

**PATRIOTIC ATTACHMENT, LIBIDINAL ECONOMY, AND COSMOPOLITAN CITIZENSHIP  
A QUALIFIED DEFENSE OF PATRIOTIC LOVE**

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**THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND  
STATE UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
OF**

**MASTER OF ARTS  
IN  
POLITICAL SCIENCE**

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**APRIL 24, 2009  
BLACKSBURG, VA**

**KEYWORDS: POLITICAL THEORY, CITIZENSHIP, COSMOPOLITANISM, PSYCHOANALYTIC  
THEORY, GOVERNANCE, NATIONALISM**

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**ABSTRACT**

Terms such as 'fascist' and 'nazi' retain light and even comical currency in contemporary pop culture despite the gravity of the events that produced them. Departing from this common usage, I consider within political and psychoanalytic frameworks the normative effects common understandings of fascism and totalitarianism exercise vis-a-vis collective attachments (patriotism, nationalism), and specifically how this discourse shapes notions of citizenship. Working within this political-psychoanalytic model, I analyze the substance behind Barack Obama's Presidential campaign themes of hope and change by way of his Inaugural Address in relation to that of George W. Bush. I conclude by engaging the discourse on cosmopolitan citizenship, considering both how it fits into the framework developed for this project and the relation of Obama's understandings of citizenship and foreign policy to cosmopolitanism.

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**INTRODUCTION:  
THE SPECTRE OF FASCISMS PAST**

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**MEMORIES OF FASCISM**

To critically engage a cliché, I hereby begin with it: On January 30, 1933 Adolf Hitler was appointed Chancellor of the coalition government of Germany by Paul von Hindenburg, laying the ground work for a train of constitutionally legitimate usurpations of power that culminated in the establishment of the Third Reich. Hitler's procedurally sound ascendance to power and its nationalist emphasis has left an indelible stain on the idea and practice of nationalism, and stands as a cautionary tale to the dark underbelly of national bonds of affection. The culmination of these national bonds of affection in the Final Solution under the auspices of liberal democracy forces, or at least opens the blinds to, recognition of a new truth of liberalism. Indeed, this legal usurpation of power was not incidental, but an integral part of the Nazi project. Testifying in 1930 at the trial of two Reichswehr officers answering to charges of involvement with the Nazi Party, Hitler insisted that the Nazi Party was determined that its drive for National Revolution be conducted by legal political means.<sup>1</sup>

This fascist stain is recalled daily to a variety of purposes ranging in stake from trivial to grave. All direct a clear, common suggestion of overblown and dangerous emotion or conviction, with a corresponding imperative to simmer down. In popular culture we see a comical Nazi reference as in the rigid "Soup Nazi" of *Seinfeld*; more recently the nickname of a particularly precise and demanding Chief Resident of Surgery as "The Nazi" in *Grey's Anatomy*, or simply the loose yet pointed conversational deployment of the term 'fascist' to signal individuals who meet our displeasure. At the

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<sup>1</sup> WHEELER-BENNETT (1967). THE NEMESIS OF POWER. NEW YORK: ST. MARTIN'S PRESS, 218-9.

other end of the spectrum, as recently as the Gulf War in 1990 (Operation Desert Storm) and the 2003 invasion of Iraq (Operation Iraqi Freedom) both elder and younger Bush drew comparison between Saddam Hussein and Adolf Hitler, with the younger Bush going so far as to equate the failure to invade Iraq with the appeasement that preceded the Second World War.<sup>2</sup> Critiques of the U.S. response to the conflicts in the Balkans, Rwanda, and Darfur have been framed in reference to the horrors of the Holocaust, and indeed our very concern for genocide expressed in the mantra “never again!” is driven from the incomprehensible scale and horror of that tragedy. Such historical comparisons might be justified in reference to the questions of violence they concern or seek to avert, but perhaps more interestingly such mobilizations are not limited to instances of actual violence: the day following the 2008 U.S. Presidential Election Judith Butler circulated an editorial wherein she couches a warning against overzealous fealty to President-elect Barack Obama in terms of the fascist threat.<sup>3</sup> In the impoverished political memory of the United States, the events of and prefacing World War II, particularly in relation to the Third Reich’s trajectory, occupy a curiously privileged rhetorical position.

In spite of a certain stigma surrounding nationalism, or perhaps because of it, the pages of the popular and academic media alike testify to the enduring interest in and concern for the collectivist impulse, be it referenced in terms of patriotism or nationalism. This is especially so following the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon of September 11, 2001. If the news media are any indication, these attacks spurred a monstrous popular discourse in the United States about patriotism, ranging

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<sup>2</sup> PAYNE, S.G. (1995). *A HISTORY OF FASCISM: 1914-1945*. MADISON: UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN PRESS.

<sup>3</sup> BUTLER, JUDITH. “UNCRITICAL EXUBERANCE?”. 5 NOVEMBER 2008. AVAILABLE AT: [HTTP://ANGRYWHITEKID.BLOGS.COM/WEBLOG/2008/11/UNCRITICAL-EXUBERANCE-JUDITH-BUTLERS-TAKE-ON-OBAMA.HTML](http://angrywhitekid.blogspot.com/weblog/2008/11/uncritical-exuberance-judith-butlers-take-on-obama.html). ACCESSED 9 NOVEMBER 2008.

from pieces laudatory of the ostensible unity felt in the aftermath,<sup>4</sup> to comparisons between the method and rhetoric of Bush's war on terror and the world of George Orwell's *1984*.<sup>5</sup> The call to patriotic unity in the wake of such a traumatic event is unsurprising, but the second Bush administration took this patriotic impulse to its more frightful ends: projecting a forced and false rhetorical choice to the international community of being either "with us or against us." Moreover, one might take note of a preference to refer to the collectivist impulse in the context of the United States in terms of patriotism, while reference to the collectivity itself must almost ineluctably be done in terms of the nation. If Hitler's ascendance to power in Weimar Germany to perpetrate the horrors of the Third Reich in the name of a patriotic nationalism has opened a wound in the liberal democratic tradition, then Bush's mobilization against terror and Iraq in the name of Western values has at least tickled it. It is this wound to which we tend in confronting the questions of patriotism and nationalism, and which we seek to avert in delimiting our national attachment.

To be sure, the stigma against nationalism is not absolute or undifferentiated in the liberal democratic imaginary: as suggested in Michael Ignatieff's *Blood and Belonging* series, its effects may range from an agent of order and stability in the case of state failure to its effects as part of an aggressive and deadly territoriality – reaching, at least in the Orwellian conception, its apogee in the fascist state and genocidal campaign. Ignatieff paints an easily dismissed caricature of nationalist sentiment in much of his documentary series in interrogating its adherents as to the basis and content of their attachment, and levels rather severe charges of nationalism

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<sup>4</sup> SEE, E.G., ROMANO, L. (2002). "IN 9/11 EVENTS, MIXTURE OF PAIN AND PATRIOTISM; DISPARATE U.S. CEREMONIES HAVE A COMMON THREAD". WASHINGTON POST. WASHINGTON: A1.

<sup>5</sup> MUFSON, S. (2009). "THE WAY BUSH SEES THE WORLD". WASHINGTON POST. WASHINGTON, DC: B1.

as an impossible dream, refuge, or false hope. And yet, through his condemnation of the more the radical aspects of nationalism's duality, a certain sentimentality or nostalgia for nationalism is apparent. What becomes quite clear in the documentary is the othering function it plays: this condemnation takes perspective through the gaze of "the West" or "the civilized", and ultimately serves as a self-justifying construct that may call for a certain action but in no way draws into question the deeper meaning or role of the 'we' in the plight of 'them', but valorizes our own way of life without seriously questioning its righteousness.<sup>6</sup>

Stanley Payne locates the end of the Era of Fascism as the May 1945 German surrender in World War II.<sup>7</sup> Coincident with this presumed *denouement*, George Orwell penned "Notes on Nationalism". Orwell here draws a distinction between nationalism and patriotism, launching a defense of latter wedded to a spirited condemnation of the former. He finds this distinction to be fundamentally defined by effect: whereas patriotism is basically defensive, nationalism follows a naturally offensive trajectory.<sup>8</sup> Patriotism is rooted in a devotion to place and way of life that one believes to be best but does not wish to force on other people, whereas nationalism is premised on the idea that "human beings can be classified like insects" and is inextricably tied to self-aggrandizing ambitions bolstered by presumptions of goodness and badness.<sup>9</sup> The fact that Orwell was concerned to defend the notion of patriotism against charges of nationalism is telling in two ways: first, as an indication of the

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<sup>6</sup> MOREFIELD, JEANE. "EMPIRE, TRAGEDY, AND THE LIBERAL STATE IN THE WRITINGS OF NIALL FERGUSON AND MICHAEL IGNATIEFF" *THEORY AND EVENT*, 11 (2008),

<sup>7</sup> PAYNE, S.G. (1995). *A HISTORY OF FASCISM: 1914-1945*. MADISON: UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN PRESS.

<sup>8</sup> ORWELL, GEORGE. "NOTES ON NATIONALISM". MAY 1945. AVAILABLE AT: [HTTP://ORWELL.RU/LIBRARY/ESSAYS/NATIONALISM/ENGLISH/E NAT](http://orwell.ru/library/essays/nationalism/english/e_nat). ACCESSED 8 NOVEMBER 2008.

<sup>9</sup> IBID.

perceived danger attached to nationalism; and second, the very need to establish a discourse distinguishing patriotism from nationalism suggests a certain continuity or homogeneity between the two modes of collective attachment. It is to the extent that this Orwellian opposition retains currency in the U.S. political imagination that it here deserves our attention.

Orwell is responding to a very particular set of events, but that his argument still resonates and the prevalence of nationalism far outstrips events of the magnitude of the World Wars. there seems to be an unspoken third term in his patriotism/nationalism distinction: fascism.<sup>10</sup> Whereas patriotism may be conceived as benign force insofar as it remains defensive, nationalism is to be avoided insofar as, given the opportunity, it can transform itself into a malignant fascism. The opposition Orwell here sets up is problematic once one interrogates what it means to say that patriotism and nationalism are basically defined by effect, which essentially renders it a moral/ethical judgment in the service of the hegemonic ideal.<sup>11</sup> One need not look farther in recent memory than the preemptive invasion of Iraq of 2003, or even more convincingly the the war on terror as waged by George W. Bush, to see the lack of substance in such definition. Both have been framed in terms of threats to the “American way of life”, and hence as fundamentally defensive, when the events of 9/11 to which this military action is a response can be traced at least in part to historical milieux in which the U.S. was not so innocently imbricated.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> THINK: ISLAMO-FASCISM

<sup>11</sup> BREUILLY, J. “NATIONALISM AND THE STATE”, IN MICHENER, ROGER, ED. (1993). NATIONALITY, PATRIOTISM, AND NATIONALISM. ST. PAUL: PARAGON HOUSE, 19.

<sup>12</sup> SEE, E.G., WRIGHT, L. (2006). THE LOOMING TOWER: AL QAEDA AND THE ROAD TO 9/11. NEW YORK: VINTAGE BOOKS.



In a 2006 article published in *Newsweek*, Christopher Dickey re-visits Orwell's essay in the present context of the United States.<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, he speaks to America's patriotism and nationalism, acknowledging the bad with the good; but he in turn compares American nationalism from that of its Middle Eastern counterparts, which of course he confers no patriotic correlate. The message, if not clear enough from the subtitle "The greatness of the United States is unique--and not a model to be exported by narrow-minded nationalists", is here deepened: the United States possesses a certain *je ne sais quoi* of enlightenment not paralleled in the rest of the world, not least in the Middle East broadly construed. The kind of imperial hubris evinced by such indiscriminate lumping is heightened in the article's usage of the term "American" to describe the quality of being a citizen of the United States disregarding the other two countries inhabiting the North American continent, or the contiguous continent qualified only by "South" on the other side of the equator. Beyond this chauvinism, however, his essay is notable insofar as it signifies a popular acknowledgment of a distinction between patriotic (i.e. good) and nationalist (bad and dangerous) modes of collective attachment in one of the world's leading powers, and this published in reference to the United States' Independence Day. We thus see an explicit affirmation of Orwell's continuum of political attachment, with a mixed justification and warning of certain kinds of these attachments within the United States.

Patchen Markell upsets this Orwellian distinction in his analysis of Jurgen Habermas' constitutional patriotism, through which we see the symmetry between Dickey's appropriation of Orwell and Habermas' argument. Markell, following the moral distinction critique of nationalism/patriotism, suggests that the patriotic

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<sup>13</sup> DICKEY, CHRISTOPHER. "AMERICAN DREAM, AMERICAN NIGHTMARE: THE GREATNESS OF THE UNITED STATES IS UNIQUE--AND NOT A MODEL TO BE EXPORTED BY NARROW-MINDED NATIONALISTS". NEWSWEEK [HTTP://WWW.NEWSWEEK.COM/ID/46649](http://www.newsweek.com/id/46649) JULY 5, 2006

attachment serves as a strategy of redirection of affect in order to construct a nationalism by another name.<sup>14</sup> This nationalism, rather than rooting itself in a notion of ethnic ties, takes shape through a collective mythology of “who we are”. To the extent that this notion of ‘who we are’ may be mapped onto Orwell’s suggestion that patriotism is basically a defensive position of a way of life and set of beliefs, Markell’s critique implores that we question the constitution of this ‘we’, how it exists (if it ever did), why this ‘we’ came to be, and whether the mere existence of the ‘we’ is sufficient grounds for the normative claim to its perpetuation.

Steven Johnston capitalizes on this idea by filling the gulf between patriotism and nationalism in our expanded Orwellian continuum, suggesting patriotism is a self-defeating doctrine that neither will nor can make good on its own promises.<sup>15</sup> Rather than exemplifying a limit case, Johnston claims that Socrates’ patriotic example of death before the collectivity installs a dynamic that poses sacrificial death as the maximum exemplar of patriotic duty, thereby marking the distinction between patriotism and nationalism quite farcical. In advancing his notion banal nationalism, Michael Billig carefully considers the manner in which patriotism *qua* nationalism is latently flagged or recalled in everyday life, which latent emotions are then summoned in times of national celebration (e.g. Independence Day) and crisis to the tune of a justified patriotic fervor.<sup>16</sup> What is essential here is the extent to which the nationalism of the sort peddled by Habermas is disavowed in daily life, but is allowed to spring up as functionally necessary in a patriotic (dis)guise – which, with the hegemonic advantage of setting the terms of discussion, allows physically violent action

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<sup>14</sup> MARKELL, P. (2000). "MAKING AFFECT SAFE FOR DEMOCRACY? ON 'CONSTITUTIONAL PATRIOTISM'". POLITICAL THEORY 28(1): 38-63.

<sup>15</sup> JOHNSTON, S (2007). THE TRUTH ABOUT PATRIOTISM. DURHAM: DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS.

<sup>16</sup> BILLIG, M. (1995). BANAL NATIONALISM. THOUSAND OAKS: SAGE.

that might otherwise be associated with nationalism to be justified and avowed as a patriotic action or duty.

The key question in considering the fate of patriotism in the roll of a progressive or left-of-center politics is the extent to which it is inherently tied to, and hence may be conceptually divorced from, the more fascistic connotations of the nationalist endeavour. Can patriotism be understood in any other way than as a hegemonic construct of an essentially civic nationalism? Is there a function served by the prominence of Nazi fascism in the political imagination in the United States? Certainly the continued occurrence of genocide through the remainder of the century suggests the dangers of nationalism did not end with the Second World War. While these instances of mass violence are significant in their own right, careful consideration of the historical milieu that produced Nazi Germany suggests the kind of perfect storm required. Against these equations of patriotism with nationalism with the presumed rejection of nationalism, Hannah Arendt claims that it is a fallacy to understand the Third Reich as driven by simple nationalism:

Their nationalist propaganda was directed toward their fellow-travelers and not their convinced members; the latter, on the contrary, were never allowed to lose sight of a consistently supranational approach to politics. Nazi “nationalism” had more than one aspect in common with the recent nationalistic propaganda of the Soviet Union, which is also used only to feed the prejudices of the masses.<sup>17</sup>

Arendt’s thrust may be problematic insofar as it is taken to implicitly suggest that the content of ‘simple nationalism’ is constructed in purely positive terms, against the Nazi propaganda which was animated against the Jews. Even so, we might do well to consider what consequences follow from her emphasis on the exceptional nature of the

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<sup>17</sup> ARENDT, H. (1976). THE ORIGINS OF TOTALITARIANISM. NEW YORK: HARCOURT, INC., 3.

Nazi project vis-a-vis nationalism, and if the mere fact of nationalism can explain the Era of Fascism.

Stanley Payne defines fascism as “a form of organic revolutionary ultra-nationalism seeking national re-birth, based on a primarily vitalist and non-rationalist philosophy, structured on a seemingly contradictory combination of extreme elitism and mass mobilization, emphasizing hierarchy and the leadership principle, positively valuing violence to some extent as end as well as means, and tending to normalize war and/or military values.”<sup>18</sup> In his account he identifies twenty pre-conditions necessary for the era of fascism to have obtained,<sup>19</sup> and notes that “sufficient conditions for the growth of fascist movements have ceased to exist since 1945”.<sup>20</sup> He draws a distinction between Big-F and Small-F fascism – he does not deny that fascist movements have existed since the era of fascism or continue to exist today, but he does claim that these fascisms take on a character that denies them the fundamental foothold and success that Fascism found in Germany and Italy between 1914 and 1945. The twenty factors Payne outlines show the tremendous forces Fascism had to overcome as a self-conflicted and -defeating doctrine, and moreover claims fascism since Fascism has been unable to peak above an extremely limited political presence and still relies on popularly-discredited rhetoric not updated since the first half of the twentieth century. He notes a contradiction fascism’s very structure that prevents it from retaining the characteristics that constitute it while still appealing to mass audiences, as well as its failure to succeed at its own purpose: war.

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<sup>18</sup> PAYNE, S.G. “FASCISM AND RACISM” IN BALL, T. & BELLAMY, R., EDs. (2005). THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF TWENTIETH-CENTURY POLITICAL THOUGHT. NEW YORK: CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 123-150.

<sup>19</sup> PAYNE, S.G. (1995) A HISTORY OF FASCISM: 1914-1945. MADISON: UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN PRESS, 489.

<sup>20</sup> IBID., 495.

The analytic effect of this strong qualification and limited historical location of Fascism is unclear, but should be considered in conjunction with fascism's relation to totalitarianism. Jeffrey Isaac claims that deployment of totalitarianism has not remained static, but that in the 1980's "a shift, however subtle had occurred. In the words of Herbert Spiro and Benjamin Barber, the concept of totalitarianism had become a counter-ideological weapon in the Cold War, a way of marking out the Soviet Union as what came later to be called an 'evil empire', and of identifying the US-led NATO alliance with the forces of light."<sup>21</sup> Isaac may be addressing something important in considering the deployment of the idea of fascism, but at the same time it is difficult to understand fascism as non-ideological, not least insofar as it is understood as a device that stands in distinction from, e.g., liberalism. He, for example, excludes Arendt from this charge of ideology, but it is not clear how Arendt *qua* liberal advocate is exempt from her own definition of totalitarianism's reliance on departure from unquestionable axioms.

The effect of Payne's thorough attention to context in the Fascism/fascism distinction is slightly ambiguous. His attention to detail might be read either as an affirmation of the idea of totalitarianism, if one strictly confined; or it may represent a measured attempt to avoid lumping fascism into the ill-defined category of totalitarianism by relegating its unencumbered operation to a specific period to ease fear of its hapless re-emergence in our own times. Does the end of the Era of Fascism preclude the continued operation of our own era of fascism? Payne's understanding of fascism highlights important facets of what Fascism is, but it may fall short insofar as it seeks to limit the scope of Fascism while defining it in terms that are not as

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<sup>21</sup> ISAAC, J. "CRITICS OF TOTALITARIANISM" IN BALL, T. & BELLAMY, R., EDs. (2005). THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF TWENTIETH-CENTURY POLITICAL THOUGHT. NEW YORK: CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 181-201.

separable from the present as he wishes to suggest in limiting fascism in the present to cases such as Saddam Hussein's Iraq.

If fascism relies in part on essentialized identity, the quirky combination of elitism and the leadership principle bolstered by mass mobilization, and the positive valuation of violence, it is not entirely fair to draw such a sharp distinction between Iraq and the United States that *invaded* Iraq.<sup>22</sup> The conditions of mass democracy resonate with this emphasis on leadership and elitism, the idea of American Exceptionalism speaks to this inborn identity, the deployment of physical violence in the absence of a credible threat to our own instances suggests the weak justification needed for use of violence, and if the concern for Fascism resides in its global catastrophic effects, the United States clearly exercises a greater Fascist reach than did Saddam Hussein. It is thus more convincing, if we accept these basic tenets of Payne's definition, to understand fascism as the truth of liberal capitalism, and moreover the truth that must be discursively cloaked in order to legitimate its perpetuation. Distinguished from or within neo-imperialism, however, this fascism might represent a particular risk in times of crisis when demands of the time and desire for self-preservation force an inward turn at the expense of the outside. The identity crisis concomitant with the cracking of the capitalist edifice in crisis lends itself to a more forceful and assertive turn to 'who we are'.

#### PSYCHOANALYSIS AND FASCISM

Slavoj Žižek begins *The Ticklish Subject* echoing Marx: "A spectre is haunting Western Academia[,] the spectre of the Cartesian subject".<sup>23</sup> Suggesting the "academic orientations" that have "entered... to exorcize this spectre", he hails the reader as

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<sup>22</sup> AS PAYNE IMPLICITLY SUGGESTS, ECHOING GEORGE H.W. BUSH.

<sup>23</sup> ŽIŽEK, S. (1999). *THE TICKLISH SUBJECT*. NEW YORK: VERSO, 1.

partisan of the Cartesian subject to “publish their views, their aims, their tendencies, and meet this nursery tale of the Spectre of Cartesian subjectivity with the philosophical manifesto of Cartesian subjectivity itself”.<sup>24</sup> The introduction is thoroughly peppered with the difficulty in toeing the line between asserting the capacity of the subject to political efficacy while acknowledging the kernel of truth in the critiques of the self-transparent subject. Psychoanalysis provides an indispensable perspective to the discussion of political subjectivity in answer to these difficulties. Confronting a discourse that hovers above the political realm, alternately manifesting promise, potential, and despair, psychoanalysis offers a means by which to excavate the subject’s psyche without diminishing the significance and influence of the collectivity. Eschewing neither the possibilities and achievements of human endeavour through reason, nor the drives and depravities that lurk beneath the gloss of the *cogito*, psychoanalysis remains ever-cognizant of the tension inherent in organized human life. As Jacqueline Rose frames her own attachment to psychoanalysis, “[if] psychoanalysis is persuasive, it is because... far from diminishing, it has the profoundest respect for the forces it is up against.”<sup>25</sup>

Psychoanalysis has a long history of academic deployment in social and cultural analysis. Following the First World War and during Freud’s lifetime Wilhelm Reich wrote *Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis* (1929). One decade after the Second World War Herbert Marcuse published his synthesis of Freud and Marx in *Eros and Civilization* (1955). Louis Althusser’s work was clearly influenced by psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan’s structural re-reading of Freud, and is quite apparent even when he is not speaking to Lacan’s work through his terminological allusions. Deleuze and

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<sup>24</sup> *IBID.*, 2.

