciation of such a pluralist/pluralizing *ethos* need not draw upon Nietzschean sources alone, though they do provide an excellent source for it, and they do deserve agonistic respect from those not moved by them.... It can ... draw sustenance from a modest rewriting of the Rawlsian problematic. In this refigured Rawlsianism, we pursue restrained terms of contestation and collaboration between multiple, overlapping traditions, each of which recognizes a certain reciprocity between the element of contestability in its own faith and the alternative

faiths with which it contends and collaborates. Such a rewriting touches the Rawlsian idea that the modern age is incompatible with a fixed conception of the good. *But it no longer calls upon each constituency to leave its metaphysical/religious doctrine in the private sphere before it enters public, secular life.* Rather, it calls upon it to acknowledge the contestability of its own presumptions and to allow that acknowledgement to infuse restraint, agonistic respect, and responsiveness into its relations to other constituencies. That is, it calls upon each to revise its self-understanding in the light of these considerations. Such an *ethos* ... fosters restrained partisanship within and between multiple constituencies, each of which may be able to identify lines of connection and collaboration to a series of others.²²

Connolly's *ethos* 'merely' asks one to acknowledge what he posits in advance as two of his articles of faith: contestability and agonistic respect. In this refashioned *modus vivendi*, one needs to agree to be a good agonistic combatant, perhaps even engage in collective laughter, and not impose too many pressures on the system, or on others, even if both the system and those others contribute to one's position of subordination within it. To the best of my knowledge, Connolly does not make any exceptions, or dispensations, in terms of historical injuries and inequalities, to this rule, thus sharing one of the most fastidious pitfalls of contractualism: the temporary theoretical suspension of *concrete* inequalities that leads to an *abstract* equality. This last point is particularly clear in Connolly's utterly abstract negotiation of the para-

doxical tension between pluralization and equality. Instead of addressing this question as one that needs to be negotiated politically – at the end, it is the collectivity that politically redresses the problems that might arise, by devising flexible institutions, for instance as a practice of *democratic constitutionalism*, or an open experimental constitutionalism – Connolly restricts this discussion with the language of consensus.

In contrast to liberalism, democracy has traditionally been the means by which subordinated constituencies have sought to change their social lot – namely the means by which constituencies that have traditionally been dominated and displaced in liberal-capitalist societies have put forward their claims. To reinvigorate the democratic imagination in the present therefore requires a more powerful challenge to the socio-economic structures of late capitalism, something that, against the liberal *in* Connolly, involves more than progressive taxation, or a practice of forbearance, especially when the latter includes those in charge of the oppressive structures that are in place. Accordingly, rather than enhancing the prospects for democratic contestation, Connolly's relentless commitment to liberalism sabotages the democratic impulse of his theory.

At this point, it might be worthwhile to pursue further the parallels between Connolly's liberalism and Rawls's. 'Political liberals' have emphasized either 'respect for persons' (Larmore) or 'the primacy of justice as fairness' (Rawls) as universal rational principles that constitute core moral commitments,



as antecedent of democratic will. In the case of Connolly, he argues for the primacy of acknowledging the contingency of one's identity in order to foster a more generous public life.²³ Consequently, identifying and accepting the contingency and contestability of one's identity becomes a principle that seems to be a precondition for engagement in Connolly's allegedly more generous public space. On this register, despite his occasional sniping against contemporary liberals – which parallels the way American *Kulturkampf* misleadingly overstated the differences between liberals and conservatives, or, in the academy, between liberals and communitarians – Connolly is closer to political liberals than he may be willing to admit: he requires the recognition and acceptance of the element of contingency in one's identity as the passport for public deliberation guided by the standards of 'agonistic respect'. This last aspect is better understood in relation to two other attributes of liberalism: state-centredness and the presence of colonizing drives.

In both *Identity/Difference* and *Why I Am Not A Secularist*, Connolly has called for a more 'expansive practice of public discourse' that 'does not have to be rolled back into strategies of conversion'.²⁴ Still, there is something strikingly disingenuous in Connolly's claim that his theory does not seek colonization, as there is certainly a moment of conversion in his plea for the incorporation of the language of contingency into one's identity. And this is where a strong element of disingenuousness resides, especially in the way in which the recognition of contingency is elevated to a liberal principle of engagement. Stated differently, for Connolly the recognition of the contingency of one's identity leads to the realization of its contestability. Both are set as preconditions for a new ethics of care for difference in a radicalized liberalism that is statist even while claiming not to be so.²⁵ Liberals like Connolly often neglect the statist dimensions of liberalism, although the *modus vivendi* that is theorized frequently requires a powerful state that at once regulates the conflicts and inequalities that it produces – the very same state power that, like a big leviathan, also watches over civil society and remedies/pasteurizes its fissures. Yet, according to Connolly, it seems that only the cultural realm needs to be refashioned while the state stands in the background watching over the people, guaranteeing order and stability. But as in Thomas Hobbes's universe, its citizens are incapable of deliberation over the nature and uses of the forms of power crystallized in the institutional framework that provides imperatives that often structure their choices. The innocence in relation to state power and its uses

is a sore spot for liberals given liberalism's professed concern with arbitrary power.²⁶

The tacit reliance of Connolly's democratic ethos on the state, and the imposition of the language of contingency, along with the colonizing drive of his liberalism, can be further discerned in his portrayal of the encounter between someone who endorses his ethical stance and those considered either 'fundamentalists' or 'puritans.'

Soul-craft

Connolly's ethos expects puritans 'to modify the way they hold' their faith (to hold their faith as *good* liberals presumably hold their truths) and to accept its contestability.²⁷ Perhaps more important is the bold expectation that a fundamentalist will 'acknowledge the contestability of its claim to intrinsic moral order'. These expectations undeniably constitute fairly thick criteria for the agonistically bounded dialogue to take place. They are expectations that, in spite of the misleadingly modest tone in which Connolly formulates them, echo Rawls's call for people to accept the primacy of justice as fairness, as well as Larmore's norm of equal respect, along with both theorists' invocation of reasonableness, something that Connolly has recently come to invoke.²⁸ Additionally, Connolly's supposedly more generous public space turns out to be very demanding, albeit still confined to a liberal mode of reasoning. It carries with it an irrefutable moment of conversion that is built into the 'invitation' that Connolly extends to fundamentalists.

Ironically, Connolly has chastised Rawls's idea of personhood because it 'obscures ... dense *cultural differentiation*' and 'deflects ethical attention from thick cultural demarcations of what is inside, marginal to, and excluded from personhood *before* justice as fairness arrives to the scene'. Yet, his call for establishing contestability and contingency as passports to the agon is equally or perhaps even more oblivious to the 'thick cultural demarcations' and assumptions operative in non-liberal identities. Regardless of his professed sensitivity to the natality of the political, or what he calls 'the politics of becoming', Connolly nonetheless expects people to accept the norms of engagement that he imposes.²⁹ As soon as a fundamentalist accepts the contingency of her/his beliefs, s/he ceases to be so, and becomes a liberal who happens to have a different religious view. Such a position is certainly no less ambitious than Rawls's. Actually, the Rawlsian formulation that Connolly so vehemently criticizes is more compelling than Connolly's in at least one sense: it is honest about its demands, and, even if it

brackets one's metaphysical views from the public sphere, it does not impose their modification in the ways Connolly does. In 'The Idea of an Overlapping Consensus' Rawls writes:

how might it happen that over generations the initial acquiescence in a liberal conception of justice as a *modus vivendi* develops into a stable and enduring overlapping consensus? In this connection I think *a certain looseness* in our comprehensive views, as well as their not being fully comprehensive, may be particularly significant. ... many if not most citizens come to affirm the political conception [of justice] without seeing any particular connection, one way or the other, between it and their other views. Hence it is possible for them first to affirm the political conception.... Should an incompatibility later be recognized between the political conception and their wider doctrines, then they might very well adjust or revise these doctrines rather than reject the political conception.³⁰

Or so Rawls hopes. Connolly has something similar to say after the challenge to the puritans is made, and/or the invitation to the fundamentalist extended:

Some might become post-puritans over time, either in the form of the faith they adopt or in the way they now articulate it. Or in both ways. Others might become *more reticent* to generalize what they are in the name of religious truth.... The cumulative effect of such enactments, when a generous ethos is operative, links a growing number of constituencies to appreciation of the fundamental contingency of things.³¹

The expectation is that citizens would restrain the range of their comprehensive views and articles of faith – these are either *loose* or *contestable* – for the sake of the advantages of living in a society with a fair system of cooperation over time (Rawls), or in a more generous ethos in which 'more partisans acknowledge their own ambiguous implication in many of the differences they engage' (Connolly).³² Here Connolly is bringing back the ancient tradition of soul-craft. In Plato's *Republic*, soul-craft and state-craft go together. And both are ordered according to the principle of justice and stability. With Machiavelli modern political theorizing shifted from the realm of consciousness to an almost exclusive focus on the arena of collective political power. Whenever considered, the passions of the soul were cast politically, not the other way around. Writers like Connolly want to send us back into the realm of soul-crafting but not for the sake of justice; stability, though, remains a crucial consideration. The focus is on how to make contemporary life, the status quo, bearable for liberals, less stingy.