<sup>25</sup> ROSE, J. (2007). THE LAST RESISTANCE. NEW YORK: VERSO, 35.

Guattari take take aim at psychoanalysis in favor of their own schizoanalysis in an attempt to think outside what they view as the limitations of psychoanalytic work.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, psychoanalysis has been mobilized to answer the specific question of fascism: 1950's *The Authoritarian Personality* found UC Berkeley researchers seeking an answer through Freud of why the masses desired fascism.<sup>27</sup> Deleuze and Guattari frame their rejection of psychoanalysis precisely through the Freudian developmental model in which Adorno et al. locate this love of repression.<sup>28</sup>

To be sure, the tensions that inhere in the organization of human life are complex and multi-scalar. Freud locates the formative operation of power early on in the experience of the child in daddy-mommy-me triad, which effects cascade and multiply throughout life. Lacan proposes the formation of the ego in the infant's recognition of a specific deficiency in relation to the parent, which sets the consequential ground for the distinction of self and other which one author has suggested makes it no wonder that humans are so unique in their mass killing of one another.<sup>29</sup> The collective attachment that serves as the condition of possibility for organized life thus contains the seeds of its own dissolution. In spite of a certain mystical disrepute psychoanalysis carries among popular channels, to the extent that its founding assumption is that structures of power have tangible effects on psychic life it is particularly well suited to, and perhaps even a necessary to, consideration of these organizing principles.

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<sup>26</sup> DELEUZE, G, AND GUATTARI, F. (2005) *ANTI-OEDIPUS*. MINNEAPOLIS: UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA PRESS.

<sup>27</sup> ADORNO, T.W., FRENKEL-BRUNSWIK, E., LEVINSON, D.J., & SANFORD, R.N. (1950). *THE AUTHORITARIAN PERSONALITY*. NEW YORK: HARPER AND ROW, 228.

<sup>28</sup> DELEUZE, G, AND GUATTARI, F. (2005) *ANTI-OEDIPUS*. MINNEAPOLIS: UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA PRESS, 102.

<sup>29</sup> WETHERELL, M., TAYLOR, S., AND YATES, S.J., EDS. (2001). *DISCOURSE THEORY AND PRACTICE: A READER*. THOUSAND OAKS: SAGE PUBLICATIONS, LTD.



While these organizing principles exercise power through collective attachments on many levels ranging from the family to the state, statal collective attachment carries special significance in the post-Westphalian world. Insofar as Weber's definition of state as the successful monopoly of the legitimate use of violence in a particular territory retains its hold on the structure of world politics,<sup>30</sup> this latent threat provides the state an inordinate ability to shape the "psychic life of power".<sup>31</sup> Even so, the abstractness of the state makes it difficult to speak of a direct linkage between state and individual. We may locate specific instances of the exercise of state power through, e.g., a routine traffic stop or the collection of taxes, but it is clear that the state exercises and reproduces itself institutionally through concrete action. The state reproduces itself as a social construct backed by an assumed legitimate exercise of physical violence. In contrast, however constituted or understood, the family occupies a clear and privileged place in shaping psychic life through its concrete expression as a site of repression to the end of habit formation. While power within the family may operate through a physically violent aspect (spanking, e.g.), its significance draws more from the power of social pressures and an advantage of shaping the child's earliest impressions.

The rote division of state and familial exercises of power is, however, problematic: to the extent that the very constitution of the family may be shaped by the imperative of state, Foucault's understanding of government as constituted by the conduct of conduct conduces to an over-determined advantage to the state. One need look no farther than China's one child policy or the aforementioned movement within the United States to statutorily define what constitutes a family through the definition

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<sup>30</sup> OWEN, D. & STRONG, T.B., EDS. (2004). THE VOCATION LECTURES. INDIANAPOLIS: HACKETT PUBLISHING COMPANY, 33.

<sup>31</sup> TO BORROW THE VERY APT PHRASEOLOGY OF JUDITH BUTLER'S 1997 BOOK OF THE SAME TITLE.

who may enter a marriage to see statal family interventions.<sup>32</sup> Althusser keenly noted the significance of the school as an ideological apparatus in reproducing social structures and inculcating structure-preserving institutions. While the family may have first bite at the apple in influencing the child's understanding of the world, the highly impressionable age at which children enter the school lends the power structure of the school a strong influence, and likewise lends itself to consideration in examining popular understandings and influences of power.

#### **WHERE'S THE CONFOUNDED SUBJECT?**

In his critique of the sociological/academic establishment C. Wright Mills references the social scientist as craftsman, rejecting the fetishization of methodology in favor of responsible efforts to understand a social world that more often than not does not lend itself to easy understanding.<sup>33</sup> Rather than subject oneself to the restrictions of methodology and problem-definition handmaiden to the driving assumptions of modernity, tantamount to Einstein's definition of insanity,<sup>34</sup> he suggested it is because "I don't have the data, and I shan't be able to get it [which]... makes it all the more important that I speculate about it."<sup>35</sup> He further denies that any honest work of social science can be performed without acknowledgment of the values which drive it and the apparent threat to them.<sup>36</sup> An adequate answer to a research question "will contain a view of the strategic points of intervention - the levers by which the structure may be maintained or changed; and an assessment of those who are in a position to intervene

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<sup>32</sup> THIS IS OF COURSE TO SAY NOTHING OF THE PRESUMED STATE RIGHT TO INTERVENE IN FAMILY LIFE THROUGH THE APPARATUS OF CHILD SERVICES.

<sup>33</sup> MILLS, C.W. (2000). THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION. NEW YORK: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS.

<sup>34</sup> I.E. CONTINUING TO DO THE SAME THING WHILE EXPECTING A DIFFERENT RESULT.

<sup>35</sup> *IBID.*, 208.

<sup>36</sup> *IBID.*, 129.

but are not doing so.”<sup>37</sup> One must be systematic, rigorous, and thorough in one’s research, but not dogmatic.

In his *Vocation Lectures* Max Weber speaks to the disenchantment of the world, the guiding assumption of modernity, that the malleability and betterment of the world through science and reason deliver incompletely on their promise.

Whether... it is worth anyone’s while to choose science as a “vocation” and whether science itself has an objectively worthwhile “vocation” is itself a value judgment about which nothing useful can be said in the lecture room. This is because positively affirming the value of science is the *precondition* of all teaching. <sup>38</sup>

Our age is characterized by rationalization and intellectualizing, and above all, the disenchantment of the world. Its resulting fate is that precisely the ultimate and most sublime values have withdrawn from public life.<sup>39</sup>

It would be unduly pessimistic to suggest an entirely tragic element in this march of modernity, particularly considering that the attempt to temper the shortcomings of modernity rests on a similar faith or hope in the ability of reason to produce a better life. If Adorno and Horkheimer counsel that myth is enlightenment and enlightenment reverts to myth,<sup>40</sup> the danger in modernity comes in the myth of objectivity, complete delegation of political agency to the technocracy, and the failure to acknowledge the guiding myths of our time as such, that science can be allowed to provide provisional answers to questions about the world, that the value judgment that precedes scientific inquiry itself precludes answering “what then shall we do and how shall we organize our lives”,<sup>41</sup> unless perhaps you count the liberal life-as-project trope of healthy living.

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<sup>37</sup> **IBID., 131.**

<sup>38</sup> **OWEN, D., AND STRONG, T.B. (2004). THE VOCATION LECTURES. INDIANAPOLIS: HACKETT PUBLISHING COMPANY, 27.**

<sup>39</sup> **IBID., 30.**

<sup>40</sup> **ADORNO, T.W. AND HORKHEIMER, M. (1979). DIALECTIC OF ENLIGHTENMENT. LONDON: VERSO.**

<sup>41</sup> **OWEN, D., AND STRONG, T.B. (2004). THE VOCATION LECTURES. INDIANAPOLIS: HACKETT PUBLISHING COMPANY, 27.**

If the tendency to the individualization of political analysis portends a conservatizing tendency,<sup>42</sup> rather than conflating units of analysis, the simultaneous focus on individual and collective through a synthesis of Freud and Žižek answers to the balance of which Mills speaks: “Order as well as disorder is relative to viewpoint: to come to an orderly understanding of men and societies requires a set of viewpoints that are simple enough to make understanding possible, yet comprehensive enough to permit us to include in our view the range and depth of the human variety.”<sup>43</sup> Inclusion of the Freudian perspective points to the importance of the collective to the individual, emphasizing a crucial point: the political is the collective, and to depart from the individual without acknowledging the reciprocal relationship between the two is to rob analysis of its political dimension. Conversely, it is naive and equally problematic to presume complete homogeneity within and among the collective. To avoid the determinism of such a viewpoint it is necessary to supplement Freud with an account of this individual excess, which we find in Žižek’s reading of Lacan. The psychoanalytic perspective thus provides us, at the very least, a narrative counter-weight to that offered by modern scientific normativity through a stark contrast contrast to its biologized psychological counterpart (Mills’ cheerful robots! Take this pill and you’ll be happy as a clam!).<sup>44</sup> Even if one takes issue with the epistemology on which psychoanalysis is undertaken, I suggest that is precisely the want of the data to understand the psychic life of power, and the difficulty in attaining it, that justifies what many might classify as mere ad hoc speculation.

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<sup>42</sup> BRANNEY, P. (2008). “SUBJECTIVITY, NOT PERSONALITY: COMBINING PSYCHOANALYSIS AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS.” SOCIAL AND PERSONALITY PSYCHOLOGY COMPASS, 2(2), 574-590.

<sup>43</sup> MILLS, C.W. (2000). THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION. NEW YORK: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 133.

<sup>44</sup> SEE, E.G., ROSE, N.S. (2007). THE POLITICS OF LIFE ITSELF: BIOMEDICINE, POWER, AND SUBJECTIVITY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY. PRINCETON: PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS.

The marriage of Freud and Žižek suggests a research method that aims to understand the interplay between the structures of power understood through psychic mappings and the discursive formations through which they are understood. Peter Branney outlines three broad approaches to the marriage of psychoanalytic theory with discourse analysis: (1) Free Association Narrative Interview (FANI), (2) Psychoanalytic Discursive Psychology (PDP), and (3) Lacanian excursions into social psychology.<sup>45</sup> As the present work does not make use of interviews, the latter two are most interesting to our considerations. PDP and Lacanian excursions are notably similar in their use of archive materials as the foundation of analysis, but differ in their utilization. Whereas PDP is organized around case studies and is typically deployed within a Freudian perspective, Lacanian excursions are organized around specific issues. Against PDP, Branney notes the Lacanian approach is categorically opposed to methodological rigidity, which he locates in the respective structure of each psychoanalytic theory. Freud's more rote and systematic mapping of the psyche lends itself to a similarly structured analytic approach, where Lacan's preference for obscurity over clarity favors an approach that draws upon a particular theoretical facet as a point of intervention for further issue engagement.

Branney notes that while FANI and PDP are on a trajectory toward methodological standardization which carries a certain benefit in lending an air of legitimacy, it may also serve to limit the potential for innovative research and quell the audacious psycho discursive research. As discourse analysis itself defies easy justification, we are essentially left in the position suggested by Mills unfortunately sexist imperative "every man his own methodologist!" Cases of this approach must be carefully justified by the researcher and assessed by the reader as to its explanatory

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<sup>45</sup> BRANNEY, P. (2008). "SUBJECTIVITY, NOT PERSONALITY: COMBINING PSYCHOANALYSIS AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS." SOCIAL AND PERSONALITY PSYCHOLOGY COMPASS, 2(2), 574-590.

worth and validity.<sup>46</sup> This in turn raises the ever-present question for psychological approaches to political analysis: who sits on the couch, who is our subject of psychoanalytic inquiry? In clinical psychoanalysis the justification for treatment is located in the individual symptom, e.g. neurosis, and the analysis thus occurs through the individual case. To identify analogous universal individual symptoms is difficult, if not epistemologically absurd. We might try to find this justification by mining statistics for individuals seeking psychological treatment, or who consume psychopharmaceutical medication, or some similar measure, but these all seem rather dubious. Such statistical justification relies on seeking treatment for symptoms that may be stigmatized, or drug use that may be heavily promoted by an industry that spends a huge sum of money each year to create demand.

Part of the struggle in locating the subject stems from the need balance between particularity and universality. In order to be worthwhile our analysis needs to speak to a problem that carries some kind of collective problem and solution, but we want to do so in a way that dignifies the human variety. Žižek speaks to the inadvertent conservatism that a fetishization for context or over-particularizing may beget:

Why is such radical historicizing false, despite the obvious moment of truth it contains? Because today's (late capitalist global market) social reality itself is dominated by what Marx referred to as the power of 'real abstraction': the circulation of capital is the force of radical 'deterritorialization' (to use Deleuze's term) which, in its very functioning, actively ignores specific conditions and cannot be rooted in them.<sup>47</sup>

As we see consistently in Žižek's thought, there is here a conflicted impulse which comes across through his ubiquitous references to 'kernels' and 'moments' of truth, wherein he seeks to invert the constitution of radical politics – an affirmation of rightist positions in defense of a leftist politics. It would thus be wrong to read into this a

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<sup>46</sup> **IBID.**

<sup>47</sup> **ŽIŽEK, S (2000). DID SOMEBODY SAY TOTALITARIANISM? FIVE INTERVENTIONS ON THE (MIS)USE OF A NOTION. NEW YORK: VERSO, 2.**

renunciation of the need for context, but to emphasize context above all else runs the risk of crippling the critical project to the extent that there is an inverse relationship between scope and explanatory power. His reference to ‘real abstraction’ and ‘deterritorialization’ as forces that actively ignore specific conditions and cannot be rooted in them should be read hyperbolically. It is not that local conditions are irrelevant. McDonald’s does not expand without regard for local conditions: as John Travolta’s character Vic Vega notes in *Pulp Fiction*, the idea of the ‘Quarter Pounder’ cheeseburger makes little sense in a metric system, but this process of expansion is not rooted in these differences but encounters and addresses them incidentally, and in some ways dilutes them.

#### **BANAL FASCISM AND CITIZENSHIP**

Were I to disavow the ‘I’ writing this, you would surely find me in it anyhow, so in suggesting the trajectory of this work I heed Mills’ suggestion that research be driven by biography in the most literal and explicit way. Lest I be charged with crafting an entirely question-begging argument, my admission that the heuristic and methodological positions here employed stand in need of constant justification leaves a gap in my approach in the absence of a specific problem. My underlying and consistent concern which justifies a psycho-discursive approach is contemporary understandings of citizenship in the United States. To the extent that these understandings are tied to forces that act beyond the borders of the United States this work may carry applicability beyond this confinement, but given my own experiential context it is with the US specifically that I concern myself. The values from which I proceed are crystallized in the selection of thinkers from which I draw, but the underlying drive is best captured in the yearning conclusion to Freud’s *Civilization and*

*its Discontents* for a plan of life that shall make us happy.<sup>48</sup> The media tell us everyday how fantastic and exceptional the United States is because of our democratic inclusion (think back to the Dickey article), our government by the people. Why, then, do I feel so positively apathetic, an obsessive mere spectator of politics? Why do a vast number among us not exercise the minimum act of voting?<sup>49</sup>

I thus throw my hat into the ring of conceptual negotiation of the essentially contestable concept of democracy. The values with which this project is concerned are basically those same enlightenment values that ostensibly prop up the governmental edifice of the United States (liberty, equality, democracy, and so on). Alexander Galloway's *Protocol* here is instructive to the task at hand. Galloway draws on the conflicted structure of internet protocol to advance the Deleuzian thesis of control society, the mechanism of self-control driven by desire.<sup>50</sup> The contradiction in protocol, and likewise democratic-republicanism as it stands, lies in the founding myth of radical freedom and inclusion (democracy) which is functionally undermined by a competing centralizing impulse (republic). The key political aspect here is that centralization is justified, and in principle open to amendment, through this competing distributive impulse. The question thus stands: in light of this principle, what is feasibility of actually realizing this founding myth?

It might be ideologically tempting to favor a spontaneous and horizontally-structured exercise of power, but realistically we must consider the restrictions upon this spontaneous collective usurpation by the competing impulse of hierarchy of the

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<sup>48</sup> FREUD, S. (1989). CIVILIZATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS. NEW YORK: W.W. NORTON PRESS.

<sup>49</sup> THIS WOULD PRESENT AN INTERESTING POINT OF INTERVENTION FOR CONSIDERATION OF CITIZENSHIP IN THE UNITED STATES IN RELATION TO THE REST OF THE WORLD'S ESTABLISHED DEMOCRACIES: WHEREAS MANY OTHER COUNTRIES ENJOY HIGHER VOTER TURNOUT, THERE IS LIKEWISE A DOWNWARD TREND IN THESE NUMBERS.

<sup>50</sup> DELEUZE, G. (1990). NEGOTIATIONS. NEW YORK: COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS.



social elite's ability to stifle the collective's will to power. What this points to, and as highlighted in Carl Schmitt's implicit presumption of democratic legitimacy in his understanding of the friend/foe basis of the political, is the inextricability of these two competing impulses under conditions of the present. Under conditions of mass democracy in the world today there are threats to the collectivity that cannot be realistically addressed on a collective basis for limitations of time, knowledge, and the need for pressing action. On the other hand, Schmitt's elaboration of the dictatorial that nests among the deliberative cannot be divorced completely from the Wolinian notion insofar as it is the idea (myth) of collective support and unity, and therefore legitimacy, that gives force to the legal structure that enables the sovereign to decide on the exception, and within which any actions taken may be retrospectively justified. Moreover, and as we shall see later, the use of two psychoanalytic frameworks is intimately tied to this dual conception of the political. As I suggested earlier, the two psychoanalytic theories upon which I draw are complementary, but more than being merely capricious affectations, each is conceptually tied to each of these conceptions of the political.

The first two chapters structure a psychoanalytic heuristic within which to understand citizenship, political engagement, and civic ethos. In Chapter One I engage Wendy Brown's essay "Political Idealization and its Discontents" to assess the Freudian framework within which she works. I aim to establish an understanding of the dynamic relating individual to collectivity conceptualized in terms of Freud's libidinal economy. I suggest a slight but crucial amendment to her model in the interest of political efficacy. In Chapter Two I draw a synthesis between the Freudian model developed in the first chapter and that employed by Slavoj Žižek to add an extra explanatory dimension to the former while strengthening the political relevance of that

latter's otherwise highly individualistic focus. I will map these two intertwined schools of psychoanalytic thought onto two similarly interleaved schools of political thought in search of levers and points of intervention. In Chapter Three I ground my political-psychoanalytic mapping through analysis of the inaugural addresses of George W. Bush and Barack Obama. I specifically highlight the conceptions of citizenship as they relate to Obama's campaign themes of 'hope' and 'change' to evaluate to what extent they appear to mobilize the kind of participation on which his campaign relied and the libidinal economy prescribes. Having provisionally considered the rhetorical trajectory of Obama's presidency, in the conclusion I draw the discursive currents of Chapter Three into a broader world context, engaging the discourse of cosmopolitan citizenship in relation to Obama's rhetoric to suggest the relevance necessity of a revised cosmopolitan civic attachment.

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## CHAPTER I: BIG LOVE IS BAD LOVE?

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### POLITICAL IDEALIZATION

In “Political Idealization and its Discontents” Wendy Brown undertakes to redeem a qualified conception of love of state in the conflicted context of the United States post-9/11.<sup>1</sup> Her project represents an attempt to remedy both the zeal and detachment that propel fascism through the application of Freud’s psychoanalytic model of love and group formation to the ideal of socratic citizenship. Drawing primarily from Freud’s *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1989), she seeks to lay forth a reading of Freud that will enable love of nation linked to a strong sense of critical agency borne of civic fidelity. Although the political relevance of such a reading is undeniable in the environment of group-think that predominated in national discourse in the aftermath of the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, critical reception of the article in both its embryonic and published forms has been less than favorable to a left highly uncomfortable with attachments to abstractions and weary of national attachments.<sup>2</sup> The charge against her is thus that her defense of collective attachment, however unintentionally, lays a theoretical foundation for the development of fascism.

Against these critiques, Brown’s effort represents an important work both in (1) attempting to synthesize a Freudian reading of Socrates, and (2) crafting a conception of citizenship that provides for civic fidelity bound to a necessary critique. For its

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<sup>1</sup> BROWN, W. (2005). *EDGEWORK*. PRINCETON: PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS.

<sup>2</sup> THE DEPTH OF THIS GROUP-THINK IS EVIDENCED AND EXEMPLIFIED BY RECENT POPULAR CRITICISM OF THE MEDIA’S FAILURE TO SERVE ITS WATCHDOG FUNCTION VIS-A-VIS THE INVASION OF IRAQ. FOR INSTANCES OF THIS MEDIA CRITIQUE SEE, E.G. NICOLAS D. KRISTOFF’S “DON’T TURN US INTO POODLES” OR GARY KAMIYA’S “IRAQ: WHY THE MEDIA FAILED.”

problematic aspects, it may be possible to read and build upon her argument to address these criticisms; we will aim to maintain a fidelity to the basic shape of her argument, while tweaking its foundations in the goal of a stronger footing. If the most convincing argument is that made in the language and terms of one's interlocutor, it is my hope that my adherence to Brown's left-conservatism will show in the language of left and right that critique of the collectivity constitutes a vital and necessary component of citizenship. This involves two difficult and symmetrical tasks. Insofar as critique constitutes an intrinsic element of the left's conception of ideal citizenship, and devotion to country an intrinsic component of the right's, these tasks consist in: (1) establishing civic love as the necessary engine of the critique to which the left is committed, and (2) establishing civic critique as a necessary component of the right's commitment to civic love.

In "Political Idealization and its Discontents" Brown appropriates a reading of Freud supplemented with Žižek that explains the psychic root of patriotism, the pain felt at its critique, and the trajectory assumed when one takes as their ego-ideal the abstract notion of the state. In spite of her argument's explanatory power, her relative lack of normative grounding makes it an explanation that invites its own transgression: "In taking up the challenge to think psychoanalytically about the state-citizen relation, I will not consider all that is entailed in formulating this relation in terms of the filial psyche but rather will focus upon the place of idealization and identification in generating political fealty".<sup>3</sup> She suggests imperatives to temper her patriotism, but no mechanism by which to enact it. The positive task of this essay will therefore be a re-reading of Brown in light of this lack, an attempt to surpass description to a psychoanalytic prescription of her stated aim to "discern how critique can be fashioned

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<sup>3</sup> BROWN, W. (2005). *EDGEWORK*. PRINCETON: PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS, 27.

as a productive de-idealization”.<sup>4</sup> In the spirit of psychoanalysis as “the talking cure”, I seek to demonstrate how meaningful democratic citizenship must be defined by this same kind of critical discursive ethos. Through an expansion of Freud’s conception of love by incorporating Thanatos as presented in *Civilization and its Discontents*, I seek to build upon and strengthen Brown’s argument for Socratic citizenship qua patriotism to embrace the quirks and possibilities of love as necessary to the aims of the left.

#### **BIG LOVE IS BAD LOVE**

The discomfort attending to Wendy Brown’s theorization of political fidelity is deeply rooted. This reticence toward love in the political realm ranges from the instrumental misgivings of Niccolo Machiavelli in *The Prince* premised on its volatility,<sup>5</sup> to Deleuze and Guattari who approach the idealization that inheres in Freud’s love from the perspective of a century’s worth of apparently love-induced atrocity of international scope: “One word here on the disgrace of psychoanalysis in history and politics: The procedure is well known: two figures are made to appear, the Great Man and the Crowd” (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, 102). Their object of critique is the fascizing tendencies of the Oedipal projection in psychoanalysis, which they seek to address in restructuring the psychoanalytic framework. The centrality of love in this relationship underscores for our discussion the danger of love as the foundation of civilization, emphasized by their reference to Hitler in the ensuing narrative. The unconditional nature of love suits it to the context of an interpersonal relationship, but makes it problematic in the context of the citizen-state relationship to the extent that

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<sup>4</sup> **IBID.**

<sup>5</sup> **WHERE HE ARGUES THAT GIVEN THE CHOICE BETWEEN HAVING ONE’S SUBJECT LOVE OR FEAR, IT IS ALWAYS BETTER TO RELY ON THE FAR LESS FICKLE FEAR (WOOTON 1994, 51-2). THIS IS NOT TO DISMISS MACHIAVELLI’S POINT AS TRIVIAL. INDEED, MACHIAVELLI’S LESSONS REGARDING LOVE, FEAR, AND HATE STILL HAVE SIGNIFICANT BEARING IN THE POLITICAL REALM. I DRAW THE COMPARISON ON THE UNDERSTANDING THAT, WHEREAS MACHIAVELLI WAS OPERATING UNDER THE ASSUMPTION OF A PURELY REPUBLICAN FORM, LOVE POTENTIALLY OPERATES IN AN EVEN MORE INSIDIOUS WAY IN THE CONTEXT OF POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY, I.E. WHEN IT IS MATTER NOT JUST OF UNSEATING THE SOVEREIGN, BUT WHEN SUCH POPULAR LOVE MAY BE USED TO JUSTIFY EGREGIOUS ACTS.**

such love may be exploited to the end of asking fantastic gestures of the collectivity-- conditions which have crystallized in the most egregious cases of fascism in the 20th Century.

Indeed, in his critique of Habermas' constitutional patriotism, Patchen Markell explains Habermas' interest in re-directing pre-political national/ethnic attachments with a similar sentiment: "the experience of the past few centuries of state-building has taught us that the fantasy of a homogenous community can be pursued only at the cost of intolerance and ethnic cleansing".<sup>6</sup> The thrust of Markell's critique is that Habermas, rather than negating or overcoming the affect that troubles him, is simply employing a strategy of redirection: "the reproduction even of civic and principled forms of identity proceed precisely by appealing to, rather than overcoming, the weightiness of the historical institutions and concrete cultures to which we find ourselves bound even prior to the process of critical reflection".<sup>7</sup> The strategy of redirection as employed by constitutional patriotism thus does not seek to substantively alter affect, suggests that in a modern liberal society there are objects that are more and less likely to lend themselves to violence.

The problem Brown encounters in terms of love in the political realm inheres in her primary text of interest, Freud's *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, specifically the primacy love takes in group formation. In the second chapter of *Group Psychology* he says "I shall make an attempt at using the concept of libido for the purpose of throwing light upon group psychology".<sup>8</sup> Beyond merely the using libido shed light, however, his aim is more ambitious: "We will try our fortune, then, with the

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<sup>6</sup> MARKELL, P. (2000). "MAKING AFFECT SAFE FOR DEMOCRACY? ON 'CONSTITUTIONAL PATRIOTISM'". *POLITICAL THEORY* 28(1): 38-63.

<sup>7</sup> *IBID.*, 45.

<sup>8</sup> FREUD, S (1989). *GROUP PSYCHOLOGY AND THE ANALYSIS OF THE EGO*. NEW YORK: W.W. NORTON PRESS, 29.

supposition that love relationships... also constitute the essence of the group mind” (*italics mine*).<sup>9</sup> The concept of group formation espoused in Brown’s primary text of reference appears not incidentally related, but inextricably tied to some conception of love. The problem is rooted as much in reference to the use of love as a binding force as her effort “to discern how critique can be fashioned as a productive de-idealization,” which is to say the claim that one should not or does not love things is made both descriptively and normatively.

Perhaps more significantly, however, Brown’s approach marks a break from Markell’s strategy of redirection. Taking a step back for a moment, if we understand affect in the political realm to be a problem, then there seem to be two broad potential solutions. The first of these amounts to a negation of affect, which may take shape either as (1) an outright disavowal of affect’s political import or (2) an attempt to redirect affect’s object of attachment. We have already ruled out the latter approach apropos of Markell’s argument, but the former is unsatisfactory for much the same reason: the strategy of disavowal is hopelessly naive in that it takes as an object of faith that which one need not dig very deeply to unhinge. The second involves the attempt not to redirect but to substantively alter mode of attachment. Rather than saying particular objects are safe for broad collective attachment and others are not, Brown opens the possibility through psychoanalysis for this more dynamic kind of attachment, and necessarily so. If we are to understand the individual as riven with affect not fully self-transparent and that this affect will necessarily bear some relation to the state as a power mechanism, then it is not enough to say that we should say ‘to hell with the state’. If, along with Wendy Brown, we accept that every argument is an affirmation of

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<sup>9</sup> *IBID.*, 31.

its object, then in the act of critique there is a disavowed attachment of some sort to the state.

Brown begins “Freudian Civic Bonds” with an account of individual identification and idealization, followed by an account of identification and idealization in terms of the relation of citizen to state. In individual terms, Brown characterizes love as a “complex combination of narcissistic projection and sexual inhibition”.<sup>10</sup> This is to say that love is driven as much, and perhaps even more, by the needs and characteristics of the lover as of the love object. To the extent that the love object is a reflection on the lover and serves the lover’s own psychic needs, love takes on a narcissistic nature. In this way love necessarily relies on an abstract idea insofar as the lover projects onto it what the lover needs it to be at any given time. Whatever form the love object takes, be it person, thing, or ideal, the love object is ultimately transformed in the eyes of the lover to the status of a stylized-ideal. This is not to say that the love object is fundamentally physically transformed, but to highlight the significance of the very use of the term ‘love object’. The reference to a romantic partner as an object divorces that partner from a certain set of attributes, and reduces that partner to a narcissistic instrument in the service of the lover. This fact alone has the effect of complicating the descriptive claim that one only loves people and not things to the extent that even the person takes on an idealized form in the mind of the lover. Insofar as the lover narcissistically projects an idealized version of the love object onto the love object, there will be a certain reluctance to criticize it. Freud and Brown claim

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<sup>10</sup> *IBID.*, 27.



there will necessarily be an overvaluation of the love object insofar as this uncritical idealization may foreclose limitation to the tasks the love object may ask of the lover.<sup>11</sup>

This individual-level dynamic is itself suggestive of the problem, but Brown complicates the picture by noting that “Freud does not take human beings to be group animals but rather, inherently socially rivalrous and competitive, a feature born from sibling jealousies over parental love”.<sup>12</sup> We might read into this that love must over-compensate for social rivalry by way of this identification in order to form a group. Love does not simply enable the formation of the group or bring it together, but represents an absolutely necessary condition of possibility in overcoming social rivalry.<sup>13</sup> We saw earlier that Freud posits love as the basis of the group mind, and Brown here fleshes this operation: “A group becomes possible... when individuals put one and the same object in place of their ego ideal and consequently identify themselves with one another in their ego”.<sup>14</sup> In the group setting the individual overcomes social rivalry by placing the same love object in the place of their ego ideal, which allows for a common sense of identification. It is in this placement that the slide between love and group formation becomes clear: the psychic form of both love and group formation are formally identical insofar as they both require the recasting of the ego-ideal in terms of a certain object. Jacqueline Rose describes this dynamic thus: “A group is nothing if not

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<sup>11</sup> ONE MIGHT HERE CONTEST THAT THIS CONCEPTION OF LOVE IS HIGHLY CONTEXT-SPECIFIC, AND THAT LOVE NEED NOT OPERATE IN THIS WAY; THAT IS CERTAINLY THE CASE, AND I DEPLOY IT HERE INsofar AS THIS ANGLICIZED NOTION OF LOVE IS OUR SUBJECT OF CONCERN.

<sup>12</sup> *IBID.*, 29.

<sup>13</sup> THIS STATEMENT UNTO ITSELF PRESUMABLY CARRIES THE CRITIQUE, DELIVERED TO THE OEDIPAL COMPLEX IN *ANTI-OEDIPUS*, THAT FREUDIAN PSYCHOANALYSIS PERPETUATES THE THING IT OSTENSIBLY DESIRES TO ALLEVIATE. TO THE EXTENT THAT CAPITALISM IS THE PREDOMINANT MODE OF PRODUCTION IT FOSTERS, CREATES, OR EVEN REQUIRES THE COMPETITIVE SUBJECT. THIS INTRODUCES AN ELEMENT OF NECESSITY EVEN IF THINGS COULD BE OTHERWISE. THIS IS TO SAY THAT EVEN THOUGH THIS MODE OF PRODUCTION CAN LOGICALLY BE TRANSCENDED, IT PROVIDES AN USEFUL HEURISTIC FOR THE PRESENT STATE OF AFFAIRS, IF NOTHING ELSE.

<sup>14</sup> *IBID.*, 29.

the struggle to preserve its own ideal”.<sup>15</sup> Insofar as the existence of the group relies on a common identification with a particular object (person, thing, or ideal) to overcome in-group rivalry, any attack on that object threatens to unseat the very foundation of the group. Love simultaneously enables and threatens the group’s very existence by fostering an environment wherein a necessary hostility is directed outward rather than inward, installing an us/them binary which places the nation in rivalry with an Other. Freud notes that, “It is always possible to bind together a considerable number of people in love, so long as there are other people left over to receive the manifestations of their aggressiveness”.<sup>16</sup> It is in this context of the love’s strain to overcome social rivalry that the overvaluation of the love object becomes especially problematic. The overvaluation of the love object in individual terms is by no means innocent, the overvaluation of the love object in the national context only amplifies the stakes by producing the condition of possibility for the atrocious acts of fascism Deleuze and Guattari reference in *The Great Man and the Crowd*. If Freud is correct in suggesting that all that is necessary to bind a group is the existence of an Other against which to direct hostility, the scope and extent of fascism becomes especially insidious. Love as the foundation of the collectivity presents the conditions for the groups dissolution to the extent that it provides the possibility to bring the group to arms against another group.

We have seen how love as a binding force of the collective may lend itself to a slide to fascism; but if Brown’s charge is that she enables a slide into fascism, this

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<sup>15</sup> ROSE, J. (2007) THE LAST RESISTANCE. NEW YORK: VERSO, 161.

<sup>16</sup> FREUD, S (1989). GROUP PSYCHOLOGY AND THE ANALYSIS OF THE EGO. NEW YORK: W.W. NORTON PRESS, 72.

critique must be substantiated with an alternative mode of attachment.<sup>17</sup> The more readily acceptable mode of attachment is fidelity, but it is not clear that this actually serves as a remedy to the fascist problem. We must then examine if there is any other way love can be acceptably tempered to avert this slide. In navigating this problematic, it will be necessary to problematize the very critique being made by Brown's interlocutors: what does it mean to say that nationalism must be driven by a sense of fidelity rather than love? What sense can we make of fidelity in the context of psychoanalysis?

#### SICK, TWISTED LOVE

Freud begins Group Psychology with the observation that “only rarely and under certain exceptional conditions is individual psychology in a position to disregard the relations of [the] individual to others.”<sup>18</sup> To emphasize the indispensable role of love in the group, in Group Psychology Freud explores the role of love in as counterintuitive a context as the army in relation to the church. In discussing the church and the army as two highly organized and lasting groups to examine the libidinal ties on which each relies, Freud suggests that the role of Eros in the understanding of the military organization has been a key theoretical and practical deficit, the absence of which is “to be found in the phenomenon of panic, which is best studied in military groups. A panic arises if a group of that kind becomes disintegrated”.<sup>19</sup> The group panic appears when there effectively is no group any longer, i.e. the group has been divested of libidinal ties.

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<sup>17</sup> OF COURSE, PRESUMABLY THE DISTASTE FOR STATE COLLECTIVE ATTACHMENTS IS PART AND PARCEL OF A DESIRE TO SEE THE STATE ITSELF WITHER. IF THIS IS NOT THE CASE, THEN INDEED, YOU MUST SUPPLY AN ALTERNATIVE MODE OF ATTACHMENT. IF THIS IS THE CASE, THEN THERE IS THE VERY LEGITIMATE QUESTION OF WHETHER THAT END MAY BE ACHIEVED THROUGH THE SIMPLE REJECTION OF THE STATE.

<sup>18</sup> FREUD, S. (1989). GROUP PSYCHOLOGY AND THE ANALYSIS OF THE EGO. NEW YORK: W.W. NORTON, 3.

<sup>19</sup> *IBID.*, 35.

Even a group as austere and regimented as the army requires Eros' blessing to cohere. It is worth noting in this case, however, that Freud defines the army as an artificial group which, whatever its reliance on Eros, "a certain external force is employed to prevent them from disintegrating and to check alterations in their structure".<sup>20</sup> This signifies an important acknowledgment, but not a crippling one. The army may necessitate a certain external force in the form of a threat of physical violence, but it is precisely when this threat is most necessary that the dissolution of libidinal ties is sufficient to dissolve the group. This external force exists in times of peace as a kind of nudge to reinforce the libidinal ties of the group, but there is an inverse relationship between the efficacy of this force and its necessity. The time at which this threat is most necessary is in when the the group is at the verge of dissolution, but it is just this possibility of dissolution, this weakening of libidinal ties that negates the threat of external force.

This relationship between Eros and external force in group formation is neither surprising nor objectionable insofar as the group requires some kind of common attachment, but the examination of this relationship is enlightening in two ways: (1) it shows the necessity of a common object with which the nation's subjects may identify; and (2) to the extent that the state perpetuates itself by means of a monopoly of legitimate force in the absence of identification with a common object, the nation may present us with a limit-case. The example of the army demonstrates the necessity of a common love-object in order for a group to function as an effective whole. Drawn into the context of the state writ large, this common object might take the form of a commitment to the ideals of democracy, e.g. freedom and equality. A disparity of conceptions of democracy, particularly combined with disparities in sub-group power

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<sup>20</sup> *IBID.*, 32.

and influence that often obtain under modern liberal capitalist nation-states, may undermine this commitment to a common object. Inasmuch as the state is immediately less intrusive in the life of an individual compared with the army (i.e. less micro-managing), a failure to identify with these ideals, or more specifically a failure to embrace the state as an upholder of these ideals, will not present an immediate threat to the health or viability of the state; but insofar as it is non-sensical to speak of the state outside the collectivity of individuals, this lack of identification has enormous consequences in view of the enormous power the state wields over the individual. The less influence a common object has among the collectivity, the greater the distance between collectivity and state, and the less internal consistency the state has in terms of being representative of its people. What this produces is a functional contradiction: the state claims to uphold one set of ideals while enacting another. The state may persist under these conditions, in the absence of explicit popular support or participation, but so doing sets the stage for a backlash to the extent that these contradictions take a psychic toll on the collectivity.

If love is a necessary force in the formation and perpetuation of the group, what does this mean for the possibility of fidelity? One might contend that love is not tantamount to fidelity, and within Freud's own terms it is quite possible that we need not abandon the possibility of fidelity as the force of group formation. If there is no outside of love in terms of the group/collectivity, and we understand ourselves to be social animals, if only now by practical necessity, the attainment of civic fidelity becomes a function of tempering love's volatility. In other words, fidelity may only make sense as a love force that has been reduced in magnitude. In *Group Psychology* Freud suggests the possibility and mechanism of attachment of this kind:

In the psycho-analytic study of neuroses we have hitherto been occupied almost exclusively with ties with objects made by love instincts which still pursue directly

sexual aims. In groups there can evidently be no question of sexual aims of that kind. We are concerned here with love instincts which have been diverted from their original aims, though they do not operate with less energy on that account.<sup>21</sup>

Freud thus offers us respite from the intense feeling that characterizes the sexual instinct qua object-cathexis that threatens to morph into fascism. Freud terms these alternative attachments identifications, and identifies them as the first emotional ties the child forms. Remembering that identification and idealization were Brown's points of departure for "Political Idealization and its Discontents", it will be fruitful to supplement the account of love and group formation that Brown very ably presented with the account of group formation vis-a-vis love-inhibition put forth by Freud in *Civilization and its Discontents*.

A key inclusion that differentiates the account of group formation in *Group Psychology* from that in *Civilization and its Discontents* is a more detailed consideration of the function served by the inhibition of Eros in the collective context. "We said that man's discovery that sexual (genital) love afforded him the strongest experience of satisfaction, and in fact provided him with the prototype of all happiness," but in focusing on this kind of immediate sensory gratification "he made himself dependent... on a portion of the external world, namely, his chosen love-object, and exposed himself to extreme suffering".<sup>22</sup> The purpose of inhibiting one's love aim is a kind of psychic self-preservation, an affirmation of pain and mortality. Freud acknowledges three sources of pain: (1) the body's mortality, (2) the external world, and (3) relations to others.<sup>23</sup> The inhibition of one's love is an attempt to negate the third source of pain; one minimizes libidinal investment in order to minimize the potential

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<sup>21</sup> FREUD, S. (1989). *CIVILIZATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS*. NEW YORK: W.W. NORTON PRESS, 44.

<sup>22</sup> *IBID.*, 56.

<sup>23</sup> *IBID.*, 26.

for psychic unease that results from the loss of one's love object. The individual trades strong love attachment for a less intense but more reliable form.<sup>24</sup>

they avoid the uncertainties and disappointments of genital love by turning away from its sexual aims and transforming the instinct into an impulse with an inhibited aim. What they bring about in themselves in this way is a state of evenly suspended, steadfast, affectionate feeling, which has little external resemblance anymore to the stormy agitations of genital love, from which is it nevertheless derived.<sup>25</sup>

This is significant for nationalism in three ways: (1) The example taken here is focused on actual interpersonal love, which may taken to be normatively suggestive vis-a-vis the proper object of love; (2) if the role of aim-inhibition is a kind of psychic defense, then we might say that this inhibition of aim is a result of a desire to avoid psychic unease, then there might be little reason to avoid strong attachment to the nation; (3) This points to a certain tension within love that is noted by Freud himself, i.e. a conflict between being a tie that is productive (in a very physical way in terms of producing bodies), and at the same time anti-productive by means of the exclusivity of the love relation in its uninhibited form.

To address the first question in passing, the claim that he refers only to love in the context of people may be taken as supportive of the normative and descriptive claim that we only love people and not things. I do not deny that this claim has significant theoretical bearing on the present inquiry, but I reject it on the grounds that Freud still posits love as a foundation of group formation.<sup>26</sup> Although the actual strength of attachment and volatility of the relationship is reduced, Freud emphasizes that

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<sup>24</sup> THIS RECASTING OF LOVE BEARS ON MACHIAVELLI'S CONCEPTION OF LOVE AND FEAR IN INTERESTING WAYS, PARTICULARLY IN RELATION TO FREUD'S ANALYSIS OF GROUP PANIC. IN THIS READING OF LOVE AS A MORE RELIABLE FORM OF ATTACHMENT, IT IS IN FACT LOVE (EFFECTIVELY TEMPERED) THAT PROVIDES THE BASIS FOR A STABLE FIDELITY, AND FEAR (OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE) THAT PLAYS HAND-MAIDEN TO LOVE. THIS IS TO SAY THAT INSTEAD OF FEAR BEING PREFERABLE TO LOVE, IT IS LOVE THAT ANIMATES THE COLLECTIVITY AND ENABLES THE BINDING FORCE OF FEAR.

<sup>25</sup> *IBID.*, 57.

<sup>26</sup> IT IS TRUE, HOWEVER, THAT FREUD SUPPLEMENTS EROS WITH ANANKE AS THE FOUNDING FORCES OF HUMAN GROUPS; THIS WILL PRESUMABLY CARRY THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS THAT WILL BE INVESTIGATED LATER ON.

identifications are still derived from love proper; group identification still involves the placement in the ego-ideal a common object. Moreover, as noted earlier, personal love ultimately degenerates into a kind of idealized projection to suit the lover; to speak of a clear distinction in these terms presents a difficult task. In other words, it seems more consistent with the spirit of Freud's work to speak of collective attachment than it does to deny that possibility.

Second, personal relationships generate their own imperatives. This is to say that Freud presents aim-inhibited love as a product of the desire to preserve one's psychic ease by limiting the number of individuals with whom one engages in pure genital love. There is thus have an incentive to engage in aim-inhibited love at the interpersonal level, but this incentive may not operate on the collective level, which raises troubling possibilities in terms of fascism. The state presents a theoretically interesting example insofar as it represents characteristics of the object to the extent that it is already an ideal and only exists through its human element to the extent that it is non-sensical to speak of a state outside the people. The state has effects, presence, and imperatives that are all its own and contrary to the interests of the people (i.e. reason of state), and yet it is ultimately always individuals who are generating and acting upon these imperatives. However abstractly the state may be conceived, its existence is always reliance on its social reproduction. From a functionalist perspective, then, the perpetuation of the idea of state can only occur to the extent that individuals libidinally invest in that structure . It is quite clear in light of the fascist movements that emerged in the 20th century that there is a sufficient draw in the nation as love object to produce the stormy agitations of genital love.