Presumably, even if the fundamentalist refuses to engage s/he will see the advantages that 'agonistic respect' as a *modus vivendi* presents, and discover how s/he is better off with the affirmation of 'self-restrictions' in a public ethos of 'selective disturbances'.³³ Formulations like these clearly exemplify an increasingly prominent theoretical temperament, where conviction becomes a synonym of authoritarianism while fuzziness has become identified as democratic.³⁴ This is a theoretical temperament that at once impairs the capacity to be passionate about democracy while it raises the anxieties of liberal democracy to a virtue. Theoretical fuzziness notwithstanding, the state that is usually behind it is everything but fuzzy: it is powerful, aggressive and pretty much principled in its exportation of neoliberalism and liberal democracy. The statement in *The Augustinian Imperative*, 'No writer is free from the drive to convert', is as much a testament of Connolly's sense of irony as it might be a reluctant admission of his failure to escape the colonizing tendencies of the liberal tradition.³⁵ Sadly, this is liberal colonization at its best. Something perhaps unexpected from a thinker who has zealously defended 'the plurivocity of being'.

Don't worry, be happy

I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negroes' great stumbling block in the stride toward freedom is not ... the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate who is more devoted to 'order' than to justice.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

To state the matter bluntly, had blacks waited for liberals for deliverance from the caste system, they would still be consigned to the back of the bus. Blacks have had to overcome not just the vicious opposition of their political enemies, but also the well-intentioned counsel of 'friends' who, whether inspired by utopian ideals or swayed by practical politics, actively discouraged the aggressive pursuit of civil rights.

*Stephen Steinberg*³⁶

In focusing almost exclusively on the quest for a *modus vivendi*, Connolly ultimately sabotages even the most democratic moment within his theory, which resides in its resistance to rights-centred discourse. Connolly's sensibility to the natality of the political notwithstanding, his formulations do not go beyond traditional understandings of liberal tolerance. For critical responsiveness to be *critical*, a more vigilant attitude towards liberal tolerance, 'its kissing cousin', is called for.³⁷ And for this ethos to be critical, a more concrete rendering is needed. Discussions of tolerance

usually take place along an axis in which liberty and equality are pitted against each other. In actuality, however, these are negotiated politically. In Tzvetan Todorov's formulation, 'the form and the direction that the fight for toleration will take depend on the historical, cultural, and political context in which one lives'.³⁸ But this is not the path chosen by Connolly.

Evidently, a theory of any complexity involves an important degree of abstraction in order to gain critical distance and formulate a comprehensive view of the reality it seeks to comprehend. Therefore the point is not merely to take Connolly to task for what he fails to say. Rather, it is to ponder critically whether or not the exclusions of Connolly's theory are built into its structure, and what effects these have on its normative and explanatory power. Up to now, I have argued that once certain exclusions of Connolly's theory are brought to bear, its accommodation to the liberal status quo, as well as its limitations from a democratic perspective, become apparent. Such theory conveniently brushes aside class and bureaucratic structures, the imperatives of military and corporate power in a constitutional capitalist democracy, and the absence of a democratic public discourse. Likewise, the compatibility, or lack thereof, of Connolly's ethico-political stance with the historical experience of democracy, or with capitalism, is not considered in any sustained way. Furthermore, Connolly's increasingly prophylactic understanding of agonistic conflicts mirrors the no less prophylactic mass-media culture of 'safe' conflict and risk in a liberal society such as the USA, as well as its therapeutic trends. In fact, Connolly's emphasis on agonism presupposes a rough equality that is hardly attainable within its own terms.