Third and finally, this relationship references a distinction Freud made in terms of the function of love both to enable and foreclose group-formation: "On the one hand



love comes into opposition to the interests of civilization; on the other, civilization threatens love with substantial restrictions”.<sup>27</sup> “We have already perceived that one of the main endeavours of civilization is to bring people together into large unities. But the family will not give the individual up”.<sup>28</sup> It might seem somewhat contradictory to suggest that there is no inhibiting mechanism in the entity of the state when I earlier suggested that love presents both the possibility and counter-force to the state by providing the impetus to bring it together while presenting the possibility for its dissolution by conflict. In the same way the fear of loss and rejection with the love object inhibits interpersonal love, this possibility would seem to temper nation-love. Indeed, to the extent that the lover is first and foremost concerned with the love-object in narcissistic terms, and the lover wants to be happy, it would in fact make sense for the lover as citizen to temper love to the nation-state in order to lessen to the extent possible the repression of instincts that the state imposes.

These questions might be explained in two ways. First, we need only observe that even in genital relationships lovers do not always abide by the imperatives to inhibit their love aims. In spite of the risk of substantial pain that genital love poses individuals are still driven to engage in it. Even though the purpose of the inhibition of love serves a rational and self-interested purpose, love is in itself not a purely rational entity, and its inhibition will therefore function imperfectly. This is to say that inhibition serves a rational purpose, but that its operation is not perfectly executed. Second, we must recall Brown’s reference to Žižek’s distinction between imaginary and symbolic identifications in reference to the fascist agenda. A defining characteristic of the fascist program is a return to grace in reference to an idealized and stylized past. If

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<sup>27</sup> *IBID.*, 58.

<sup>28</sup> *IBID.*

Žižek complicates the terms of identification by suggesting that there is often an identification with state power that underlies the rhetoric of national ideals, we might suggest that it is precisely this desire collectively to be the father (the dominating power) in the global arena that negates the conflict within Eros that would otherwise temper attachment to the nation.

Turning away from the presupposition of love as the sole force determining the success of group existence as in *Group Psychology*,<sup>29</sup> towards the text from which the title of Brown's paper is derived but from which she ironically cites only once, we see a conception of group formation that is still reliant on love but adopts a more cynical worldview. In the context of this discussion the shift in emphasis in *Civilization and its Discontents* is notable in two ways: (1) in addition to Eros, Ananke (necessity) has been brought into the account of forces that cohere society; (2) the instinctual force of love, Eros, has been brought to bear with Thanatos (the death drive), the destructive instinct. In spite of the significant theoretical implications the inclusion of Ananke has for us, Freud mentions it only twice.<sup>30</sup> The emphasis of both is Ananke as the spark of civilization, with Eros as the engine:

We can only be satisfied, therefore, if we assert that the process of civilization is a modification of a task that is set it by Eros and instigated by Ananke -- by the exigencies of reality; and that this task is one of united separate individuals into a community by together by libidinal ties.<sup>31</sup>

The significance of the inclusion of necessity as a binding force is that it has the potential to provide us with an alternate form of attachment beyond that of love and identification. If necessity has this power as well, it opens the possibility of some

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<sup>29</sup> BROWN'S DECISION ON THIS TEXTUAL EXCLUSION IS A RESULT OF A PERSONAL PREFERENCE FOR FREUD'S PRE-THANATAL WORK.

<sup>30</sup> INCIDENTALLY, IN BEYOND THE PLEASURE PRINCIPLE, THE FIRST WORK IN WHICH FREUD OUTLINES THE POSSIBILITY OF THE DEATH DRIVE, ANANKE IS MENTIONED ONLY ONCE.

<sup>31</sup> *IBID.*, 104.

means beyond the mere inhibition of love with which to bind the collectivity. Bracketing for the moment that Freud holds that it is still Eros that binds the collectivity even with the inclusion of Ananke, let us suppose for the sake of argument that Ananke provides respite from our fascist love. Rather than providing a means out of the fascist problem, drawing Ananke into the role of group formation creates more problems than it solves.

To speak of civilization as a task that is “instigated by Ananke” suggests that it is materially grounded in scarcity, in accordance with Freud’s reality principle. Distinguished from the drive of Eros, which is geared toward the attainment of pleasure, Ananke is informed by the more economically-informed principle that a division of labor facilitates and eases survival. Ananke incites individuals to associate themselves with one another in order to ease the first two of Freud’s three sources of unease: the mortality of the body and the forces of the external world.<sup>32</sup> In a sense, to speak of fidelity as necessity is tenable within Freud’s terms. Freud says that “in overpowering their father, the sons had made the discovery that a combination can be stronger than the individual”.<sup>33</sup> We might say, for example, that fidelity helps cement an instrumental bond that eases the collective psychic condition by providing a certain means by which to cope with power. To say that, “I am going to be faithful to this collectivity in a rationalistic and pragmatic kind of way in order to better my own lot” initially provides a kind of critical distance that is reassuring. In a more troubling way, however, to deprive Eros of its binding power and to attribute it to or share it with

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<sup>32</sup> AND IT IS HERE THAT WE SEE ONCE AGAIN THE AMBIVALENCE BETWEEN THE TIES THAT BIND AND DESTROY. IN SEEKING TO ALLEVIATE THE UNEASE PRODUCED BY FREUD’S FIRST TWO SOURCES OF DISPLEASURE, THE CONDITIONS OF POSSIBILITY ARE CREATED, OR AT LEAST AMPLIFIED, FOR THE THIRD.

<sup>33</sup> FREUD, S. (1989). GROUP PSYCHOLOGY AND THE ANALYSIS OF THE EGO. NEW YORK: W.W. NORTON, 55.

Ananke is to ascribe necessity to the process of civilization.<sup>34</sup> Rather than merely stating that the individual is incapable of living in the absence of certain material necessities, which can have the effect of provoking individuals to form the collective that makes life more bearable and less uneasy, we may have taken the leap to essentialize the formation of groups themselves.<sup>35</sup>

#### **CAN'T BUY ME LOVE**

If we accept Eros as the fundamental binding force of society and fidelity, the task before us is to establish an affirmative means by which to temper the love that binds the collectivity to the inhibited and less volatile love-as-fidelity which is less totalizing and more constructive. Within Brown's framework this presents a difficult task because, as already mentioned, she limits herself to texts that do not employ the death drive, leaving her in the position of relying on the conflicted and bipolar nature of love to stifle itself. Brown's reluctance to deploy the death drive is not necessarily unique insofar as Freud himself encountered resistance to it in his own time: "The assumption of the existence of an instinct of death or destruction has met with resistance even in analytic circles; I am aware that there is a frequent inclination rather to ascribe whatever is dangerous and hostile in love to an original bipolarity in its own nature".<sup>36</sup> While the examples of sadism and masochism support love's bipolarity, I here enjoin Freud's claim that we cannot retain all aggressiveness as a component of love in light of the "ubiquity of non-erotic aggressivity and

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<sup>34</sup> MOREOVER, THE VERY FACT THAT FREUD DRAWS A DISTINCTION BETWEEN ANANKE AND EROS SUGGESTS THAT THIS KIND OF POSITION SEEMS TO STAND AT ODDS WITH THE AIMS OF PSYCHOANALYSIS. IF THE PURPOSE OF PSYCHOANALYSIS IS TO FOSTER GREATER PSYCHIC EASE BY MEANS OF ISOLATING THE MANNER IN WHICH POWER SHAPES THE PSYCHE, THEN TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN LOVE AND NECESSITY SUGGESTS A THEORETICAL COMMITMENT TO, AND COGNIZANCE OF, THE MANNER IN WHICH POWER SHAPES MODES OF EXISTENCE.

<sup>35</sup> THE IDEA THAT FREUD WOULD NOT WANT TO TAKE THIS STEP GAINS SUPPORT IN HIS DISCUSSION OF THE THREE SOURCES OF PAIN, WHEN HE ACKNOWLEDGES THE SECLUSION OF THE HERMIT AS A REACTION TO THE UNEASE OF CIVILIZATION.

<sup>36</sup> FREUD, S. (1989). CIVILIZATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS. NEW YORK: W.W. NORTON, 78.

destructiveness”,<sup>37</sup> and moreover in light of the critical possibilities it opens. As we have seen, love’s conflicted nature is not a particularly strong mechanism by which to inhibit love, which presumably is why Brown goes no farther than to suggest a certain economy of love – she denies herself the necessary theoretical tools to mount a strong defense against it.<sup>38</sup>

This course necessitates an examination of Freud’s characterization of the death drive. Freud casts the death drive as a kind of resistive force: “besides the instinct to preserve living substance and to join it into ever larger units, there must exist another, contrary instinct seeking to dissolve those units and to bring them back to their primaeval, inorganic state.”<sup>39</sup> Against Eros, the force that draws us into ever larger formations, there is another force, Thanatos, that desires to rid us of the repression that comes with these ever larger units. In *Eros and Civilization* Herbert Marcuse describes the antagonism of death drive as follows: “The descent towards death is an unconscious flight from pain and want. It is an expression of the eternal struggle against suffering and repression.”<sup>40</sup> Eros drives us together, begetting greater repression, and Thanatos resists this movement in fits and starts as it wrestles with the ego. While this kind of characterization might appear unsavory by virtue of its binarism, I reject this critique as unfair for two reasons that are revealing to the nature of Freud’s project for our present discussion.

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<sup>37</sup> *IBID.*, 79.

<sup>38</sup> THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO ACCOUNT FOR THE INHIBITION OF LOVE AIM IN THE ABSENCE OF THANATOS; BUT IT IS TO SUGGEST THAT A MORE CONVINCING ACCOUNT OF THIS INHIBITION MAY BE CRAFTED GIVEN THE ACCEPTANCE OF IT. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE, AND PERHAPS INDICATIVE OF ITS SIGNIFICANCE, THAT BOTH JACQUES LACAN AND SLAVOJ ŽIŽEK HAVE RETAINED THE NOTION OF THE DEATH DRIVE IN SPITE OF THEIR RESISTANCE TO INSTINCT.

<sup>39</sup> *IBID.*, 77.

<sup>40</sup> MARCUSE, H. (1997). *EROS AND CIVILIZATION.* , 29

First, we must remember that in *Civilization and its Discontents* it is not only Eros and Thanatos in play, but Ananke as well.<sup>41</sup> This account suggests a triad of forces that competitively tug on the reigns of the collective's fate. Thanatos may resist the work of Eros, but it likewise must come to bear with the factor of necessity (Ananke). Meanwhile, although Thanatos may be in tension with the spark and engine of collective life, Ananke and Eros respectively, these two forces do not exactly exist or operate in concert or harmony. As noted earlier, love contains a certain tension in aim whereby it wants simultaneously to beget and foreclose the mass organization of human life. Ananke may be read as a force of resistance to this factionalizing tendency of the love instinct. In laying the foundation for his argument of the possibility of a non-repressive society in *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse draws very interestingly on these kinds of distinctions to recast Freud's reality principle. In light of the claim that "Freud's concept reality principle... makes historical contingencies into biological necessities",<sup>42</sup> he bifurcates the reality principle into the performance principle and the reality principle proper, and introduces the concept of surplus-repression to explain the distinction between the two.<sup>43</sup> Marcuse argues that the level of instinctual repression necessitated by material reality is of a lesser degree than the repression to which we are actually subjected, and by means of this distinction we yield the concept of surplus-repression, which is constituted by all "the restrictions necessitated by social

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<sup>41</sup> THAT BOTH THANATOS AND ANANKE WERE ABSENT FROM GROUP PSYCHOLOGY MIGHT LEAD ONE TO SPECULATE THAT FREUD'S COGNIZANCE OF THIS KIND OF CRITIQUE. THIS SPECULATION MIGHT BE FURTHER SUPPORTED BY FREUD'S APPARENT AFFINITY FOR TRIADS AS EVIDENCED BY SUCH FORMULATIONS AS CONSCIOUS-PRECONSCIOUS-UNCONSCIOUS AND ID-EGO-SUPEREGO.

<sup>42</sup> *IBID.*, 34.

<sup>43</sup> WHILE IT IS NOT ENTIRELY ACCURATE TO REFER TO MARCUSE'S UTOPIAN PROJECT AS NON-REPRESSIVE INSOFAR AS HE PROPOSES A REORGANIZATION THAT MERELY SHIFTS THE SOURCE, LEVEL, AND KIND OF REPRESSION, I DO SO HERE FOR THE EASE OF REFERENCE AND WITH THE BELIEF THAT SUCH AN APPARENT OVERSIGHT IS TANGENTIAL TO MY OWN ARGUMENT.

domination... distinguished from (basic) repression".<sup>44</sup> Marcuse suggests that rather than abiding by a true reality principle, which would imply that we repress only those instincts that are necessitated by necessity (Ananke), we have historically been dominated by the performance principle, which goes above and beyond in order to perpetuate social domination itself. In other words, this surplus-repression is "what had to be suppressed so that suppression could prevail and organize ever more efficient domination of men and nature".<sup>45</sup> In Marcuse we thus see the triadic structure of forces outlined by Freud in *Civilization and its Discontents* wherein Ananke is intertwined with Eros by limiting the pursuit of pleasure, and Thanatos is spurred to destructive action by the disparity between the reality principle and the performance principle.

Secondly, the most functionally significant feature of Thanatos in terms of fashioning a positive mechanism of inhibition is the malleability of aim that Freud attributes to it. Rather than being strictly separate, Thanatos is inextricably tied to Eros. Freud characterizes his arrival at the death drive as follows:

Starting from speculations on the beginning of life and from biological parallels, I drew the conclusion that, besides the instinct to preserve living substance and to joint it into ever larger units, there must exist another, contrary instinct seeking to dissolve those units and to bring them back to their primaeval, inorganic state. That is to say, as well as Eros there was an instinct of death.<sup>46</sup>

It might be assumed that the death instinct operated silently within the organism towards its dissolution, but that, of course, was no proof. A more fruitful idea was that a portion of the instinct is diverted towards the external world and comes to light as an instinct of aggressiveness and destructiveness. In this way the instinct itself could be pressed into the service of Eros, in that the organism was destroying some other thing, whether animate or inanimate, instead of destroying its own self. Conversely, any restriction of this aggressiveness directed outwards would be bound to increase the self-destruction, which is in any case proceeding. At the same time one can suspect from this example that the two kinds of instinct seldom--perhaps never--appear in isolation from each other, but are alloyed with each other in varying

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<sup>44</sup> **IBID., 35.**

<sup>45</sup> **IBID., 50.**

<sup>46</sup> **FREUD, S. (1989). CIVILIZATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS. NEW YORK: W.W. NORTON, 77.**

and very difference proportions and so become unrecognizable to our judgement.<sup>47</sup>

While Thanatos and Eros are oppositional in aim, in practice they are more malleable by virtue of their mutual presence in varying proportion in our actions and emotions. As a result, it is possible for Eros to conscript Thanatos to do its bidding, and it is precisely the success of this conscription that Freud suggests is determinative of the value or success human society in the closing of *Civilization and its Discontents*.<sup>48</sup>

While Freud has been criticized for his utilization of a developmental model that may be deployed as a justification for colonialism, we are not resigned to this kind of reading. In fact, he manifests a critical distance to civilization by means of an acknowledgment of its faults and a degree of mixed temporality, for example when he claims “it is very far from my intention to express an opinion upon the value of human civilization. I have endeavoured to guard myself against the enthusiastic prejudice that... [it] is the most precious thing we could possess”.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, he claims that no mode of organization is bereft of repression, nor is it possible to arrange various forms of civilization into qualitatively hierarchies.<sup>50</sup> Freud may send mixed signals by way of his explicit claims regarding civilization and his model, but such a reading is not crippling to his account, particularly with respect to the question of the relation of psychoanalysis to the collectivity. Ultimately, the desire to free one’s self from the bonds of repression that manifests itself by means of Thanatos may either be turned to an inward kind of self-destruction, or it may be channelled outward. If turned outward, it may manifest itself in ways that are either useful or gratuitous. While Thanatos may

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<sup>47</sup> **IBID.** 78.

<sup>48</sup> **IBID.**, 111-2.

<sup>49</sup> **IBID.**, 110-1.

<sup>50</sup> **IBID.**, 73.



be characterized as a turn away from civilization, a drive to escape the shackles of repression, this escape is an impossible and ultimately false one. It is a turn away that is characterized not by an escape from power, but a shift in its structure. The power structure in this shift may be less complex, but it is not necessarily follow that it is any less total or more desirable.

It is here that we may positively enact the dissent born of love of which Brown speaks in “Political Idealization”. If a defining characteristic of Thanatos is that it may conscripted to do the work of Eros, we are left with two possibilities. Thanatos may be enlisted in a fashion that will either: (a) produce further psychic unease, or (b) alleviate that psychic unease. It would be convenient to suggest that any conscription of Thanatos would be to the collective benefit, but this is too quick and easy. Freud’s suggestion that “The fateful question for the human species seems to me to be whether and to what extent their cultural development will succeed in mastering the disturbance of their communal life by the human instinct of aggression and self-destruction”,<sup>51</sup> can be read as oversimplification of the relationship between Eros and Thanatos. The discourse on the creative/constructive destruction of capitalism amply demonstrates the manner in which Thanatos may be enlisted in such a way as to increase unease.

Emanating from the work of Joseph Schumpeter, the idea of creative destruction speaks to the need for, in the face of growing barriers to market entry concomitant with monopoly, the need to destroy existing capital value in order to sustain long-term economic growth.<sup>52</sup> If capitalism relies on these ruptures, the form these creative destructions take is not foreordained – certain crisis situations might lend themselves

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<sup>51</sup> *IBID.*, 111.

<sup>52</sup> SCHUMPETER, J. A. (1950). CAPITALISM, SOCIALISM AND DEMOCRACY. NEW YORK: HARPER, 81-86.

to decreasing and others increasing unease. David Harvey picks up upon this creative destruction in spatial terms showing “capitalism’s insatiable drive to resolve its own crisis tendencies by geographical expansion... and restructuring.”<sup>53</sup> As an example he suggests the “the key role of suburbanization in the United States after 1945 in absorbing surpluses of capital and labor” insofar as it produced demand for the automobile.<sup>54</sup> One might hope, then, that the present financial crisis in conjunction with the looming spectre of global climate change might come together to produce a fix consonant both with green policy and decreased unease.

Rather than casting Socrates’ demeanor as a simple act of critique, we might view it as an act borne of a tough and critical love, in the best interest of himself and the collectivity insofar as it de-idealizes the nation in order to alleviate psychic unease – an act of productive catharsis. In Marcuse’s language, he seeks to improve the parity between the reality principle and the performance principle by exposure of surplus-repression to his surplus of scathing, productive, love-borne critique. Channeling the pain and frustration that inheres in the human condition and which civilization amplified,<sup>55</sup> Brown’s Socrates commits himself to the critique of the malleable, to that which may ameliorate our discontent. In the model of Socrates’ critique we thus find an answer to the struggle of Eros, Thanatos, and Ananke the figure that positively realizes through everyday experience Freud’s justification of societal critique:

When we justly find fault with the present state of our civilization for so inadequately fulfilling our demands for a plan of life that shall make us happy,

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<sup>53</sup> HARVEY, D. (2001). “GLOBALIZATION AND THE SPATIAL FIX”, UNIVERSITY OF POTSDAM, 24. AVAILABLE AT: [HTTP://OPUS.KOBV.DE/UBP/VOLLTEXTE/2008/2436/](http://opus.kobv.de/ubp/volltexte/2008/2436/)

<sup>53</sup> *IBID.*, 28.

<sup>54</sup> I HERE SUGGEST THAT UNEASE THAT IS PART AND PARCEL OF THE HUMAN CONDITION IN THE SPIRIT BOTH OF FREUDIAN AND LACANIAN PSYCHOANALYSIS, BOTH AS A PRODUCT OF HUMAN ORGANIZATION AND AS THE INDIVIDUAL’S EXISTENCE AS SUBJECT OF THE SIGNIFIER.

<sup>55</sup> FREUD, S. (1989). CIVILIZATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS. NEW YORK: W.W. NORTON, 74.

and for allowing the existence of so much suffering which could probably be avoided – when, with unsparing criticism, we try to uncover the roots of its imperfection, we are undoubtedly exercising a proper right and are not showing ourselves enemies of civilization.<sup>56</sup>

As Wendy Brown It is only through means of adoption, and perhaps interpellation, of such critical subjectivities that productively harness the death drive to de-idealize our collective identifications that we may begin to secure “a plan of life that shall make us happy”.

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<sup>56</sup> BROWN, W. (2005). EDGEWORK: CRITICAL ESSAYS ON KNOWLEDGE AND POLITICS. PRINCETON, N.J., PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS, 32.

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## CHAPTER II: MIND THE GAP

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### POINTS AND LEVERS

Wendy Brown leaves us with a provocative addition to her model of group formation in a brief foray into Žižek’s conception of group attachment, wherein she bifurcates Freud’s simplex bond into symbolic and imaginary components. Where her understanding of the civic libidinal economy establishes the possibility of a dynamic and critically productive patriotic attachment, the imaginary/symbolic distinction deepens the explanatory power of her account by opening a practical avenue of investigation through discourse. In addition, it furthers the normative stance contained within the operation of the libidinal economy to the end of producing a more nuanced civic ethic to guide that attachment; not only is it a matter of participation or enfranchisement, but that this participation must be exercised in particular ways. If Brown and Freud lay our Archimedean pivot of collective love and narcissistic self-preservation, then Žižek provides our lever.

Brown draws the distinction between symbolic and imaginary forms of collective identification such that “[w]hereas imaginary identification is identification with the objects in an image, symbolic identification consists in identification with the gaze the produces the image.”<sup>1</sup> This is to say that in imaginary identification we identify “with the image in which we appear likeable to ourselves,”<sup>2</sup> while the symbolic identification is “identification with the very place *from where...* we look at ourselves so that we appear to ourselves as likable.”<sup>3</sup> Applied to the attacks on the World Trade Center and

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<sup>1</sup> IBID.

<sup>2</sup> IBID.

<sup>3</sup> IBID.

Pentagon, imaginary identification engenders “an image of America as good, free, and true, but injured by evildoers... while symbolic identification identifies with the power that generates this image”.<sup>4</sup> The trouble in this distinction is the intimate relationship between imaginary and symbolic identifications in relation to the vast power that produced them and which, in turn, they guide. They they are “made simultaneously and in relationship to one another,”<sup>5</sup> and thus the “idealizations that symbolic identification generations and lives off of are extremely powerful as legitimization strategies”.<sup>6</sup> The close relationship and rough distinction between these forms of identification allows the imaginary identification to cloak the actual of object of the symbolic identification. This is to say that if we (i.e. the United States) needed after 9/11 to feel wounded in spite of our goodness, we were acting out this imaginary identification from a need to disavow any relationship between U.S. power and policy as a source of the wound. Power’s imbrication with money and desire forecloses the consideration of and learning from that power, serving to perpetuate it. This narcissistic wound is then deepened to the extent that this imaginary identification is not sympathetically received in the international community.