This built-in obstacle to equality can be better seen if one extends the 'drive to convert' to questions of significant economic redistribution and the distribution of power and status. Historically, especially in the USA, it has not been the good faith of those in privileged positions that has allowed democracy to take place. On the contrary, democracy has involved shattering obstacles to power and, in some circumstances, the use of violence and force.³⁹ Democratic movements attempt to resist the terms of discussion and engagements that the status quo imposes. In brushing this aside, Connolly's theory further imposes a domesticating language of engagement – a language that deprives of political teeth what might otherwise be radical claims of equality and justice, and incorporates these as part of a liberal *modus vivendi*. As a result, the established neoliberal corporate–constitutional order remains unthreatened. It would be cynical to

expect injured and displaced constituencies (racial or sexual minorities and targeted poor constituencies, for example) to enter into agonistic contestation with the source of their suffering. Historical experience has involved precisely the opposite: transgressing the impediments for ordinary people to share in power. Ordinary people, who are striving to open up space for political contestation to redress unequal access to power and status cannot afford to practise the kind of forbearance that Connolly prescribes, let alone engage others on the basis of the mutual contestability of their positions. Doing so would lessen the critical import of their claims. An egalitarian cannot accept that the presence of inequalities and domination is merely 'contestable' when these are part of the everyday life experiences of people who suffer these in their bodies and psyches. Connolly is a thinker who is fond of bringing the body to bear on theoretical discussions, yet, ironically, he fails to consider the incontestability of this material dimension of the suffering of real bodies.

In light of the preceding discussions, Connolly's emphasis, at least since *The Ethos of Pluralization*, on 'work on the self' and 'self artistry' could be cast in a different light. Practices like these remain too close to a discredited white-liberal strategy in the American academy that often reduces racialized inequality and domination to the language of prejudice, and is oblivious to the complex socio-economic processes intrinsic to contemporary patterns of injustice and inequality.⁴⁰ The strong emphasis on therapeutic strategies serves further to clarify the audience Connolly is addressing, while absolving him from the charge of cynicism. It seems that these practices on the self are hardly intended for those who do not share in power, for the dispossessed, the inhabitant of urban ghettos, poor inner city neighbourhoods, or forgotten countryside areas. Rather, the strong emphasis placed on forbearance seems directed to those already sharing power, privilege and status: these are asked to practise forbearance to the forces unleashed by the disadvantaged members, to react more generously to new constituencies seeking parity of status and cultural capital. The prescription seems to be: a dosage of work on the self and the colonization of rivals by means of providing an emplotment of their claims in a 'don't worry be happy' narrative that privileges the protean 'politics of becoming' as an offspring of 'the abundance of being'. In other words, the work on the self is a prescription for fellow-traveller liberals to be less static, and more responsive, in relation to new political and cultural constituencies.

Historically, in the USA, white liberals do not have the best record in dealing with issues of inequality, especially in relation to questions of race and class. During moments of democratic upheaval, liberalism has functioned as an accommodationist ideology of power that has often reverted to reformist rhetoric (by means of a call for the preservation of order and moderation) in order to tame democratic energies. This is one of the foremost anti-democratic bents in the liberal tradition. While presenting a politics of selective disturbances for the *have-nots*, Connolly proposes practices of work on the self for the *haves*, so the upper mobility within corporations, or the education of targeted constituencies, does not evoke too much of a visceral reaction in the establishment, or resentment among whites. In the meantime, the *have-nots* not only abide by the terms of restrained participation, but as long as they emplot their claims in the narrative of contestability it is less difficult for the *haves* to admit them.

Historically, liberalism has harboured inequalities of power, class and status. Such inequalities are not only the product of historical contingencies, or of ascriptive traditions that have developed alongside liberalism. A good number of them are liberal in character, and intrinsic to the liberal tradition in its historical coupling with capitalism and its market imperatives.⁴¹ As Wolin, democracy's pre-eminent contemporary theorist, has put it: in a world defined by structural tendencies and imperatives that in spirit and design lead to increased inequalities and powerlessness, active political action 'on the part of the socially and economically disadvantaged becomes the crucial means of saving themselves'.⁴² Rather than questioning the structural forms that produce and perpetuate inequalities in a liberal society (corporations, managerial and economic class structures, educational elitism, the corporate media, centralized power in an increasingly unaccountable government, unaccountable bureaucratic and governmental institutions, among others), Connolly focuses on mild redistribution (a policy he first formulated thirty years ago with Michael Best) in order to transform political antagonism into an agonism of difference. Potential claims for equality and recognition are bounded by the politics of selective disturbances: 'If every settlement came up for grabs at the same time, then a sustaining condition of pluralization would self-destruct'.⁴³

Democratic contestation involving different constituencies with disparate languages involves reciprocal translation, not the imposition of a mode of speech, or colonization.⁴⁴ Perhaps Connolly is so invested

in the academic politics of the culture wars that he fails to notice how his ethos of engagement based on an agonistic respect, once extended to other issues, contributes to the liberal stalemate and ends up colonizing rivals as much as traditional liberals do. This is an ironic twist for a thinker who has so zealously affirmed that 'difference is fundamental'.