Interrogated through this lens of linguistic violence, patriotism is forced to draw a line between rhetoric and effect, and justify the storylines that propel the trajectory of state action. It is to the extent that symbolic identifications remain uncritically sustained by this imaginary identification that the collectivity may enamor themselves of power. Brown herself does not make use of it, but in the same passage from which she quotes Žižek equates the symbolic/imaginary distinction with constitutive/

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<sup>4</sup> *IBID.*, 33.

<sup>5</sup> *IBID.*

<sup>6</sup> ŽIŽEK, S. (1989). THE SUBLIME OBJECT OF IDEOLOGY. LONDON ; NEW YORK, VERSO.

constituted identification and, to draw Freud back into the picture, the ego-ideal/ideal ego.<sup>7</sup> The danger exposed in this distinction is to focus on the ideal ego/imaginary identification or to uncritically devote oneself to it enables one to gloss over the forces that enable the imaginary to persist. The love object shifts away from, e.g., the state as protector or guarantor of freedom and equality, towards the state as global power, “breed[ing] [the] anti-intellectualism, contempt for thoughtfulness and collective introspection, and disdain for peacemaking” with which Brown is concerned.<sup>8</sup> The seductive nature of power as an end in itself may supplant the more lofty ideals upon the collectivity is founded. It is by identifying the gaze through which the imaginary identification takes shape that one may discern the true ego-ideal of the collectivity.

The upshot of the tripartite civic libidinal economy of Eros, Thanatos, and Ananke is the role of the Thanatal drive may play in manipulating discontent, and the possibility of catering to and seeking to effect that drive. This imaginary/symbolic distinction is suggestive of a certain ethical stance vis-a-vis the libidinal economy: if symbolic identification exhibits a propensity to assume identification from the perspective of power and this power tends to become isomorphic with imaginary identification and ratchet discontent, this ethic resides in the critical reflective ethos which Brown locates in Socrates’ mode of philosophical citizenship. Contrasted with modes of citizenship most often fostered in modern liberal democratic contexts, the exceptional feature of Socrates’ patriotism is the constitutive role power plays in his patriotic attachment. It is the state’s enormous power that warrants civic attachment in order to stack that deck of power, against the odds, towards the citizen. To the extent that the ideal ego indicates an idealized vision of self, what we wish we were

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<sup>7</sup> *IBID.*, 33-4.

<sup>8</sup> ŽIŽEK, S. “YOU MAY!” (18 MARCH 1999). *LONDON REVIEW OF BOOKS*, 21(6).

like, the first step to realizing this goal is fashioning a conduct to excavate the content of the ego-ideal in relation to the ideal ego.

The imaginary-symbolic distinction maps the operation of a narcissistically-driven identification in its guise of righteousness, but does not exhaust the question of how or wherefrom the identification sustains itself. In accordance with her unipolar libidinal economy, Brown's deployment of the distinction frames its operation as narcissistic self-preservation: the need to appear likable to yourself stems from a desire to be at peace with oneself in spite of certain shortcomings. We understand that the ultimate object of identification is power thus may locate the incentive in desire to cloak it; but if this cloaking operation must occur at the individual level, it is more problematic to suggest that it does so spontaneously and uniformly. The disparate ability to exercise power and the relative benefit to various actors in doing so suggest that these identifications are not collectively created, but are influenced by those who exercise greater power. To the extent that there is no power without consent we can assume mass complacency (if not consent) with this state of affairs, but to suggest that a bum on the street individually helps to craft or defend this status quo with fervor equal to that of a Fortune 500 executive is absurd. These apparent contradictions between ideal and practice, however, suggest that there may be an ideological element to the imaginary identification.

Žižek updates the classic Marxist conception of ideology by way of inversion: whereas Marx posited the ideological illusion as "they do not know it, but they are doing it," Žižek suggests that contemporary ideology has assumed a reflexive form: "they know it, but still they are doing it."<sup>9</sup> We know very well that our style of disposable consumption is destroying the environment and comes at the expense of

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<sup>9</sup> REFLECTING GRAMSCI'S NOTION OF HEGEMONIC CONCESSION.

much of the rest of the world, but still we are doing it. There are two complementary aspects to this ideological component of the symbolic and imaginary identification:

(1) Political identification will always ultimately be existential in nature. To the extent that group identification hails from a place of power, a political collective will successfully garner identification insofar as it provides for the existential needs of life. Acceptance of the ideology is likely to correlate with some level of benefit.<sup>10</sup>

(2) If we are to understand the symbolic/imaginary distinction as one of legitimation by way of a cloaking, to the extent that this rests on the Marxist conception of ideology we must account for its inverse. If we know it, yet still we are doing it, in order to preserve our psychic ease we must not accept blame for it. In ideological terms we may do so. The symbolic cloaking provides the beginning of the answer, but this cloaking arguably goes farther: it is not that we just know it, but we must satisfy ourselves, and we do so through the limited distribution of the imaginary to satisfy the symbolic. The implication of this ideological formation is that the very cynical distance toward the object of (non-) identification that sustains the ideology. We know that the king is only king insofar as we treat him as the king, and yet we persist in action as though the king were really in himself king. We all know that us shopping at Wal-Mart is killing off our Mom-an'-Pop's stores, that it is the largest employer in the United States and that it pays pitiful wages, but we love watching for those falling prices (and real wages). This is not a critique unto itself insofar as there are structural incentives to, for example, shop at Wal-Mart, but precisely to

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<sup>10</sup> SEE, E.G., NUSSBAUM, M. C. AND J. COHEN (1996). FOR LOVE OF COUNTRY : DEBATING THE LIMITS OF PATRIOTISM. BOSTON, BEACON PRESS.



illustrate the sense of necessity I might feel to continue shopping at Wal-Mart in spite of my outward objections.

Before moving on to consider the relation between identification and the political, I would like to loose Žižek upon one last problem carrying over from the civic libidinal economy: the propriety of deploying such an undifferentiated romantic notion of loves to the abstraction of the state. Where Freud differentiates love only roughly by means of a continuum that begins with great volatility in genital love which may then be tempered, the Greeks finessed the idea of love through four qualitative distinctions: Agape, Eros, Philia, and Storge (love, passionate love, friendship, and affection, respectively). In comparison, Freud's continuum comes across as crude and, at worst, inapplicable to the citizen-state relation; how are we to compare genital love to civic attachment? There is indeed a *prima facie* trouble in drawing the libidinal economy into the question of collective identity. The libidinal economy speaks to relations between individuals and not disembodied notions of collectivity, while at the same time it may offend our notions of romantic love to think of that kind of love in terms of such a narcissistic and self-serving attachment. If indeed Freudian love does provoke this discomfort, it is this discomfort that suggests its critical power. Moreover, the comparison between Freudian and Greek love is unfair: the Greek notion is indeed more nuanced, but its distinctions are not quick, easy, or even mutually exclusive. More to the point, bracketing an attempt to synthesize these models, through Žižek we locate a structural resemblance between national identity and romantic love.

In the romantic ideal there is a coupling between two individuals that ostensibly takes shape as the product of so many choices, but in such a way as the loves could actually have done no other – there is a sense of inertia about the relationship once the

train of events is set in motion when the lovers cross paths. As captured in critiques of nationalism that rest on the ‘arbitrary’ character of the attachment,<sup>11</sup> or that is a purely imaginary construction that blurs the lines intra-national stratification and equality that sustains it,<sup>12</sup> there is a structural homology between the forced choice of romantic love and nationalism, not least insofar as the national patriotic attachment is posited as love of state/nation/country. The claim of cosmopolitanism is that the problem of nationalized notions of citizenship resides in their contingency: I have been born as a US citizen to parents who were US citizens, but I could have been born in any other place in the world. The inequality that follows from valorization of these accidents of birth makes it problematic to defend such construction – an argument that resembles John Rawls’ veil of ignorance. What this argument fails to capture is the extent to which I HAD to be born in the United States in order to be speaking from this present position, that this hypothetical birth in Zimbabwe simply isn’t. This accident of birth should inform our ethics, but, having been raised in this context of cultural conceit, how am I to simply wipe clean the slate and start afresh? Such disavowal of nationality in this case removes power and responsibility from the question, where in fact such rejection perhaps displaces any particular nationalism with a disavowed Western liberal democratic form, which perpetuate in a slightly different way the same problem. I do not believe that Nussbaum would not save her child before anyone else’s, and perhaps we shouldn’t expect her to. But her departure from such abstraction poses little effective difference in concrete policy. This state of affairs still leaves open a very serious ethical question of that place of such identification to which we shall venture, but suggests the relevance of the romantic relation to civic attachment.

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<sup>11</sup> SEE, E.G., ANDERSON, B.R.O.G. (2006). IMAGINED COMMUNITIES: REFLECTIONS ON THE ORIGIN AND SPREAD OF NATIONALISM. NEW YORK, VERSO.

<sup>12</sup> SCHMITT, C. (2007). THE CONCEPT OF THE POLITICAL. NEW YORK: TELOS PRESS, 26.

## TWO NOTIONS OF THE POLITICAL

If our ultimate goal is to take up a political analysis in relation to psychoanalysis, we are in need of a notion of the political to attach to it. The collectivist impulse of Freud's psychoanalytic theory suggests an uncontroversial claim to intrinsic political relevance, but the discursive functions elaborated by Žižek suggest at least two things:

- (1) that Freud's non-discursive is insufficient for contemporary political analysis.
- (2) that it is difficult to account for the political under Žižek in a way that dovetails with his leftist bent.

To be sure, both concern the relation of power to the group, but Žižek's model provides for more of a group-individual dynamic whereas Freud's is more reciprocal. Freud has a long history of appropriation toward explaining the problem of fascism. Deleuze and Guattari seek to overcome this fascist trajectory through the negation of psychoanalysis (by way of schizoanalysis). Lacan's structural re-reading of Freud was in response to a similar critique of a determinist stripe in his frameworks. To the extent that these critiques are geared toward political temperance they most often take shape in individual ways. The collective-orientation provided by the libidinal economy is more useful when tied to a Wolinian political, whereas the conditions of mediation under late capitalism better lends itself to consideration through a Schmittian political.

In *The Concept of the Political* (1932) Schmitt claims in the most existential sense that "[t]he specific distinction to which political actions and motives can be reduced is that between friend and enemy".<sup>13</sup> The line of enmity poses a threat of difference sufficient to warrant violence, although crucially "[w]ar is neither the aim

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<sup>13</sup> *IBID.*, 34

nor the purpose nor even the very content of politics.”<sup>14</sup> He identifies the political with the state (or state aspirations as he classifies the eruption of the political within the territorial confines of the state as civil war), though it is not strictly reducible to the state or any particular issue. The existential thrust of Schmitt’s claim that the sovereign is the one who decides on the exception points to the root of the political in the needs of life itself. Liberal deliberation is wanting politically insofar as it forestalls a solution to a dire and immediate problem.

In contrast to this blunt and undifferentiated notion of the political, Schmitt acknowledges a more nuanced reading in *Theory of the Partisan* (1963), formulated in response to the growing incidence of unconventional warfare.<sup>15</sup> In addition to the conventional lines of enmity between states and defended by traditional uniformed soldiers from his earlier work, he here elaborates two additional notions of enmity: (1) real enmity, exemplified in the example of the traditional partisan fighter who seeks an aim within a bounded territory and is understood as defensive; (2) absolute enmity, which finds instantiation in the global revolutionary fighting for abstract universals. Where Schmitt’s emphasis on the exception in *Political Theology* presupposes a unified body politic behind the sovereign, under real enmity Schmitt makes an allowance for the political within the body politic outside the spectre of civil war.

The consistent concern that drives his liberal critique is the need for decisive action under the state of emergency/exception. He sees in liberalism a tendency to satisfy itself with perpetual deliberation which can prove inadequate in meeting the swift needs of the state of exception under the conditions of mass democracy. Power is a

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<sup>14</sup> SCHMITT, C. (2007). THEORY OF THE PARTISAN : INTERMEDIATE COMMENTARY ON THE CONCEPT OF THE POLITICAL. NEW YORK: TELOS PRESS.

<sup>15</sup> WOLIN, S. S. (2004). POLITICS AND VISION : CONTINUITY AND INNOVATION IN WESTERN POLITICAL THOUGHT. PRINCETON: PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS.

feature of the group, and the political matters insofar as it is concerned with the maintenance of a certain way of life, which is significant insofar as Schmitt notes that nothing is inherently political, but nearly anything may become political. The emergence of the political in its most extreme form, the outbreak of warfare, is rooted in a desire to maintain a group's way of life against another group perceived to threaten it. Group solidarity is assumed, and it is from this solidarity and the strength rooted in the collective from which power is derived.

Schmitt's conception of real enmity as a basically defensive position enables a reading of the pluralism within the political, allowing for a more comprehensive account of state dynamics outside the garrison state. Shy an outbreak of civil war, domestic interest groups may be viewed as acting upon the less fractious but still contentious real lines of enmity. Their goal is to shape a certain 'way of life' behind the conventional lines of enmity, and just as the political may erupt into violence on the conventional stage but the ultimate goal of the political is not war, real enmity may be viewed as erupting into partisan guerrilla war in its most extreme. Just as with conventional enmity, unconventional enmity does not reach its apogee in the outbreak of such internal warfare, but its most extreme case.

The key utility in drawing together Schmitt and Wolin is their complementarity: each sees the political in the other's non-political. Schmitt understands the political existentially, but presumes a pre-existing democratic legitimacy wherefrom the sovereign acts. Wolin presumes a settled liberal democratic institutional structure, but one in which significant matters of the public are decided through non-collective means; he thus locates the the political in the experience of collaborative action among citizens. Wolin's point of reference in *Politics and Vision* is the Greek *polis*, and his argument traces the historical trajectory of functions once serves through collective decision-

making as they have been usurped by various other mechanisms over the course of time.<sup>16</sup> Where Schmitt outlines his notion of the political in response to a shortcoming in liberalism's ability to act decisively, Wolin speaks to the character and intent of such deliberation. His notion of inverted totalitarianism sees an elite-driven policy-making process that encourages and capitalizes upon popular political apathy to rob institutional democracy's claim to be for the people. The association of the political with collective action leads Wolin to suggest that we ought not understand democracy as an institutional arrangement, but as an experience; democracy doesn't exist in any kind of external sense, but can only be experienced through collective action.

#### **PRODUCTIVE TENSIONS & PLEASING FACADES**

The analytic upshot of this Schmitt/Wolin opposition is its resemblance to the competing republican-democratic impulses of the United States. The foundational myth of the United States, the American Dream, is an abiding faith in freedom and opportunity and hard work - you are what you make of yourself. While this freedom is largely understood in economic terms, it takes shape politically through the act of voting, participating in civil society, and perhaps contacting your representative. These modes of participation are then undermined by a structure imposing hierarchy within democracy by, for example, placing an intermediate between the citizen and the presidential candidates in elections, an exclusion from the actual work of political decision making, and access to political representatives that tends to correlate with material resources. This institutional tension garners popular attention today most obviously through the concern for the role of special interests: in spite of the

The pluralist model underscores important aspects of the role of groups under Schmitt's conception of the political, especially in relation to the pluralism that

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<sup>16</sup> AS ESTABLISHED IN, E.G. FEDERALIST PAPERS NO. 10 & 51

underpins the institutional structure of the United States.<sup>17</sup> Around the middle of the 20th century pluralism was typically juxtaposed with elite theory, which argued that “power is not open to all who are organized enough to reach for it but rather is an obvious by-product of economic power.... The argument runs that elites from both worlds (business and politics) exchange roles freely - business elites becomes political elites, and vice versa”.<sup>18</sup> The 1980’s, however, saw the emergence of regime theory, a theoretical strand that sought to synthesize the strengths of both elite and pluralist theory in the form of regime theory that emphasized the importance of coalition building, leadership, and economic and institutional power.<sup>19</sup>

Regime theory is grounded in the implausibility of presuming either complete and unchallenged dominance and control of the masses by the elites, nor that the ability to assemble a coalition or interest around a particular cause to effect a policy change is as simple and unimpeded by power relations as the pluralists suggest. Rather than deny the agency or influence of the masses at risk in elite theory – or to overstate it, as in pluralism. Regime theory dignifies the role and influence of the masses whilst acknowledging the odds that are stacked against them in terms of material resources, access to information, and the obstacles to organizing against the power elite. Hackworth notes that regime theory has been critiqued on the grounds of its resemblance to the model of the commercial republic, rooted in classical liberal thought, this more differentiated account of power in the context of liberal capitalist democracy remains preferable to either elite or pluralist theories on their own. He says “[t]hough some have refuted this conception of regime theory, at a minimum it is true

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<sup>17</sup> HACKWORTH, J. R. (2007). THE NEOLIBERAL CITY: GOVERNANCE, IDEOLOGY, AND DEVELOPMENT IN AMERICAN URBANISM. ITHACA, CORNELL UNIVERSITY PRESS.

<sup>18</sup> IBID.

<sup>19</sup> VAN SCHEDEL, W., AND ABRAHAM, I., EDS. (2005). ILLICIT FLOWS AND CRIMINAL THINGS: STATES, BORDERS, AND THE OTHER SIDE OF GLOBALIZATION. BLOOMINGTON: INDIANA UNIVERSITY PRESS.

that its tendency to focus on the uniqueness of individual coalitions are connected to broader restructuring processes”. At the very least this makes regime theory a useful descriptive heuristic in understanding these restructuring processes insofar as we would like to be able to effect them in some way.

The synthesis of plural and elite theories into regime theory is notable insofar as it foregrounds the role of the group, and in so doing underscores its political relevance. Indeed, Hackworth’s elucidation of the liberal commercial republic critique presented by Brown is couched not in terms of atomistic individuals, but individuals as part of groups. The characterization of money as another interest group may be problematic insofar as it presumes that money does not imply an undue power and carries a normative injunction that such should be the case, he highlights the potential synthesis between elite and pluralist. It may even be that elite theory makes little sense outside an understanding of the elite as a group whose organization, connectivity, and power are difficult to counteract through the fragmentation of myriad other groups that exercise less power and have fewer resources who are not elite. The nesting of elite theory within pluralist theory gives credence to anti-liberal critiques of the valorization of the freedom to associate. What regime theory offers us is yet another way to consider the tensions of liberal democratic governance. While psychoanalysis provides us a picture of how the political attachment shapes up and our notions of the political the structures through which they act, regime theory suggests the modes of power that operate through the politico-psychological. Rather than reading the commercial-republic critique of regime theory as outright rejection, what we ought to take from it is the avenues of power it isolates: elite theory the power of money/status, and pluralist theory the power of coalition/public sentiment.



Post-structuralism and -colonialism express a general discomfort with the binary conceptual definitions we have here set up, which misgiving may be justified in at least three ways:

- (1) the poles of the binary tend to foreclose shades of grey
- (2) one pole is frequently understood to be stronger or better than the other pole, if only implicitly
- (3) emphasis on the poles of the binary may mask underlying phenomena, and thereby favor certain modes of analysis at the expense of others.

Consider, for example, investigation of the global informal flow of goods such as drugs. Under the traditional state-centric viewpoint, analysis is likely to be couched in terms of legality/illegality, and the response to be how the state should react in terms of enforcing this legal status (e.g. appropriate punishments, enforcement methods, border strengthening, etc.).<sup>20</sup> In some respects this analysis might be fruitful, but taken to the end it is actually self-defeating: given the unlikely outcome of ending the drug trade or drug infiltration through one's borders, the presupposition of the absolute authority of the state ultimately ends with the state's incapacity to address the problem. Moreover, the state has an interest in imperfectly enforcing its laws to the extent that it relies for its continued existence on one of these illegal flows (e.g. illegal labor).

These critiques of our binary oppositions provide the justification for our realist departure from them. As is often the case, this binary of the political is not weighted equally: Schmitt's elucidation of the power of the sovereign to both decide when and what the exception is illustrates the favored position the sovereign maintains vis-a-vis the electorate. Thus, to the extent that there remains this hierarchical element, for example the republican impulse in the United States, the sovereign retains this

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<sup>20</sup> DEMARS, W. E. (2005). NGOS AND TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS : WILD CARDS IN WORLD POLITICS. ANN ARBOR: PLUTO, 106-7.

advantaged position. The presumed democratic legitimacy underscores the important justifying role played by the, at least possibility, in the competing impulse of distributed power. For the privileged place of the sovereign, it is only through the structural possibility of usurpation of that position that the hierarchical impulse is sustained, that the abstractly empty place of power may in principle be filled by ‘the people’.

#### POWER/IDENTIFICATION

Non-governmental organizations provide a perfect example of the flows of power suggested in regime theory occupying, as they do, the limbo between pursuing public aims through the constraints of private funding. That they are not wholly private sector suggests the limited material basis from which they depart, while their distance from the state and separation from the threat of violence suggests their limited claim to social impact. These constraints may be seen to operate in the role of NGOs broadly, but might be more clearly discerned in broader and more contentious contexts. The framing of *NGOs and Transnational Networks* here is telling. DeMars begins with the cheeky polemic “Your NGO Starter Kit” where he details four dubious propositions from which NGOs must pursue their aims. By the end of the book, however, one feels a shift from a tone of derision to one of depressed resignation. Less than a critique of NGOs themselves, the NGO starter kit feels more like a lament of the conditions under which they must work in pursuing laudable goals – goals that the state does not meet and the market would not otherwise pursue. Accident thus takes on a thematic role – the NGO is forced to work toward a goal that is at least in part rooted in the very structures within which it is embedded. The NGO thus must capitalize and seek to realize the rhetorical foundations of that structure without offending its material basis. The best

case outcome under these constraints is a rupture in the system that expands its envelope without altogether crippling it.

Demars provides an example of this delicate balancing act in the NGO response to Argentina's Dirty War. The Dirty War emerged at least in part as a result of NGO action to expose human rights violations in Chile a few years earlier: rather than openly abuse human rights in the attempt to quell the left insurgency in Argentina, the government adopted a strategy of quiet violence and disappearances.<sup>21</sup> The NGO response was spearheaded by Amnesty International acting in concert with a host of local NGOs who provided information necessary enact its campaign. Amnesty International pursued a narrow line: to hold leaders accountable to universalized human rights, without drawing into question the legitimacy of the government in power,<sup>22</sup> which effort was exercised through publicity and letter-writing campaigns. In order to gain traction these campaigns had to focus on the issue of human rights divorced from the larger context that produce them, which strategy earned the public condemnation of the Dirty War by then-President Jimmy Carter, along with a halt of military aid to Argentina.<sup>23</sup>

In this example we see the mobilization of a relatively uncontested moral claim to counteract an inertia of policy. The push for human rights and their simple, if forceful, exposure on the world stage halted the flow of military aid to an authoritarian regime against a leftist insurgency when the US had before provided military aid in Argentina to a regime that, in myopic terms at least, arguably served its interests

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<sup>21</sup> **IBID., 104.**

<sup>22</sup> **IBID., 96.**

<sup>23</sup> **I SAY THAT THIS SUPPORT FOR AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES IS SHORT-SIGHTED FOLLOWING RONALD COX IN POWER AND PROFITS WHERE HE SUGGESTS A DESIRE NOT ONLY TO EXTRACT PRODUCTION, BUT ALSO TO BUILD A BASE OF CONSUMPTION IN LATIN AMERICA.**

better.<sup>24</sup> Had Amnesty International pursued the same goal of human rights by looking more deeply into the social conditions that produced the insurgency or the insurgency that produced the 'human rights violations', it likely would have offended prevailing understandings of the world and undermined their goal of ending the violence. When he suggests that NGOs attained both more and less than they intended in Argentina, it might be so by necessity: they achieved *less* in the way of human rights due to the structural constraints imposed on their message by sources of power, and *more* because this resistance took shape under circumstances that conduced to a significant structural shift to democracy.

DeMars exclusion of guerrilla organizations from his umbrella of non-governmental organizations is unfortunate because they provide a most glaring illustration of power constraints. The structural constraints suggested in the argentine example lay at the heart of Angelika Rettberg's analysis of the private sector's role peacebuilding in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Colombia.<sup>25</sup> The functional necessity of including the private sector stems from the power it may exercise to forestall those very negotiations: it exercises a great deal of leverage in negotiating peace as it "generates and controls many of the resources necessary for building peace, including taxes, investments and production."<sup>26</sup> It is the highly inequitable allocation of these resources that provoked the disturbance of peace in the first instance and that must, against odds, be addressed to restore it. The three factors she isolates as having the greatest effect on private interest involvement in peacebuilding are:

(1) the costs of armed conflict and establishing peace

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<sup>24</sup> RETTBERG, A. (2007). "THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND PEACE IN EL SALVADOR, GUATEMALA, AND COLOMBIA." JOURNAL OF LATIN AMERICA STUDIES 39(3): 463-494.

<sup>25</sup> IBID., 463

<sup>26</sup> COX, R.W. (1994). POWER AND PROFITS: U.S. POLICY IN CENTRAL AMERICA. LEXINGTON: UNIVERSITY PRESS OF KENTUCKY.

(2) private sector unity

(3) ability of the private sector to exert control over the process of negotiations.

The first of these explicitly concerns the availability and concentration of material resources: what is essentially at stake is a cost/benefit analysis of the damage inflicted by the armed movement to industry. In the case of Guatemala, for example, the guerrillas were relatively ineffective in affecting industry, and accordingly the private sector saw little reason to engage in peace talks with them. In the case of El Salvador, in contrast, the FMLN was capable of exerting sufficient damage to the business environment to spur the business interest to desire peace. The second factor stems from the first, and largely concerns the homogeneity of the private sector. If, for example, half of industry in a given context is labor-intensive and the other half capital-intensive, then the different social structures each would seek in pursuit of profit would defy a unity of purpose against the guerrillas.<sup>27</sup> The third factor incorporates the first two, but with an additional element of organizational and sentimental factors in opposition to industry. Scrutiny from the international community may push the private sector towards peace negotiations, as might pressure from domestic public opinion or the ability of the Guerrillas to legitimately claim mass popular support. In Guatemala, for example, the private sector saw little reason to engage in peace negotiations due to the ineffectual threat posed by the guerrillas, and once engaged in peacebuilding exercised enormous influence, but the private sector was quite resistant to peacebuilding, and only engaged in the process once they saw the tide of public opinion was pushing the state to engage with the guerrillas.

Even in the face of the guerrillas to exert influence to warrant engagement in peace accords, however, there is a constraint on the ability to work outside the demands

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<sup>27</sup> DEMARS, W.E. (2005). *NGOS AND TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS: WILD CARDS IN WORLD POLITICS*. ANN ARBOR: PLUTO PRESS.

of industry. DeMars notes that “the more that political grievances and hopes are expressed through NGOs, the less they are conceptualized in class terms.”<sup>28</sup> Once the guerrillas exerted influence to lay the groundwork for the peace accords, they still were beholden to the practical limitations of working within the existing social/political/economic structure. FMLN leaders were forced to abandon “more profound socio-economic demands in exchange for political and judicial reforms” in the process of peace.<sup>29</sup> Rettberg notes a certain redemption of this failure to address socio-economic concerns by way of subsequent FMLN electoral victories, which is presumably now heightened as the FMLN has won the presidency for the first time since the peace accords nearly two decades ago. In Guatemala, however, the concessions reached in the peace accords were rendered toothless, and hence have received little enforcement since de-mobilization. We thus see these antagonisms carrying over, with FMLN success rooted in their attention to organization and political capacity to counter-weight the influence of capital.

These examples of insurgency raise a question conspicuously absent from DeMars discussion of Argentina: the relation between violence and power. In spite of the moment of truth contained in Foucault’s claim that physical violence yields and problematizes their rote separation. These Latin American insurgencies and demonstrate critical limitations on the ability of violence to usher peace or for money to usher social change, but at the same time show at least how they may do so in back-handed ways. What we see in these examples of NGO action, as in Argentina, and more grassroots political action, as in El Salvador, is a social change spurred by inequity that produced a violent resistance, but which effects were ultimately brought

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<sup>28</sup> *IBID.*, 472.

<sup>29</sup> DEAN, M. (2007). GOVERNING SOCIETIES: POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL RULE. MAIDENHEAD, OPEN UNIVERSITY PRESS, 98.

about through physically non-violent negotiations. To be sure, the effect brought about by these non-violent negotiations very incompletely addressed the socio-economic root of the problem, but it is not clear that continued adherence to violence would a more successful mechanism by which to effect the change they sought. The role of violence in upsetting capital suggests a key limitation in cases where capital will not be easily effected by violence – there may be a greater risk of violence becoming violence for its own sake rather than for change.

#### **POLITICIZING ŽIŽEK**

With this discursive understanding of the symbolic and imaginary and regime theory, we now return to the political. We said earlier that the political ultimately always takes shape through an identification with power. The relatively uncontested state monopoly of physical violence in established liberal democracies suggests a political allegiance that takes shape around lines of real enmity (pluralism) drawn behind or in support of conventional lines due to the relative affluence which they afford their constituents; but what happens to the political in more contentious contexts? The undue influence of the west in the world is due in large part to the material resources available to it and its citizens. What is the meaning of the political when admittedly porous First World conventional lines of enmity give way to a state that exercises little ability to command the allegiance of its territorial subjects by virtue of its dis-concern or inability to provide for the necessities of life? Do conventional lines of enmity even make sense in the global context?

What follows is the insufficiency of understanding the state as the sole source of governance, and perhaps even the propriety of understanding the political primarily in statal terms. The standard opposition between state and society comes up short when

one recognizes the disavowed governing function that society itself plays.<sup>30</sup> The attempt to understand the political more broadly than the state is borne of a desire not to dilute its meaning, but to suggest that the absence of the state to command a conventional notion of the political does not negate the existence of the political in other forms within a territory. Moreover, these shadow political networks occupy a place in the lives of the individuals they serve to sustain that functionally mirrors that of the conventional state insofar as these networks pop up not only to provide necessary material goods, but may also take up a form of protection racket/self-government within and potentially against the conventional state, a fact noted by the United States military as they have re-tooled their forces to counteract not conventional warfare, but urban warfare.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, to the extent that the state is seen to rely on these illegal extra-statal activities, the state begins to look like a larger and internationally legitimate version of the rackets on which is disavowedly relies for its continued existence.

The paradox of these power groupings is that on the one hand they signify an identification with the needs of life (and hence a rejection of the state), and on the other this same identification reaffirms the structure of impoverishment that necessitates these flows insofar as the money that gives incentive to facilitate the flows, and becomes in a sense interchangeable with it, only has meaning once returned to the First World economy, and hence the state system. These flows might be interpreted as flowing across real global lines of enmity insofar as they ride on existential necessity. Because they are structurally linked and functionally dependent, however, they are not absolutely opposed, raising the question of whether these autonomous non-statal

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<sup>30</sup> DAVIS, M. (2007). PLANET OF SLUMS. NEW YORK: VERSO, 202-6.

<sup>31</sup> CONCERNED FOR ITS AUTHENTICITY, I CONFIRMED THAT SHE HAD INITIALLY SUBMITTED THE ARTICLE FOR PUBLICATION IN THE NATION, BUT DUE TO TIME AND PUBLICATION CONSTRAINTS ONCE THE ARTICLE SPREAD LIKE WILDFIRE ACROSS THE BLOGOSPHERE THEY ELECTED NOT TO RUN IT.



networks represent real or conventional lines of enmity; and what happened to absolute lines of enmity?

The guerrilla strategy of quick and pointed attacks on army patrols are intended to undermine the state's claim to a legitimate monopoly of physical violence, but where we might read this in terms of Schmitt's real enmity, this may in fact be too myopic. If the state whose legitimacy is being called into question is being propped up by first world consumption and whose domestic situations cannot be divorced from the world economic system, perhaps we ought to view such attacks as real aspiring to absolute enmity. Where Schmitt saw absolute enmity in the likes of Lenin, it is important to keep in mind that every line of enmity has two sides, but Schmitt's side happened to come out victorious to the destruction of serious alternatives to capitalism.

The upshot of this understanding of NGOs is that while NGOs may serve as a symptom of the neoliberal gutting of the state or a sign of state failure, in pragmatic terms they may be viewed as the tiny pockets of limited resistance to which power gives rise. The majority of the time the system is quite capable of absorbing this resistance unfazed, but as the Argentine example shows, when the planets and stars align just so their actions can be quite significant. If NGOs are both symptom and enabler of state failure, they may at the same time thus be read as a prescription. While the change they bring about may be imperfect, haphazard, and even unintended, NGOs may represent a key countering force insofar as NGOs may be mobilized to hold the state accountable. Insofar as we recognize society as a state unto itself, the project for socially progressive organizations is both foster the orientation of this disavowed state to political ends, while arduously pursuing the many tiny resistances that may in time exceed the system.

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### CHAPTER III: OBAMANIA!

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#### FASCIST DISCOURSE

The day following the 2008 U.S. Presidential Election an article titled “Uncritical Exuberance” purportedly penned by Judith Butler began circulating the internet via e.mail and blog.<sup>1</sup> In it she warned against over-identification in the wake of Obama’s election for fear of fascist consequences such attachments might produce.<sup>2</sup> Butler’s suggestion of a fascist shadow at the foot of our present political attachment provides an interesting provocation: a distinguished academic expressing concern over fascism in the transition of power between an ostensibly right wing political figure to one more leftist – if only by a matter of degree. The root of Butler’s concern is not unjustified: in her home state of California Obama’s election co-occurred with the passage of a ban on marriage between gay couples. Obama did not make gay rights an emphasis of his campaign, and in fact had the invocation at his inauguration performed by Rick Warren, a vocal advocate of the proposition in question. How are we then to read Butler’s plea? To what extent is her reference to the era of fascism hyperbolic or quite rightly justified, and what purpose does its deployment serve? To the extent that such a claim might shock the reader in a serious or ridiculous way, is this the academic equivalent of calling your friend a fascist, or is there something deeper here?

The function of such an argumentative move carries a clear normative claim against political zeal, which warning resonates with Hannah Arendt’s understanding of

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<sup>1</sup> BUTLER, J. (5 NOVEMBER 2008). “UNCRITICAL EXUBERANCE?”. AVAILABLE AT: [HTTP://ANGRYWHITEKID.BLOGS.COM/WEBLOG/2008/11/UNCRITICAL-EXUBERANCE-JUDITH-BUTLERS-TAKE-ON-OBAMA.HTML](http://angrywhitekid.blogspot.com/weblog/2008/11/uncritical-exuberance-judith-butlers-take-on-obama.html).

<sup>2</sup> “IDEOLOGY AND TERROR” IN ARENDT, H. (1994). THE ORIGINS OF TOTALITARIANISM. NEW YORK: HARCOURT, INC.

the events of the era of fascism, particularly in terms of her structural understanding of the totalitarian edifice a closing of the space between citizens to create in its place ‘one man’,<sup>3</sup> or as we see in Deleuze and Guattari’s language ‘the great man and the crowd’. In Arendt’s case, however, she sees this gap closing as terror supports an ideological march that proceeds from the basis of unquestionable axioms, and which takes place through a proliferation of a police state.<sup>4</sup> In light of Arendt’s argument Butler’s warning is especially curious to the extent that we might wonder where this article was in 2001 under Bush’s call to unity. This call exposed the conspicuous vacuity of the U.S. civic bond:

The deliberate and deadly attacks, which were carried out yesterday against our country, were more than acts of terror. They were acts of war. This will require our country to unite in steadfast determination and resolve. Freedom and democracy are under attack. The American people need to know we're facing a different enemy than we have ever faced.

In spite of this framing as the attacks as targeting the United States as a whole, our freedom and democracy, the response was decidedly elitist, and the most memorable injunction on doubt came in in his famous call to “keep America rolling”, go shopping!

If both Arendt and Butler speak to a desire to avert the horrors of the World Wars and the Holocaust, it is not clear that her suggestion for ‘space’ in itself serves their purpose. Arendt conceived of an ideal citizenship in distinctly spatial terms as collective political action among a community of equals.<sup>5</sup> She seeks to realize a form of reflective citizenship that is presumed to only be able to exist under an appropriate degree of attachment, and indeed that attachment need be of a critical variety. Fascism is a problem for her in its negation of this space that conduces to this participation and

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<sup>3</sup> IBID.

<sup>4</sup> ARENDT, H. (1959). THE HUMAN CONDITION. GARDEN CITY: DOUBLEDAY.

<sup>5</sup> WOLIN, S.S. (2004). POLITICS AND VISION: CONTINUITY AND INNOVATION IN WESTERN POLITICAL THOUGHT. PRINCETON: PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS.

reflection, but we might understand the United States at present to suffer an opposite affliction: an excess of space for reflection that comes at the cost of meaningful sustained collective action, and which we might identify with Sheldon Wolin's inverse totalitarianism.<sup>6</sup> With this delicate balancing act of political space what function does the notion of fascism, totalitarianism, nazism, the Holocaust, etc. play in discourse?

We have considered in the introduction the rhetorical function of various deployments of nationalism, patriotism, and fascism in justifying or delegitimizing various forms of attachment and action, and seen the cloaking function these deployments may serve in terms of in the last chapter. We might locate the beginning of an answer to this question in Wendy Brown's discourse analysis of the experience of the Holocaust museum.<sup>7</sup> Through that experience she outlines the discursive techniques used to 'other' the act of intolerance toward the self-satisfied end of promoting the liberal norm of tolerance, and particularly how that otherness of repression and intolerance is animated and projected to justify certain political action which is quite intolerant.

And if [the classically liberal diffusion of politics and institutional power] succeeds in conveying its didactic message that intolerance does not merely hurt feelings or injure self-esteem but literally kills, it does so by renewing the memory of the Holocaust for the present, a renewal that also ensures that 'never again' continues to have a singular meaning, singular referent, and a singular contemporary relevance.<sup>8</sup>

The US action in response to genocide have shown time and again this qualified devotion to 'never again'. Rather than representing the formation of some kind of world genocide police, it is mobilized in politically motivated ways. Brown notes the degree to which it delimits the realm of political attachment and flaunts the law in the way of, "of

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<sup>6</sup> BROWN, W. (2006). REGULATING AVERSION. PRINCETON: PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS.

<sup>7</sup> *IBID.*, 148.

<sup>8</sup> ŽIŽEK, S. (2002). WELCOME TO THE DESERT OF THE REAL: FIVE ESSAYS ON SEPTEMBER 11 AND RELATED DATES. NEW YORK, VERSO.

course we aren't doing that, because that would be illegal/if we're doing it, it's not illegal". Thus, this 'never again' seems to have always already accomplished itself: the relegation of the Holocaust to the realm of the absolute undialecticizable evil, the event never to happen again is single unrepeatable event.<sup>9</sup> If Wendy Brown outlines how the Holocaust is deployed in such a way as to reinforce or good, liberal, and tolerant way of life, then drawing into frame threat of fascism among us in our good liberal society may serve just as much a normative purpose through an othering effect of saying "we are good liberals, which I am reinforcing by reminding you of the fascist other". We must note her frame of reference: rather than showing a fascist shame in some mistake in the past of the United States which might arguably be better suited to the situation, e.g. the trail of tears or the "war-relocation camps" of WWII, she instead takes a non-US example to reinforce her own liberal standpoint.

Michael Billig takes the normative consequences of this kind of fascist othering farther. Rather than focusing just on the normative and othering components concomitant with the fixation on far-away nationalist clashes, Billig outlines the manner in which the privileged discursive place enjoyed by the world's foremost powers allows them sustain their own brand of disavowed nationalism itself in unconscious ways, which they are unleashed to their destructive purposes when they can be defended under the guise of patriotism in times of crisis and certain national celebrations.<sup>10</sup> To the extent that Butler and Arendt's arguments can be seen to enforce the liberal normativity of tolerant disattachment, they may be seen to fold into the disavowed form of democratic nationalism, and just insofar as they de-legitimate open and strong political attachments they serve this end of perpetuating banal nationalism.

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<sup>9</sup> BILLIG, M. (1995). BANAL NATIONALISM. THOUSAND OAKS, SAGE.

<sup>10</sup> ARENDT, H. (1964). EICHMANN IN JERUSALEM; A REPORT ON THE BANALITY OF EVIL. NEW YORK: VIKING PRESS.

As Billig advances his notion of banal nationalism to demonstrate how ‘our’ nationalism is disavowedly perpetuated under the cloak of patriotism only to be called upon as needed, I wish to embrace the fascist/totalitarian slide to take Billig’s thesis yet another step farther. Insofar as nationalism is identified with fascism and a disavowed nationalism permeates even our ostensibly liberal detached society, modern post-industrial liberalism is defined not only by a banal nationalism, but a banal form of fascism, and moreover it is precisely the disavowal of this fascism amongst its progenitors that enables it to terrorize the world unchecked, and through which we aggrandize ourselves at the expense of others. As Arendt’s notion of the banality of evil demonstrates,<sup>11</sup> and as acknowledged by Billig, from banality does not necessarily follow benignity, and the extension of banal nationalism to banal fascism should underscore the need for an avowed and express attention to the disavowed operation and reproduction of this power. On its face the notion of banal fascism opens at least two questions: (1) how do we reconcile the thesis of banality with its decidedly pointed and serious historical instantiations or, to put it another way, does the location of fascism everywhere dilute its critical import? If our concern with nationalism is its perceived continuity with a fascistic totalitarianism, then this concern is both rightly and wrongly placed: nationalism is a problem precisely insofar as it is totalitarian, but liberalism may itself be dangerous to the extent that it disavows its own totalitarian impulses.

#### CUE THE WHO

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<sup>11</sup> PRESS CONFERENCE - 3/24/09, AVAILABLE AT: [HTTP://WWW.NYTIMES.COM/2009/03/24/US/POLITICS/24TEXT-OBAMA.HTML? R=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/24/us/politics/24text-obama.html?_r=1)

<sup>11</sup> TO BE SURE, THIS RATHER SAD TURNOUT ISN’T UNCHARACTERISTIC, ALTHOUGH IT IN FACT WAS THE HIGHEST SINCE THE 1976 ELECTION.

President Barack Obama's bid for the presidency was centered upon the themes of hope and change, deploying the slogans "Yes We Can!" and "Change we can believe in", along with a campaign poster that depicted his portrait cast in broad swaths of red, white, and blue over the word 'Hope'. To be sure, his emphasis on change is nothing ground-breaking: the campaign device of framing oneself as a government outsider itself speaks to an appeal for change, if on a limited scale: bring in the guy who's not politics-as-usual to get stuff done in the same old political structure. It is notable, moreover, that the opposition candidate, John McCain, perceived sufficient threat in this rhetoric to deploy in his own campaign a re-drawn notion what a good change would constitute. If Obama alluded to some vague sense of change that seemed more attitudinal than substantive, in looking at both candidates we see the low threshold for change--and whether McCain's claim to change heightens or diminishes Obama's is an open question. Nevertheless, what we see in their attempt to define change is essentially an appeal to the electorate's an imaginary of the nation. The ultimate goal is, at least on the surface, to strike a chord that resonates with voters' sense of the world and the needs of the time. But where there is a presumed or idealized rationality to this process, as the division of these appeals into symbolic and imaginary component, they are flooded through with a disavowed element of desire.

The interim between Obama's election and inauguration found the media covering the standard post-election faire: the trajectory of his political life, the meaning behind the win, and his likely first moves as president. His lofty campaign rhetoric provided an angle to this coverage by way of a crucial question: how well could we expect him to make good on his transformational aspirations, and how much of a grace period he could expect before a lack of results would provoke public backlash. In view of the "Yes We Did" bumper stickers that began popping up in place of "Yes We Can",

one might wonder what did we do, and will there be a second act? The first act, that of being elected, was surely driven by an unprecedented mobilization of heretofore political apathetic or dis-engaged citizens, would act two continue that mobilization or neglect it? Does the Yes We Can extend beyond the voting booth? What sense are we to make of this apparent relative empowerment when now, he reduces the citizen's role in over-coming the financial troubles before us to bearing the financial sacrifice's that come with it.<sup>12</sup>

The discussion of citizenship is legitimated in the its inherent institutional imbrication with democratic and republican modes of governance, for the role of the citizen is precisely what is supposed to define these modes from sovereign/centralized/ classical modes. In Machiavelli, for example, in both *The Prince* and *Discourses on Livy* we see a concern for the role of the masses, if minimally defined, through the need for accountability. For this purpose he staunchly defends the right of public accusation. To the extent that democracy presumes engagement beyond this threshold of accountability, we should expect a greater level of citizen engagement and involvement within a democracy. Far from the Rousseauian ideal of participation, however, we find in the institutional structure of the United States, the self-titled World's greatest democracy, barely lends itself, at least at the federal level, to that appellation: the election of the President occurs not directly, but by proxy, and even participation in that minimal act is abysmally low. If we are thus looking for a mandate in Obama's election, his support by a little over quarter of eligible voters is hardly gratifying.<sup>13</sup>

Wherefrom comes this engagement or dis-engagement?