One measure of the lack of political import of Connolly's theory is his silence in relation to the events unfolding in the aftermath of 11 September 2001, a silence that attests to either an overly academic conception of politics or to the ethnocentric nature of his critique of fundamentalism. After all, this is someone who has written quite a bit on secularism and fundamentalism – in 1999 he published *Why I Am Not a Secularist*. In relation to the heated exchange in the pages of *Grand Street* between Edward Said and Michael Walzer on the question of Zionism in Palestine, Connolly writes: 'They sink to a level that is *unacceptable* within an ethics of agonistic respect in intellectual engagement'.⁴⁵ This assertion is at once mind-boggling and revealing. Mind-boggling because of the way in which a deeply political discussion, framed in relation to a concrete political situation that has taken tragic overtones, is deemed unacceptable unless phrased according to Connolly's rules of civility; revealing because of the way that it illustrates how deaf Connolly's ethos is to politically infused, passionate modes of speech and contestation. Furthermore, there seems to be a culturalism at work in his theory. In a formulation that adds insult to injury, Connolly frames the divergent persecutions and stigmatizations of "Gypsies," "Jews," "women," "homosexuals," "Indians," "prostitutes," "welfare free-loaders," "blacks," "atheists," and "postmodernists" as the offspring of 'an accusatory culture' that resents the speed he associates with late modernity. Remarks like these suggest a vulgar culturalism at the core of Connolly's theory.⁴⁶

Evidence of the intellectual dearth of 'agonistic respect' as an ethos of *intellectual* engagement is also found in Connolly's fondness for an *us/them* matrix of oppositions, which serves as a pre-emptive rhetorical strategy that avoids engaging thinkers and positions that challenge his own. Yet this strategy has proven superficial in the way it serializes thinkers. For an instance: 'Friedrich Nietzsche, ... Gilles Deleuze, Stuart Hampshire, Moira Gatens, Michel Foucault, Paul Patton, Jane Bennett, Thomas Dumm and Brian Massumi are all neo-Spinozists'.⁴⁷ Sentences like these beset Connolly's writings. What this matrix effectively achieves is an avoidance of serious engagement with

critics who do not share Connolly's assumptions. His introduction to Wolin's *Festschrift* provides a good example. Connolly almost writes more about himself than about Wolin, and when he is dealing with Wolin it is done, almost exclusively, self-referentially.⁴⁸ In other words, affirmations of difference and openness notwithstanding, substantial differences are hardly dealt with. Perhaps here one is witnessing a display of Connolly's practices of self-artistry. Connolly has asserted that distorting the ideas of those critical of his own is part of the tactics of the self: 'You misrepresent a religious or metaphysical perspective that troubles you, to relieve the feeling of disturbance it generates.'⁴⁹ This is yet another ironic twist for a thinker who unfailingly announces the virtues of 'agonistic respect' as a mode of intellectual engagement.

One of the features of American academic political theory is the lack of resonance between the problems on which its doyens reflect and the political questions afflicting the American imperial polity and the rest of the world. Seldom is the gap between one and the other closed. An arresting example of this paradoxical inversion is the now worn-out debate between 'liberals and communitarians' – a debate that, as many critics have observed, overstated the differences between both camps in what turned out to be a debate among liberals bearing little weight in the USA.⁵⁰ In contrast, conservative theorists like Friedrich Hayek and Leo Strauss enjoyed immense popularity in the centres of power in both England and the USA. Their ideas shaped public discourse and rhetoric during the Reagan/Thatcher years, when Rawls's reign was at its peak.⁵¹ The only common thread within the academy and outside was the displacement of the theory and practice of democracy in any meaningful sense. This is perhaps the only arena where theoretical articulations of academic liberalism correlate with public practice. Democracy was increasingly becoming an archaic term whose only meaning resided in its coupling with liberalism. In Rawls's formulations democracy is seldom present, while Hayek and Strauss were consistently hostile to it. In the USA of the early twenty-first century the *liberal* part of liberal democracy has taken over its *democratic* counterpart to the extent that the historical discourse and practice of democracy are pretty much absent from public discourse. Simultaneously, a retreat from substantial and concrete equality, along with its by-product – increasing inequalities that are growing at an amazing rate – is masqueraded by the abstract liberal discourse of diversity, tolerance and difference that simultaneously structures the coordinates of public rhetoric and marketing.⁵²