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<sup>12</sup> THIS IS IN NO WAY TO VALORIZE THE SPECIFIC FORM OF ACTION ENABLED BY THE ACTIVATION OF THE PEACE CORPS. ON THE ONE HAND, FUNDING FOR THE PROGRAM IS TOO LOW FOR THERE TO BE ANY HUGE IMPACT, WHILE THE DISPERSAL OF US CITIZENS TO ALL CORNERS OF THE GLOBE RAISES QUESTIONS OF WHETHER THEIR ULTIMATE GOAL IS NOT JUST TO SPREAD US GOVERNMENTALITY.

<sup>13</sup> ALTHUSSER, L. (2001). LENIN AND PHILOSOPHY AND OTHER ESSAYS. NEW YORK: MONTHLY REVIEW PRESS.



Liberalism can, to an extent, explain away and justify this problem through recourse to individual choice and implicit consent through non-action, a tradition that dates back at least to John Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*. Against this liberal justification we must consider the concrete and material effects that speech may produce, which necessitates explicit attention to relational power that liberal theory notoriously disavows. Rejection of the free choice excuse rests on two pillars that consider the relationship between participation is power in at least two reciprocal ways: (1) we may presume that citizens will act politically insofar as they either perceive that such action is likely to carry political weight or have been so habituated, and hence a failure to participate may be attributed at least in part to a disempowering/marginalizing structure; and (2) while the first rests on collective individual perceptions, certain actors within the political realm exercise more power to effect a change in/to the political environment exercise more power than do others.

We may locate an illuminating, if less startling and dramatic, example of this in John F. Kennedy and the Peace Corps. John F Kennedy, for example, rather famously implored that we "ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country," which he enacted in deed through the creation of, e.g., the Peace Corps.<sup>14</sup> It would be problematic to claim that Kennedy produced this movement singlehandedly in one fell swoop through the utterance of those words, but the success of the Peace Corps offers testament to the enabling function those words, turned into action, had in tapping and mobilizing a deeper idealism that had been previously neglected, but that had been seeking outlet. In this example we thus see a respect given to the agency of the subject through a latent impulse, while simultaneously acknowledging the role of those with greater consistent access to mediated communication and certain reins of

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<sup>14</sup> FOUCAULT, M. "WHAT IS AN AUTHOR?" IN RABINOW., P. (1984). THE FOUCAULT READER. NEW YORK: PANTHEON BOOKS.

the government in tapping this impulse. The upshot of this disparate ability to shape the political environment through measures of structural adjustment is the validity it gives to the study of citizenship not only through bottom-up analyses, but likewise from the top-down. Citizenship ultimately only makes sense at the point of praxis, but it is naive to think that this ethic of citizenship likewise emanates solely from the individual, to which examination we shall now turn.

#### HAILING THE CITIZEN-SUBJECT

The notorious Louis Althusser is perhaps best intellectually remembered for his notion of interpellation.<sup>15</sup> His oft-repeated example occurs on the street between a police officer and a passer-by: the passer-by acknowledges himself as a subject in the turn to answer the hail of the police officer in spite of his ostensible lack of guilt. This stylized example demonstrates the materiality of the interpellative scene: while initiated verbally by the officer, the passer-by's subjection occurs in the material act of turning to answer the hail. And while this turn to answer the hail is equated with an ideological hail, there is an additional material element in this scene, because this ideological component is under-girded through the element of physical force, which actual or presumed legitimacy further bolsters the ideological element. He has been criticized for the supposed determinism which this understanding of ideological power entails, in political terms the interpellative gesture is indispensable, even drawn through the lens of post-structural reactions. Consider, for example the discussions of Michel Foucault and Roland Barthes on the idea of the author.

In "What is an Author?" Foucault is concerned to detail the assumptions that go along with the idea of the 'author-function', which ascendance associates with the rise

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<sup>15</sup> BARTHES, R. (1977). IMAGE, MUSIC, TEXT. NEW YORK: HILL AND WANG.

of liberal discipline's concern with the individual subject.<sup>16</sup> He thus problematizes modern assumptions of the continuity and highlights the accidents of history that go into writing, from which follows an emphasis on specific works rather than the authors who is supposed to tie them together. This squares with his emphasis on how he expects people to respond to his own work, particularly that he recognizes himself as ever-evolving, and hence sees his work as a set of toolboxes from which we might draw insofar as we find its contents useful. Similarly, Roland Barthes calls for the death of the author as the point of textual continuity in favor of the reader, suggesting that the text only carries meaning insofar as it retains a relevance in the field of view of the reader.<sup>17</sup> What is notable in here is that while both focus into the significance of distributed lived experience, that no one persons can ever fix and hold the meaning of any text, broadly construed, when drawn into the mediated environment of contemporary post-industrial society there exists an unequal relational power in the figure of the author.

The result of Barthes' authorial assassination in the name of the reader is, in turn, a re-birth of the author as a reader insofar as the reader exercises her/his own life as text by quilting together the texts of other author-readers. Relational power through this understanding is exercised through the ability to command an audience. I may sit here and say that I quilt together all of the readings that I love in order to author my own life text, but the footprint of my own text is quite miniscule in comparison to that of probably any President in the history of the United States, or for that matter even the pull that famous-just-because Lauren Conrad of "The O.C." and "The Hills" fame. In a political context the disparate ability to change the course of the ship of state by

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<sup>16</sup> HAYEK, F. (1979). LAW, LEGISLATION, AND LIBERTY, VOLUME 3: THE POLITICAL ORDER OF A FREE PEOPLE. CHICAGO: UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS, 40.

<sup>17</sup> ROSE, G. (1995). LOVE'S WORK: A RECKONING WITH LIFE. NEW YORK, SCHOCKEN BOOKS.

means of this authorial power to mobilize or stifle popular political involvement provides a *prima facie* justification for the psychoanalytic investigation of citizenship in terms of the libidinal economy. The utility of the perspective, however, rests on its empirical usefulness, which can only be evaluated by connecting the meta-psychological to the social-psychological.

This example points to the validity of analyzing public addresses, particularly major public addresses for their tone-setting purposes, but the value of this exercise might still be criticized under traditional assumptions about the distinction between word and deed. There is, to be sure, a truth to the dictum enunciated by Che Guevara “Words without deeds are meaningless”. Looking to Cuba, Fidel Castro’s nick name as Señor Habrá (Mr. There-Will-Be), that were Spanish to lack a future tense Fidel would be rendered speechless, certainly resonates here. Moreover, one could just as easily say the dissonance often found between deed and the way those deeds are symbolized is equally problematic. To mire oneself in the presumption of a clear distinction between the two is to ignore the inescapable reciprocity between them and the effect such language can have on context. That context exercises an important interpretative effect is unremarkable: to kick off my shoes and put my feet up on my desk in my home is unlikely to elicit any kind of remark other than “my you look comfortable”; in contrast, to do the same in the office setting is likely to earn my nicknames and perhaps a reputation as sloppy insofar as it violates social norms.

The example of Kennedy and the Peace Corps is illuminating here as to how this might bear on the case of Obama’s commitment to change. We may observe that Kennedy set the tenor for his administration that enabled the enactment of the peace corps in his inaugural address, and made specific note of the peace corps program during his campaign. That the idea for the Peace Corps saw its public genesis at least

eight years prior to his election, and assumed bill form three years before, shows what effect rhetorical tone may have, and the need to measure the relation between the two. Even the cases of failed correspondence between rhetoric and outcome are instructive. It was not for want of trying that either Clinton or Bush failed in realizing certain aspects of their agendas. Indeed, each put a great deal of effort toward health care and social security, respectively, and it was in spite of their own quite serious efforts that their programs were thwarted. The effect of language in such an agenda-setting context is thus an attempt stake out a discursive territory within which the policies you seek to implement.

In looking at the construction of citizenship I suggest there are two discursive devices of special relevance to power and citizenship: context and positioning/footing. The first of these is related to the enabling and disabling functions of language on action: within different historical contexts one might be uttering the same words while meaning something quite different. Consider the example of the citizen: the citizen meant something very different in the *polis* than it does in the United States. More applicable to our present case, it may be that the events of 9.11 altered the conceptual terrain sufficiently to produce a shift in understanding. The second of these stabs at the heart of citizenship understood as a set of rights, duties, and obligations. The question of subject positions/relational power is important in itself to the understanding of citizenship, but the manner in which that relationship is discursively constructed will, along interpellative lines, have bearing on how certain actions are understood and therefore to what end they might be directed. The goal of this second analysis in parsing citizenship is thus the disentangle the web of responsibility to evaluate the extent to which it exceeds merely getting by.

## POWER TO THE PEOPLE?

In a January 2009 New York Times column, economist and 2008 Nobel Prize recipient Paul Krugman, working through his trepidation over the still-developing economic situation, combed through Obama's inaugural address in search of some sign of hope that he intended to take swift and significant rectifying action. His tone was one of disappointment and despair, however, as he expressed that he felt no more confident in the aftermath of the speech than he did before, suggesting that he found little difference between that speech and Bush's eight years prior, reducing them both to a call for an ethics of responsibility. In response to this provocation, our initial task will be analysis of this thesis. If there does exist this homology between their thematic emphases, is it the case that they are truly speaking to and interpellating the same kind of responsible citizen? In what kind of rhetorical context does each couch their language of responsibility, and how does each understand the state-citizen dynamic? What does responsibility mean?

We come upon an initial empirical hurdle in this effort: whereas Bush's inaugural address(es) may be measured against the eight years of his presidency, we have comparatively little against which to do the same with Obama, which raises the propriety of comparing burgeoning rhetoric to a depth of Bush's work. In spite of this handicap, there still is value in comparing the addresses by virtue of the aforementioned tone-setting function, which is why we are working here from the inaugural addresses, and where we shall now begin with the understanding that the meaning attached to the works with which we are concerned are especially provisional in this light. Friedrich von Hayek noted in his argument for demarchy that one of the key virtues of democracy was the ease with which it facilitated the transfer of power

(which virtue provided the point of departure for Bush's first inaugural address).<sup>18</sup> Seen in this light Obama's call for 'change we can believe in' meets a reality check: if this virtue of democracy is its continuity of power, the implication is that this drive for change will always be tempered by the trajectory crafted most immediately by one's political predecessor, who himself (thus far) has been similarly constrained. Beyond that, while the office of President carries a power platform from which to push for certain initiatives, as we have seen time and again such pushes are no guarantee of successful implementation. The inaugural address will implicitly or explicitly reference the present and future in reference to a certain conception of the past; a key measure of this consideration of the constitution of citizenship occurs through this rhetorical construction of the past. These imperatives might be contained in the question of whether the past invoked as a kind of innate and natural trajectory that presumes a certain conservatism, or is it called upon to establish a sense of collective self that speaks to an agency borne out by individuals. To distinction is surely more nuanced than this, but it is this notion of identity and agency upon which we shall fix our sights.

While seemingly a small gesture, the greeting used in the address is quite significant in positioning speaker and audience. In a typical conversational context this function of positioning bears on the idea of responsibility -- use of the passive rather than the active voice, for example, might be used in delivering bad news to shield oneself from responsibility and hence blame. In the case of a political address by the government figurehead this one might derive notions of citizenship in relation to expressions of responsibility and blame insofar as citizenship is understood as a set of responsibilities to fellow citizens and the state. Obama succinctly addresses his inaugural speech with "My fellow citizens", in contrast to Bush who began his with

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<sup>18</sup> LLOYD, V. (2008). "ON GILLIAN ROSE AND LOVE". TELOS 143: 49.

“President Clinton, distinguished guests, and my fellow citizens”. While subtle, this interpellation is significant: Obama seemingly does not distinguish among himself and his audience. There not citizens AND an outgoing President, distinguished guests, and then fellow citizens as in President Bush’s, only citizens of the United States, suggesting a sense of common interest and responsibility. This could be read in two ways, not necessarily mutually exclusive: it may signify a direction toward equality, while in the vein of Benedict Anderson’s critique of nationalism it may likewise disavow the differential power in view of this formal equality to redistribute blame from problems from the position of power just publicly reaffirmed in the act of the (botched) inaugural oath.

In spite of the *prima facie* difference in tone, both move quickly to the task of constructing the nation of which speaker and audience are a part in reference to a shared history:

Bush: I am honored and humbled to stand here, where so many of Americas leaders have come before me, and so many will follow.

Obama: I stand today humbled by the task before us, grateful for the trust you have bestowed, mindful of the sacrifices borne by our ancestors.

The glaring similarities between these two statements lay in their expressions of humility and their reference to the past, and their common thread is the extent to which they bear on the Presidents duty. The reference by Bush to “America’s leaders... before me” and Obama to “the sacrifices borne by our ancestors” both suggest a certain conservatism in a duty owed to the past. Bush’s reference to continuity comes not in relation to the past of the country but specifically its leadership. This selective construction of the past, underscored in his extended salutations to President Clinton and Vice President Gore, might be read as implying his primary duty to the memory of the state, and by extension maintaining the reverence of that state, than on a more



inclusive notion of what constitutes the state. His focus on the office frames his humility in terms of the enormous power and responsibility that come therewith, placing the emphasis on leadership. Obama, in contrast, frames his humility as mindful of the past, but grateful for the trust placed in him in his election to office. While subtle, this language suggests not just an acknowledgment of the importance of responsible leadership, but that the duty is as much to the electorate of present as to the past. Obama evinces a very republican concern with accountability, fitting with his rather populist appeal during the campaign and in response to the notoriously tight-lipped Bush administration.

Having referenced their project in relation to this idea of the past, their construction of the constitution of this fidelity is quite similar:

Bush: ... it is the American story-a story of flawed and fallible people, united across the generations by grand and enduring ideals.

Obama: ...America has carried on not simply because of the skill or vision of those in high office, but because We the People have remained faithful to the ideals of our forbears, and true to our founding documents.

This emphasis on attachment rooted in ideal ostensibly establishes this national bond through a robust understanding of citizenship. Although problematic for reasons discussed earlier, not to mention the automatic conferral of citizenship upon birth within the territorial US or to US parents, the idea is that belonging to the United States may be taken to foreground the feature of choice. But if it is worth commenting that the United States is bound by ideals, there are at least two possible implications (1) that this bond is probably not as concrete as is supposed; (2) that this need to emphasize citizenship based upon this particular object of identification means there is another form of identification, and the valorization of this identification suggests its superiority over supposed deficiencies in others. The collective bond routed in the choice to adhere to grand ideals is both weaker and stronger than those based in 'blood,

birth, or soil', if potentially no less vacuous. If supposedly less intrinsic, it provides a stronger platform for its defense because it relies on reference to essentially contestable ideas of freedom, equality, and democracy. If Markell suggests that constitutional patriotism is a false respite from nationalism, this problem would appear to take on an extra dimension of illusion. Not only does the attachment to the constitution itself rely on the call to the past, but its claim to be a nation rooted in the participation of the people and their adherence to the constitution is itself farce.

Having established the ties of the nation so, their linguistic tacks continue to show similarity, e.g. the calls to need address social programs that aid the disadvantaged, terrorism, and weapons of mass destruction, but the organization structures through which they are conveyed begin to diverge. Bush's address is comparatively rote in form, shaping up as a concerted effort to shape the nation itself and what the nation needs to address, while Obama's is more of an unfolding with thematic clarity, but unclear organization. Each continues to speak to the idea of citizenship in varying degrees of explicitness. Bracketing their personal speaking styles and rhetorical effect they seek to achieve in influencing this organization, this disparity is due at least in part to the historical milieux each confronts. Bush makes note of his circumstance in saying "Some seem to think that our politics can afford to be petty because, in a time of peace, the stakes of our debates appear to be small. But the stakes for America are never small. If our country does not lead the cause of freedom, it will not be led." We might read this as an incitement to urgency in a time of comparative calm. Entering office Bush was confronted with with a recession and a great deal of press about values voting and the deeply divided nation, both of which work against an easy hailing of the unified citizen in the absence of an external object against which to identify. Obama has little problem in this way: he faced a world

economic crisis and lingering unpopular involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. When he speaks to the enormous tasks ahead, there is little question of his reference or its gravity. With the spectre clear, he needed do less work to construct the problem than suggest the approach.

These organizational structures lend themselves to a different kind of presentation of citizenship, which comes across most clearly in the question of agency. To the extent that the inaugural address is platform-laying and tone-setting exercise, there must be an agent or agents that will carry out these actions. Having begun through a discursive construction of the 'we', the speaker may set these goals for action by way of the 'I' or various constructions on this 'we': it may include the full extent of the we, or only a select portion of them-and both Bush and Obama mull around in this ambiguity, which is perhaps telling to the extent that we earlier noted the republican-democratic/Schmitt-Wolin/hierarchy-distribution distinctions. Bush's address is focused around four virtues: "Today, we affirm a new commitment to live out our nation's promise through civility, courage, compassion, and character." The virtues are only meaningful as applied to individuals, and the explicitly collective character through a constant reference to 'citizens' and 'citizenship' in which he deploys these virtues make it clear that these virtues are necessary across the population and not just to a particular group.

In spite of this call to civic virtue, it is essentially one to temperance. Consider that the first virtue he addresses is civility, a "formal politeness and courtesy in behavior or speech" and defined by Bush as "not a tactic or a sentiment. It is the determined choice of trust over cynicism of community over chaos." The reference made in the context of civil society and defined as good will, respect, fair dealing, and forgiveness. The formulation is vague, but within the broad range captured under the

word 'civic' ranging from community to public more broadly understood, his understanding of civility leans strongly toward the former. In fact, this call for civility, accompanied as it is by a call to unity and civic duty, makes no mention of any kind of critical citizen engagement, but takes on a character of chummy communitarianism where you lend your neighbor a cup of sugar, help a stalled motorist, volunteer at the local soup kitchen, etcetra. Bush calls for education to stimulate eager young minds but paints citizenship as a certain *je ne sais quoi* that cannot be fostered by the government. He calls on us to be "citizens, not spectators; citizens, not subjects; responsible citizens, building communities of service and a nation of character". He thus denies the power inherent in his very privileged place of address in calling for citizens not subjects, and engaged citizens, but in calling for communities of service and character it is clear that this citizenship is something apart from engagement with the government.

The bulk of Obama's address is devoted to framing the political needs of the time domestically and internationally, but Obama's 'we' has a slightly different content, if with a basically similar object. Both deployments of 'we' attempt to fix an idea of who or what an American is, but Bush's angle takes on a much more personal tack: Americans embody these virtues, which virtues are then connected to the needs and trajectories of US policy. Obama's ideas of citizenship come across implicitly through the people he hails as exemplary and the traits he valorizes. Speaking to the people who have made the US great, who have *earned* the title of greatness, he applauds "the risk-takers, the doers, the makers of things - some celebrated but more often men and women obscure in their labor, who have carried us up to the long, rugged path towards prosperity and freedom." There is thus a clear economic foundation to his

understanding of the role of the citizen in the United States toward the end-goal of prosperity and freedom.

The stealthy shift in the constitution of the 'we' is best captured in the following two paragraphs:

This is the journey we continue today. We remain the most prosperous, powerful nation on Earth. Our workers are no less productive than when the crisis began. Our minds are no less inventive, our goods and services no less needed than they were last week or last month or last year. Our capacity remains undiminished. But our time of standing pat, of protecting narrow interests and putting off unpleasant decisions - that time has surely passed. Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking America.

For everywhere we look, there is work to be done. The state of the economy calls for action, bold and swift, and we will act - not only to create new jobs, but to lay a new foundation for growth. We will build the roads and bridges, the electric grids and digital lines that feed our commerce and bind us together. We will restore science to its rightful place, and wield technology's wonders to raise health care's quality and lower its cost. We will harness the sun and the winds and the soil to fuel our cars and run our factories. And we will transform our schools and colleges and universities to meet the demands of a new age. All this we can do. And all this we will do.

In the first of these Obama defends the place of the United States in the world through an economic lens: we remain prosperous, we are productive, inventive, and the world needs our stuff. These things, to the extent that they hold up, must be carried out by everyone insofar as the economy precisely only functions through the distribution of production and consumption. A shift in the agent begins to occur with "But our time of standing pat, of protecting narrow interests and putting off unpleasant decisions..." and through consideration of what it means to dust ourselves off and get back to work. In the second paragraph he acknowledges the groundwork necessary to get back on our feet, but he is still speaking from a royal 'we' when, there is no indication through the address that the agent who can lay that foundation goes beyond the government. 'We' can restore science to its rightful place, better our schools and universities, but speaking from my position as a single unit in a country of over 300 million people and a

relative absence of civic organizations, it is not clear how *I* am going to do any of that aside from just trying to make a living. His claim that we need to pick ourselves up and get back to the work of being great borders on nonsensical and laughable when we are reduced to this economic component, when the vast majority of US citizens are simply trying to get by and probably felt very little sense of renewal or empowerment in response to this call.

If there is a key difference between these two inaugural addresses, it is in a deeper understanding of who they speak to. Bush's address is saturated with religious references. By the thirteenth paragraph out of a total of forty-nine he has claimed "I know [a single nation of justice and opportunity] is in our reach because we are guided by a power larger than ourselves who creates us equal in His image." When speaking to the duty of care to one's fellow citizens he says, "When we see that wounded traveler on the road to Jericho, we will not pass to the other side." Speaking to the demands of democracy, "as a saint of our times has said, every day we are called to do small things with great love. The most important tasks of a democracy are done by everyone." Constructing the nature of community he says "Church and charity, synagogue and mosque lend our communities their humanity, and they will have an honored place in our plans and in our laws." In addition to these overt references, the very structure of his address has religious overtones: the organization around these four virtues is suggestive of the cardinal virtues of Christianity (justice, fortitude, prudence, temperance).

Meanwhile Obama's speech is notable for its populist tone. This is not to say that Bush is aloof of such concerns; to the contrary, he notes that "[t]he ambition of some Americans are limited by failing schools and hidden prejudice and the circumstances of their birth, and vows "to work to build a single nation of justice and

opportunity.” How are we to do so? “We will reform Social Security and Medicare... and we will reduce taxes, to recover the momentum of our economy and reward the effort and enterprise of working Americans.” The emphasis on ‘reward’, ‘effort’ and ‘*working* Americans’, the problem is shifted away from the market as such and toward the individual. The solution to such a framing must then occur through an attention to the working American’s negative. That this restoration of spirit is relegated to the realm of faith disavows any government responsibility.