Reflections like Connolly's, however, are not innocent in relation to the structure of power and privilege that saturates the present. In fact, they are symptomatic of a larger trend in Anglo-American political theory that unreflectively mirrors contemporary forms of power. Authors like Connolly, who has taken pretty much every 'turn' there has been in the last twenty-five years, praise theoretical novelty as an end in itself. If postmodernism was once considered 'the cultural logic of late capitalism', in the American academic scene it has arguably become the *theoretical logic* of neoliberal liberal democracy.⁵³ With few exceptions, contemporary political-theory politics has become academic. Meanwhile, academic politics, though waging insatiable battles in relation to canons and cultures, fails to consider the ways in which its institutional supports (mainly universities) are implicated in the present-day structures of power.

Forty years ago political theory was a marginal discipline in the Anglo-American academy. Nowadays 'theory' reigns, even if its political import is elusive. The Western tradition of political theory is richer. Historically, it has been constituted by different genres of reflection and writing: aphorisms, comedies, counsel-pamphlet, dialogue, historical-textual commentary, history, poetry, tragedy, pamphlets, philosophical treatises, theological and political treatises, sermons and speeches. The contemporary challenge might thus reside in breaking with the yoke of 'theory'. Better still, the key might be in starting to think about theory politically.

Notes

1. In this article I draw from the following texts by Connolly: *Politics and Ambiguity*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1987; *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1991; *Political Theory and Modernity*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1993; *The Augustinian Imperative: A Reflection on the Politics of Morality*, Sage, Newbury Park, 1993; 'Beyond Good and Evil: The Ethical Sensibility of Michel Foucault', *Political Theory* 21, August 1993; *The Ethos of Pluralization*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1995; 'Reworking the Democratic Imagination', *Journal of Political Philosophy* 15, 1997; *Why I Am Not a Secularist*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1999; 'Assembling the Left', *Boundary 2*, 26, Fall 1999; 'The Nobility of Democracy', John Tambornino and Jason Frank, eds, *Vocations of Political Theory*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1999; 'Secularism, Partisanship and the Ambiguity of Justice', in Edward B. Portis et al., eds, *Political Theory and Partisan Politics*, SUNY Press, Albany, 2001; 'Politics and Vision', in Aryeh Botwinick and William Connolly, eds, *Democracy and Vision: Sheldon Wolin and the Vicissitudes of the Political*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2001; 'Confessing Identity/