These calls for or claims to unity are thus exceeded and undermined in through selective construction of the audience, which underscores a basic failure even to address what exactly that unity consists in beyond an economic inter-dependence - and if we understand this to be our basis of collective attachment, we are just as well to understand ourselves as glorified citizens of the world as of the United States, except that the United States exercises a violence that maintains their economic status relative to much of the rest of the world. While they are, of course, offering their voices to whomever will listen, they are clearly directed towards certain groups. In Bush’s case, for example, religion provides the foundation for the community, and while he pays lip service to religions other than Christianity, it is quite clear that he is speaking to the supposed Christian ‘values voters’ who were claimed to have put him into office. This kind of political construction, for example delegating responses to poverty to religious organizations, creates a context that privileges certain actors in relation to others. Obama, for his part, while perhaps not partitioning off his audience in quite the same way, certainly privileges certain members over others. His campaign was noted for its ability to mobilize typically apathetic constituencies, one of which was the 18-25 demographic. He does ostensibly reach out to the public, but his use of the internet as a

tool to do so marks his effort as particularly interested in those more technologically savvy, namely that younger demographic.

Apart from these rhetorical inconsistencies, perhaps more troubling is the extent to which Bush and Obama's rhetoric in terms of our psychoanalytic ethic. As suggested in their strong separation of government and civil society and their failure to conceive of the citizen beyond a unit of productivity in capitalist society there is an initial disparity with the relationship suggested by the libidinal economy, but particularly in discursive terms their use of the royal 'we' does indeed produce one man but not because there is no space between the great man and the crowd, but because there is, in effect, both too little and too much space, because the very real gap that is there is not acknowledged. Both are happy to separate government and citizen, and the claim that the government is of the people is true, only in the wrong way: the government exists by skimming the economic fruits of its people, but does not seek to draw them explicitly into process of governance; and to the extent that the state has a part in perpetuating the market and its adverse effects, it disavows and shifts this responsibility.



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**CONCLUSION:  
WHEREFORE SMILES THE KING?**

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**EMOTING THE KING**

We began consideration of civic attachment with an understanding of the levers between individual and collective informed by the Freudian libidinal economy, expanded the empirical utility of that model by elaborating the discursive avenues through which the libidinal economy can be manipulated, and then considered how the inaugural addresses of George W. Bush and Barack H. Obama worked through these discursive structures to effect the libidinal economy. This examination and understanding of citizenship is worthwhile unto itself, but the concern for human well-being and happiness is self-defeating if confined to the unit of the nation-state. There is no pre-given reason that the constituents of a more affluent state deserve greater advantage in these matters than any of the largely impoverished states of the world, and to confine our analysis to the nation-state privileges just this kind of outcome. Our concern here for collective love must go deeper than just love of and for ourselves.

In *Love's Work* Gillian Rose offers the parable of King Arthur to illustrate the the tenuous relationship between affect and reason.<sup>1</sup> King Arthur is driven by twin loves: that for his wife, Guinevere, and that for the ideals upon which the kingdom he has fashioned rest: justice and equality. These loves are thrown into inexorable tension when fellow knight Launcelot falls in love with Guinevere, for which the law dictates that Guinevere must die and Launcelot be banished. Arthur is thus forced to choose between his loves: he may choose the kingdom and lose both Guinevere and Launcelot, or he may choose Guinevere and undermine the kingdom he has worked to create. It is

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<sup>1</sup> **IBID.**

clear that whether he chooses love or reason there will be no favorable outcome whatever his choice, and the King must therefore be sad.

Vincent Lloyd suggests that “when law is understood as an ideal, imposed by a King or a sovereign people, ‘humanity is forgotten, and so will be the law’”, because “the focus on a distant ideal allows the lawmakers to forget their personal vulnerability and power, with inevitably tragic results. But tragic results would just as surely followed had King Arthur favored his family and friends and forgotten his ideal”.<sup>2</sup> Rose thus surmises that the fundamental condition of the king is the sadness at these inescapable tensions; the question is how one deals with this sadness. Lloyd suggests that for Rose, good philosophy consists in embracing this sadness as a productive tension, while bad philosophy seeks to suppress it, looking for “the easy way out,”<sup>3</sup> resulting in an interminable melancholy. The King’s sadness is a knowing unease and an embrace of disquieting truths.

Foucault famously enjoined that, in looking at power, we cut off the head of the King. In spite of the hyperbole, he highlights an important point: if the power is in principle ours because we are all (part of the) King, how are we to produce this same knowing embrace of disquieting truths throughout the body of the King so as to stir the body to action? This question is at the heart of cosmopolitan citizenship, and indeed cosmopolitan citizenship is the logical sequence of western universalism. If our state and system of governance is premised on the inherent worth of the individual and a vague notion of equality, how can it be that this worth does not travel across borders? How can we justify the disparity in living conditions, or, to the extent that we acknowledge the problem, project our own self-serving solutions onto them?

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<sup>2</sup> NUSSBAUM, M. C. AND J. COHEN (1996). FOR LOVE OF COUNTRY: DEBATING THE LIMITS OF PATRIOTISM. BOSTON: BEACON PRESS, 3.

<sup>3</sup> *IBID.*, 4.

In “Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism” Martha Nussbaum argues against the “easy comfort” of patriotism in favor of the more far-reaching cosmopolitanism, citizenship of the world. She suggests that civic education is lacking to the extent that it focuses almost exclusively on domestic history. Her answer to the problem is thus quite practical: the revision of school curricula to cover the breadth of the world is not all that radical, and the function of the school as an ideological apparatus could indeed be an effective avenue to achieving cosmopolitan citizenship. Her concern here is laudable, that US citizens give “the fact of being an American citizen a special salience in moral and political deliberation”,<sup>4</sup> and “that this emphasis on patriotic pride is both morally dangerous and, ultimately, subversive of the worthy goals that patriotism sets out to serve - for example,... justice and equality”.<sup>5</sup> In spite of her claim that we ought first of all recognize ourselves as citizens of the world, she does not match this implicit claim to equal rights the kind of political teeth necessary to actually make it matter. She suggests that we should be troubled by our place of affluence in the world amidst much poverty, but defends focusing education on the history and politics of one’s territory. In so doing, rather than advancing her claim to the love of humanity, she treats other peoples as secluded collectivities unto themselves and unrelated to our own history, against her stated desire to craft an understanding of ourselves that allows us to question the naturalistic assumption.

Her approach to the problem of pollution is telling. One benefit she claims of cosmopolitanism is its ability to foster approaches to international problems; but in offering the example of pollution she says “The pollution of third-world nations that are

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<sup>4</sup> *IBID.*, 12.

<sup>5</sup> *IBID.*, 13.

attempting to attain our high standard of living will, in some cases, end up in our air.”<sup>6</sup> She makes no mention of the astronomical disparity in pollution between the US and the third world, nor does she consider how the fantastic volumes of pollution emitted by the United States affects the third world, or that perhaps we ought to sacrifice our own standard of living for their benefit. Instead, she answers that “politics, like child care, will be poorly done if each thinks herself equally responsible for all.”<sup>7</sup> This question is at the heart of cosmopolitan citizenship, and indeed cosmopolitan citizenship is the logical sequence of western universalism. If we understand people to possess a certain intrinsic worth that binds us to certain ethical duties, then how are we to justify a disparity in living conditions or impose our ideas and modes of governance upon them? In shrugging off affect, drawing an easy line between love and the ethical and elevating the rationally-derived love for all mankind to the ethical ideal, isn’t this suppression of sadness just Nussbaum’s aim?

Against Martha Nussbaum’s cosmopolitanism, Ulrich Beck’s cosmopolitan realist approach remedies at least one of these deficiencies in providing the political teeth the Nussbaum ignores. This cosmopolitan realism specifically questions market benevolence and by identifying capital’s key strategic move as the power of exit, that “the public spheres and national parliaments of different states can be played off against one another and in this way ultimately be forced into anticipatory assent” to economic measures not in the public interest.<sup>8</sup> The political solution thus comes in the

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<sup>6</sup> BECK, U. (2005). POWER IN THE GLOBAL AGE: A NEW GLOBAL POLITICAL ECONOMY. MALDEN, MA: POLITY, 135.

<sup>7</sup> MCCREERY, D. (1994). RURAL GUATEMALA, 1760-1940. STANFORD: STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS.

<sup>8</sup> ACCORDING TO THE 2008 CIA WORLD FACTBOOK, THERE ARE 120 COUNTRIES WITH SUCH A GDP: OVER 60% OF COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD. DATA AVAILABLE AT: [HTTPS://WWW.CIA.GOV/LIBRARY/PUBLICATIONS/THE-WORLD-FACTBOOK/](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/)

<sup>8</sup> ONCE AGAIN, IF OUR CONCERN IS TO PRESERVE OUR OWN PROSPERITY AT THE COST OF THE OTHER.

form of a pooling of sovereignty. As acknowledged in the Rettberg article on private sector involvement in peace negotiations, capitalism brings mixed in its outcomes but must ultimately cannot be ignored in seeking political or social change. Capital's key bargaining chip, the power of exit, must then be checked, which Beck proposes the equitable response must occur by linking the public spheres and national parliaments in a united front against this strategy to prevent the race to the bottom. To be sure, this form of cosmopolitanism incompletely answers to critiques concerning the liberal imposition, and though this might present a practicable solution for the wealthy states of the world, it is highly unlikely that this united front would be easily extended across the spectrum of states. Even so, Beck's theorization stands distinct from Nussbaum's in his concern to fashion a practice to match cosmopolitanism's aims, in this case the unequal effects of capital.

An example: prior to their colonization the indigenous population of Guatemala had enjoyed a way of life which, if not perfect, sustained them in greater ease than many enjoy at present. They were not drowning in material goods, but neither are they now: the indigenous population is the most impoverished demographic group in Guatemala, so it is difficult to identify how the purported benefits of the market have come to bear on their lives. Moreover, involvement in the market can not be explained away by reference to a matter of choice. To the contrary, so long as it was possible they only performed paid labor until they had saved enough to live on for a few months, and then returned home. There came a point in the late 1800's, however, where it simply became impossible to exist outside the market and live by with subsistence farming.<sup>9</sup> There is, of course, a certain danger in recourse to this valorization of the 'traditional' against the 'modern'; but my very point in bringing this example is to highlight that the

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<sup>9</sup> AS SUGGESTED WHEN BILLIG NOTES THAT IN A WORLD OF NATION-STATES, DEMOCRACY TAKES SHAPE AS AND THROUGH THE NATION.

indigenous have reaped a negligible benefit, and borne a huge cost, from this external imposition. To the extent that the United States was involved in the milieu that upset their world, this desperation signified not least in the formation of a guerrilla response, we have a duty of care toward them. The full content of this duty is in principle undecidable because it is not our decision. Such dictate would violate the very agency we are trying to affirm, but might depart from the question: we have helped to get you into your present predicament, how may we help you out? This approach would be quite antithetical to that presently pursued by, e.g. the World Bank, who place strong restrictions upon the states they aid in 'development', and that are very often not in the best interest of that state's constituents. A more equitable and truly cosmopolitan outcome would require acknowledgment that formal institutional equality is not tantamount to substantive equality, thereby exposing and delegitimizing the love of power cloaking our self-aggrandizing and narcissistic imposition.

#### **PITY THE POOR IMMIGRANT**

This work has been concerned to outline the kind of civic ethic in terms of practice that might be involved in a post-colonial cosmopolitanism, but it is quite clear that this civic ethic must be matched to a certain understanding of the world which will be encoded in various discursive formulations ranging from the law to daily conversation. So what does it mean to be a cosmopolitan citizen, and how does a cosmopolitan society interact with the rest of the world? This question is best explored through a limit case: consider the example of an individual from any of the vast plurality of states that have one-quarter of the United States' GDP who has immigrated to the United States in search of opportunity.<sup>10</sup> What rights ought s/he be afforded? Should s/he be allowed to vote? Receive social welfare programs? I imagine that the

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<sup>10</sup> ROSE, J. (2007). THE LAST RESISTANCE. NEW YORK: VERSO, 163.

overwhelming response for the majority of US citizens would be an over-enthusiastic “No! S/he would have to be naturalized, immigrants have to *earn* the right to citizenship and *learn* how to be an American.” From a social contractarian perspective this makes sense, and perhaps it has some basis in realistic economic concerns, but in a fundamental way this response says a great deal about the value one places in humanity. Asking whether the immigrant should be afforded the right to vote both skirts and constitutes the issue at hand: in one way it skirts the question of *why* the immigrant is there in the first place and what part our own way of life has in that answer, while at the same time placing the spotlight upon the question of why we would *not* want the immigrant to vote. Both approaches expose the hypocrisy of our claim to exceptionalism and commitment to human rights. We might expect that expressions of this kind of policy framework would contain a sense of humility and a desire to root to the bottom of conflict instead of reinforcing one’s commitment to it.

Following Obama’s inauguration the media afforded significant coverage to expressions of relief among the international community in respite of Bush’s foreign policy. They explained that the shock that the same nation that elected George W. Bush for two consecutive terms could shift so markedly, and how exceptional the United States was to elect such a historically subjugated minority to high office. In spite of this acclaim, however his policies do not approach the needs of a non-imposing cosmopolitan citizenship. For the political aims that have garnered this attention, Obama’s foreign policy still evinces a power relation reminiscent of Martha Nussbaum’s. Obama devotes a seven paragraph cluster toward the end of his address to the rest of the world, expanding his audience beyond “my fellow citizens” to the Muslim World, poor nations, the terrorist threat - although this section feels as much a justification to the world as an address to any of these particular groups.

Speaking to the question of defense, he says “As for our common defense, we reject as false the choice between our safety and our ideals.” This might be understood on the domestic front as a statement of refusal to compromise civil liberties to combat terrorist threats. But in making that claim he implicitly invokes the cloaking suggested by Wendy Brown: there is an abject failure to consider the root of the apparent antagonism, and this absolute commitment to defense is wedded to an absolute sense of enmity - but the problem isn’t us, it’s them. He reinforces the message in saying: “to all the other peoples and governments who are watching today... know that America is a friend of each nation and every man, woman, and child who seeks a future of peace and dignity, and that we are ready to lead once more.” The United States is thus presumed to be a force of good, and if we do not get along with any given contingent of the world it isn’t because *we* are unfriendly or unwilling, but that *they* are unreasonable to our very modest and reasonable aims.

The second paragraph in this cluster thus serves an important distancing function in this way:

Recall that earlier generations faced down fascism and communism not just with missiles and tanks, but with steady alliances and enduring convictions. They understood that our power alone cannot protect us, nor does it entitle us to do as we please. Instead, they knew that our power grows through its prudent use; our security emanates from the justness of our cause, the force of our example, the tempering qualities of humility and restraint.

This juxtaposition serves at least two functions here: (1) as we have seen with, e.g., Judith Butler’s presumption that *truly* fascist acts are carried out by an other, the reference to fascists and communists (the totalitarians) here draws a distinction he explicitly picks up in painting their demise as a result, in part, of our “tempering qualities of humility and restraint”; (2) it serves a justifying purpose, as in ‘we are not totalitarian, and that is why we won - because we have power, but we know how to use our power fairly, and that is why we are still in power - because



we are right.’ Because this victory against fascism and communism was accomplished through reasonable conviction matched to alliance, it is quite clear for him that from this reasonability stems a presumption of right. His claim to humility is thus surprisingly prideful, perhaps narcissistic, and his temperance a euphemism for conservatism.

This conceit comes across most strikingly in his simultaneous acknowledgment of suffering in the rest of the world while drawing a line between suffering for itself and suffering that might, for example, produce the terrorist organizations he denounces:

To the people of poor nations, we pledge to work alongside you to make your farms flourish and let clean waters flow; to nourish starved bodies and feed hungry minds. And to those nations like ours that enjoy relative plenty, we say we can no longer afford indifference to suffering outside our borders[.]

We will not apologize for our way of life, nor will we waver in its defense, and for those who seek to advance their aims by inducing terror and slaughtering innocents, we say to you now that our spirit is stronger and cannot be broken; you cannot outlast us, and we will defeat you.

Implicit in this willingness to “extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist” is an assurance of purpose and, importantly, a failure to conceive of the world as a functional totality. The willingness to cooperate on the condition of assent to the terms imposed by the more powerful party is not surprising, but the manner in which this power is openly understood is conflicted. Consider again his reference to the defeat of communism and fascism, where he says that “our power alone cannot protect us”, but “grows through its prudent use”. While ostensibly speaking to the same entity of power throughout, he is in fact speaking to two different things. The first power is explicitly physical, exercised through “missiles and tanks”, but this understanding is exceeded in the second case insofar as it is not clear how physical power grows through prudent use. Perhaps the measured use of physical power gains *legitimacy* through its prudent use, but this legitimacy is distinct from physical power itself. His understanding of power has thus shifted from the

physical to the ideological – there is still a physical element to this power, but this legitimacy of power as physical violence is understood in this ability to summon a line of enmity that stretches across borders.

The task for a libidinally-informed cosmopolitanism is precisely to spur reflection into why we might want to “apologize for our way of life”, and to recast exactly how we consider terrorism to be a problem. It is here that we can locate very clearly the relation between our position in the world and the libidinal economy: if discontent is understood to stem from a repressive impetus exercised through discourse that is exclusive of political participation, then the state of exception necessitated in response to the terrorist threat is antithetical to this civic ethos. The defensive nature that characterizes and legitimates for Orwell the patriotic position resonates here, and so should its critique as being a moralistic and power-privileging distinction. Obama’s stated intention of looking toward the world with a sympathetic heart and open arms goes in the right direction, but is functionally undermined through his portrayal of the terrorist through the lens of absolute enmity, thereby foreclosing the thinkability of dialecticizing any fault of our own in producing the antagonism. Obama’s call that they unclench their fists thus signifies an acceptance of the very terms that provoked the violent response, cementing the antagonism.

#### **ASSUMING THE MISTAKE**

In his eponymous documentary, Žižek borrows the physicist’ notion of the universe as a positively charged void wherein things are spurred into existence at its disturbance. Following Freud’s understanding of group psychology, he suggests that this disturbance is the force of love, and moreover that we may only right the universe by assuming the mistake and taking it to the end. Collective love in all of its forms should be understood along these lines – a mistake with great problems and

consequences, but one that cannot simply be brushed aside and expected to right itself. To address the problems of collective love, collective love itself must be critically embraced. For the liberal conceits in Nussbaum's and Beck's formulations of cosmopolitan citizenship, the perspective provides a glimmer of hope in addressing the shortcomings of collective attachment so long as one pays attention to the question of scope. It is important to note here that I suggest the libidinal economy to frame a revised cosmopolitan response not out of a desire to deploy the libidinal economy universally. Instead, I suggest it in the particular context of the United States to the end of questioning the internal dynamic of citizenship vis-a-vis our position relative to the rest of the world. That said, I expect that it should apply somewhat more broadly, at least to post-industrial world powers. The libidinal economy is a realist approach toward greater affirmation of common humanity that embraces the unfortunate quirks of the present in the hope of better days to come.

I propose the patriotic response not to valorize the patriotic bond, but to address the cynical distance between citizen and state under the assumption that this distance may be as dangerous to the world as its obverse - and that passively resisting the state does not further the end of changing its course. I thus offer an attempt to re-cast the patriotic bond in a qualitatively different way in hopes that it will serve the function of driving political engagement to the end of considering more fully the United States' role in the world, accepting responsibility for missteps and blind spots in foreign policy and addressing them. Assuming the mistake of collective love thus *must* take on a cosmopolitan form if it is to be at all defensible. This responsibility or ethical duty exists insofar as we are complicit in subjugating the populations of other states, but our response must not paint the other in terms of a lack to be filled but agents in themselves with their own bodies of knowledge and history. In pragmatic terms I

propose that this collective love should occur along the lines of patriotism in the United States to emphasize its civic character and because, if there need be a national identity attached to this civic attachment, I think it best to divest it of as much essentialism as possible. If there must be a nation attached to democracy, then that nation should take shape actively through what we *do* than what we *are*. The state represents our object of study only insofar as it is understood under the present world order to legitimately monopolize violence; but we do not want to leave the state as our ultimate focus insofar as so doing reifies and cements it.

By way of conclusion, in “Freud and the People” Jacqueline Rose examines the collective psychic trauma of the Abu Ghraib scandal. For Rose the purportedly representative nature of democracy and identification of citizen with state produces a horror in the recognition that the state fails to comply with its own ideals. In time of war this horror is heightened by the efforts of the government to stifle dissent, as the state seeks to justify the use of violence as ‘good’, valorizing of the ‘us’ against the depravity of the ‘them’.

The Greatest sacrifice the people are being asked to make on behalf of the state is to give up their right not to believe in it. If there is one thing worse than disillusionment it is not being allowed to recognise that disillusioned is what you are. (As psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott once said, it doesn’t matter what children feel provided they are allowed to feel it.) There is a lie at the heart of democracy if the state will sacrifice its citizens freedom to take dissent to the limit, and indeed its relationship to them, for the sake of its own violently enacted and no less violently preserved self-regard.

We see in this example a libidinal tie tortuous and discontented through the repression necessitated in our self-satisfied claims to righteousness. This argument is not very convincing, however, understood in terms of an outright garrison state silencing dissent. I am not, nor have I ever been, afraid of punitive government action when I denounce the invasion of Iraq; more troubling is my fellow citizens’ reactions. The

power that forecloses disillusionment is not so much in outright repression as the discourse that disables open dissatisfaction.

How do we deprogram our cheerful robots into sad kings? What is the connection between sadness and horror? Rose's framing suggests responsible actors but no easy solutions, but the relation between horror and sadness lies in the libidinal relation: the state's authorial privilege and monopoly of violence are difficult to discursively dethrone. Sadness is felt and, while sometimes crippling, may also provoke one to action; horror is a done unto and presumes recoil. If a complete answer to our question must include actors in a position to effect our problem but are not the answer in principle is everyone, but certain actors no doubt have more influence than others. Citizens can and should engage themselves at whatever level of government possible and available to favor the left side of the democratic-republican opposition; but the political fragmentation concomitant with neoliberalism suggests a more scathing critique of those with greater political-authorial power. Nussbaum and Beck both suggest fertile avenues for cosmopolitan policies in relation to other states and civic education. For the displeasure we may take in Weber's call for an ethic of responsibility owing to his unapologetic liberal imperialism, the dictum that with great power comes great responsibility here unfortunately holds true. But when we conceive of power in terms of controlling the discourse, there rests a great responsibility in the mediator as that which is mediated. The state must seek to produce an abundance of sad despots and policies that affirm ideals of equality and dignity, and the media should be charged with more faithfully carrying out its role as a critical interlocutor so that the ever-elusive 'people' might be made substantive.

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