- Belonging to Difference', *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of a Political Paradox*, expanded edition, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2002; *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, and Speed*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2002.
2. William E. Connolly, 'Brain Waves, Transcendental Fields, and Techniques of Thought', *Radical Philosophy* 94, March/April 1999.
 3. See Gopal Balakrishnan, *The Enemy: An Intellectual Portrait of Carl Schmitt*, Verso, London and New York, 2000, p. 263. For a different formulation of the relationship between democracy and liberalism, see Chantal Mouffe, *Democratic Paradox*, Verso, London and New York, 2001. Unfortunately, Mouffe is consistently superficial in dealing with this question.
 4. For a discussion, see Perry Anderson, 'Confronting Defeat', *London Review of Books*, 17 October 2002, pp. 11ff.
 5. Lutz Niethammer as quoted in Perry Anderson's 'The Ends of History', in *A Zone of Engagement*, Verso, London and New York, 1992, p. 280.
 6. See Sheldon S. Wolin, 'Brave New World', *Theory & Event*, vol. 5, no. 4, 2002, http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/theory_and_event/. See also his *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought*, expanded edition, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2004, pp. 520–23, 557ff.
 7. See Perry Anderson, 'Renewals', *New Left Review* 1, January/February 2000, p. 16.
 8. For an informative treatment of this dynamics post-1945 to the present, see Robert Brenner, *The Boom and the Bubble: The US in the World Economy*, Verso, London and New York, 2002.
 9. Right away in *Identity/Difference* Connolly writes: 'the relational and constructed character of identity can nevertheless make a difference to the ethical quality of political life' (p. ix). Later on he will define his 'ethic of care for life' as 'an ethic in which alter-identities foster agonistic respect for the differences that constitutes them' (p. 166).
 10. See, for instance, *Identity/Difference*, pp. 166, 168, 170; *Ethos*, pp. xv, xxii, 28, 38, 99, 183, 200. See also *Why I Am Not a Secularist*; 'Brain Waves, Transcendental Fields, and Techniques of Thought'; and *Neuropolitics*, especially ch. 4.
 11. *Identity/Difference*, p. 178.
 12. In Connolly's rendering: 'the ambiguity of democracy adds the possibility of engaging the contingency of existence' and 'more than other social forms, democracy accentuates exposure to contingency and increases the likelihood that the affirmation of difference in identity will find expression in public life'. *Identity/Difference*, p. 193.
 13. Commonplace narratives on contingency suggest that the contingency of social and political affairs always leaves open the possibility for things to be otherwise, and thus spontaneity, freedom and action are possible. But, as Connolly rightly suggests, there are 'entrenched' and 'obdurate' contingencies. Furthermore, contingent relations and events often inaugurate their own patterns and imperatives of legitimization and justification. Historically, contingent events have inaugurated modes of domination and oppression that often bring about their own patterns of justification; that is, contingently hegemonic institutions impose and develop patterns and practices to assure their continuity: practices that have been carried out in the name of 'reason of state', the glory and security of the nation, a peaceful social order, racial purism, a consensual politics à la 'third way', among others. Nevertheless, the length of duration of a contingent event, discourse or system depends on a variety of factors, including its coherence, the combination of cultural and economic imperatives, as well as the effectiveness of its affirmation and/or contestation.
 14. *Ethos*, p. 153, emphasis added.
 15. *Why I Am Not a Secularist*, p. 154, emphasis added; see also *ibid.*, p. 185.
 16. *Neuropolitics*, p. 173.
 17. See James Tully, 'The Agonic Freedom of Citizens', *Economy and Society* 28, May 1999, p. 169. On the relationship between a stable politico-juridical framework and capitalism, see Ellen Meiksins Wood's suggestive accounts in *The Origins of Capitalism: A Longer View*, Verso, London and New York, 2002; and *The Empire of Capital*, Verso, London and New York, 2003. See also Terry Eagleton, 'Capitalism and Form', *New Left Review* 14, March/April 2002.
 18. An arresting discussion of the role of the unthinkable as one of the discursive strategies of silencing is found in Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1995.
 19. *Neuropolitics*, p. 144.
 20. 'I do not have radical hopes', he has stated; 'This perspective is, of course, a liberalism.' 'This would be a radicalized liberalism, but not in the direction of revolutionary overthrow, socialist abundance or the universalization of the late-modern state' – no, the gods forbid; rather, 'I myself aspire to a critical liberalism that both expands and thickens the range of secularism.' See 'Beyond Good and Evil', p. 338; *Identity/Difference*, p. 94; *Political Theory and Modernity*, pp. 174–5; *Why I Am Not a Secularist*, p. 20.
 21. On this point my discussion is deeply indebted to Wolin, 'The Liberal/Democratic Divide: On John Rawls's *Political Liberalism*', *Political Theory* 24, February 1996, p. 103.
 22. 'Secularism', pp. 168–9; emphasis added.
 23. See Charles Larmore, 'The Moral Basis of Political Liberalism', *The Journal of Philosophy* 91, December 1999, pp. 599–625.
 24. *Why I Am Not a Secularist*, pp. 42–3; *Identity/Difference*, p. 179.
 25. This point is forcefully made by Roberto Alejandro in his essay 'Ethics and Politics', unpublished manuscript. I would like to thank Alejandro for generously sharing this essay with me. It brought to my attention the similarities between Connolly and Rawls, and my argument is indebted to it.
 26. Cf. Wolin's 'The Liberal/Democratic Divide'. An account of the dynamics of contemporary capitalism might shed a different light on Connolly's theory, in relation to material dynamics of redistribution and recognition, equality and status, in liberal-democratic societies. On this point, see Fraser's essay 'Heterosexism, Misrecognition, and Capitalism', *Social Text* 52/53, Fall/Winter 1997.
 27. *Ethos*, p. 181.
 28. 'The Nobility of Democracy', p. 308.
 29. 'Secularism', p. 158.
 30. John Rawls, 'The Idea of an Overlapping Consensus', in *John Rawls: Collected Papers*, ed. Samuel Freedman,

- Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 1999, p. 441; emphasis added. See also *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 2001, pp. 192–5.
31. *Ethos*, p. 181.
 32. *Why I Am Not a Secularist*, p. 155. In the most recent restatement of his positions, Connolly has introduced a distinction between accepting the contestability of one's views and accepting that others see them as such. In 'Confessing' he has offered the following statements: 'The idea is to attend to the persistence of multiple ethical sources in political life while dramatizing the comparative contestability of the candidates, and to work on ourselves and others to affirm, without existential resentment, the contestability on each in the eyes of others'; 'I also find it noble to treat one's faith as contestable in one's own eyes, not just to affirm that it is so in the eyes of others.... But I do not contend that everyone must hold this view for a positive ethos of engagement to emerge. It suffices if numerous partisans appreciate the contestability of their faith in the minds and souls of others, and struggle to overcome resentment against this persistent feature of the human condition.' See 'Confessing', pp. xxi and xxiii, respectively. This distinction seems to reduce the demands imposed on others, but it hardly eliminates the drive to colonize.
 33. On 'selective disturbances', see *Ethos*, pp. 74–104; Alejandro's 'Ethics and Politics' offers a good discussion of this theme.
 34. See Terry Eagleton's remarks in *After Theory*, Basic Books, New York, 2003, p. 103.
 35. *The Augustinian Imperative*, p. 86. For two discussions of this feature of liberalism, see Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1995; and Roberto Alejandro, *The Limits of Rawlsian Justice*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore MD, 1997.
 36. Stephen Steinberg, *Turning Back: The Retreat from Racial Justice in American Thought and Policy*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1995, p. 56.
 37. For Connolly, 'tolerance and agonistic respect are kissing cousins', even if 'they are not equivalent'. 'Confessing', p. xxvii.
 38. See Tzvetan Todorov, *The Morals of History*, trans. Alyson Waters, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1995, p. 156.
 39. See and contrast with Étienne Balibar, 'Outlines of a Topography of Cruelty: Citizenship and Civility in the Era of Global Violence', *Constellations* 8, March 2001, p. 27.
 40. Steinberg, *Turning Back*, pp. 68–93. For Connolly's views on how a practice of agonistic respect opens up the possibility for an ethical understanding of democracy, linking practices of the self with democratic politics, see *Identity/Difference*, pp. 178–97; *Ethos*, pp. 41–74; *Why I Am Not a Secularist*, pp. 143–61; 'The Nobility of Democracy', pp. 319–23.
 41. For a highly sanitized view of liberalism that largely ascribes its coexistence with inequalities to ascriptive traditions outside of its core, see Rogers Smith's otherwise stimulating book *Civic Ideals*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1997). For a critique, see Bonnie Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2001. For a stimulating elucidation of the link between liberalism and territoriality, see Uday S. Metha, *Liberalism and Empire*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1999.
 42. See Wolin, 'The Liberal/Democratic Divide', p. 101.
 43. *Ethos*, p. 194.
 44. See the stimulating treatment of these questions in Susan Buck-Morss, *Thinking Past Terror*, Verso, London and New York, 2003.
 45. *Ethos*, pp. 225–6 n16; emphasis added.
 46. *Neuropolitics*, p. 163. On this point, see Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking Recognition', *New Left Review* 3, May/June 2000.
 47. See William E. Connolly, 'The Radical Enlightenment: Faith, Power, and Theory', *Theory & Event*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2004, http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/theory_and_event/.
 48. See Connolly, 'Politics and Vision'.
 49. Connolly, *Neuropolitics*, p. 102.
 50. Although one of its offspring, the debate on the rights of 'minorities' has had a larger impact on Canadian politics. Its main theorists, Charles Taylor, Will Kymlicka and James Tully, are Canadians.
 51. See Perry Anderson, 'The Intransigent Right at the End of the Century', *London Review of Books*, 24 September 1992, pp. 7–11.
 52. Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*, MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 2000, p. x. For an excellent discussion of how the discourses of difference have diluted the commitment to racial equality, see Claire Jean Kim, 'Clinton's Race Initiative: Recasting the American Dilemma', *Polity* 33, Winter 2000, pp. 175–97. See also Steinberg, *Turning Back*. More recent treatments of the eclipse of equality in the USA are found in Lisa Duggan, *Twilight of Equality?*, Beacon Press, Boston, 2002; and Godfrey Hodgson, *More Equal than Others*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2004.
 53. Cf. Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, p. 567.

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