

This article focuses on the relation of public sphere theory to two important problems in ethical and political philosophy, namely, 'distributive justice' and 'existential meaning.' In the broadest historical context, these problems are typical of the circumstances of liberal modernity, with its particular constellation of societal and cultural conditions. Starting from the premise that they are collective problems, I look to recent contributions in public sphere theory, such as the work of Michael Warner, to attempt an elaboration of how these problems relate to a singularly important way of being collective: in "publics." As such, I attempt to bridge the works of various contemporary ethical and political philosophers (i.e. Charles Taylor, Richard Rorty and Jürgen Habermas) with a sociological analysis that focuses on the collective configuration of the cultural form of a "public." Insofar as publics are invested with their own ethical and normative charge, I speculate on two forms of publicness (*romantic* and *democratic*), which are pertinent to the problems of distributive justice and existential meaning.

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## Liberalism and Utopian Publics

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### I

Liberalism, taken as the attempt to make flourish "the goods of self-governance and freedom, based on rights founded on equality" (Taylor, *Philosophical* 258) faces two immense challenges today: how to ensure distributive justice and how to work against the loss of existential meaning. These problems are well known and some claim that they have been inherent to the project of modernity since its beginnings.<sup>1</sup> They have been

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<sup>1</sup> See Bernstein, J. M., chapter 5.

addressed by liberals and Marxists in the former case, and by the Romantics and existentialists in the latter. The problem of egalitarian justice, considered as normative equality across different spheres of life, is particularly on the point of distributive justice. It is not that justice has been achieved in other domains, but it has undoubtedly come a long way if we consider, for example, the abolition of slavery, the gains of feminists, the civil rights movement, and queer culture. Distributive justice has also progressed, most importantly at the level of the civil welfare state. But just as the welfare state was achieving some important normative milestones throughout the twentieth century, it was already being put at risk with the de-politicization of national markets that has come about in the course of economic globalization.<sup>2</sup>

The loss of existential meaning, on the other hand, is perhaps the chief “malaise” of modernity.<sup>3</sup> Charles Taylor links it to our failure to actualize the potential of modern individualism. With the degradation of pre-modern ontological orders and the subsequent “disenchantment” of the world, the significance of ethical imperatives and moral horizons in everyday life has greatly faded, creating a sense of existential insecurity. With the institutional enactment of the modern goal of individual freedom, the passion for higher purposes has receded, often leaving the individual without a sense of “what things costs, what life costs.” As Taylor says, the ethical and existential significance of our lives together has been “flattened” and “narrowed.” This means that while “we live in a world where people have a right to choose for themselves their own pattern of life, to decide in conscience what convictions to espouse, to determine the shape of their lives in a whole host of ways that their ancestors couldn’t control” (Taylor, *Malaise 2*), there is a darker side of individualism that looms in a “centering on the self, which both flattens and narrows our lives, makes them poorer in meaning, and less concerned with others in society” (Taylor, *Malaise 4*).

The reason I draw on public sphere theory to address these problems, of justice and meaning, is that they can only be worked out through negotiating the bonds of community and commonality, which occur at different levels of scale and political relevance but always via “publics” and “publicness.” With the cultural and societal

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<sup>2</sup> Jürgen Habermas refers to this as the “crisis of the welfare state.” In *Taming Globalization: Frontiers of Governance*, David Held attempts to come to terms with divergent empirical interpretations of the crisis.

<sup>3</sup> I refer to this “loss” in a cultural sense, having to do with the secularization or “detraditionalization” of the world, most famously theorized by Hegel in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* but also by Tocqueville in his *Democracy in America*. The problem has been addressed in related ways at a social level by numerous theorists of modernity, touching upon issues of powerlessness and self-estrangement (Marx), meaninglessness (Weber), normlessness (Durkheim) and social isolation (Tonnies). Kohn and Schooler (1983) approach the question from the field of empirical psychology to make connections between modernity, work experience and “diminished intellectual flexibility.”

changes of the last several centuries, these bonds have shifted from relations between kin and comrades to relations between “strangers.”<sup>4</sup> In *Publics and Counterpublics* (2002), Michael Warner describes the normative framework that governs these relations as a register of “stranger-relationality,” by which he means the ethical patterns that structure sociability between strangers. The issue of stranger-relationality is central to the question of distributive justice, insofar as a specific disposition of sociability among strangers is required to regulate and dissolve the “the rise to dominance of cognitive-instrumental interests” (Habermas, *Habermas: Autonomy* 91). The conditions of stranger-relationality are also central to what I have been calling existential meaning, in that their patterning is at the heart of the processes by which we come to answer the questions posed by the simple fact of living as ‘self-interpreting animals,’ such as “who do I believe myself to be” and “what do I want or desire.” Some may perceive this fundamental existential predicament as a burden. Another, more romantic interpretation, sees it as the condition through which we might find happiness by freely transforming our answers to these questions, coming to better ones, more suited to each of our contingent life-histories and idiosyncratic personalities.<sup>5</sup>

One way to approach variations of stranger-relationality in the context of our problems is in the study of the cultural form of a “public.” A public is an associational form that has become increasingly important throughout the modern period in economic, political, and cultural forms of affiliation, though it is still poorly understood. It is a flexible type of social association ideally premised on discursive openness among indefinite strangers. Its range is not limited to the state or nation as is commonly inferred. It may also take the shape of a more autonomous kind of social totality. I examine the basic structure of a public here by way of Warner’s work and decipher two patterns that the form can potentially assume, with the goal of addressing the problems of liberalism posed above. The first pertains to a “leveled” form of life, as is implied by the state, and the second to more contingent forms of individuality and community. I consider these patterns, of *democratic* and *romantic* publicness, to be pertinent to the present historical moment and have roughly classified them as utopian.

## II

Hannah Arendt (1958) describes ‘public’ as “the world itself, insofar as it is common to all

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<sup>4</sup> The etymology of “stranger” suggests a social type that does not belong inside circles of kinship and camaraderie.

<sup>5</sup> On this point, Stanley Cavell (1981) makes the claim that “the achievement of human happiness requires not the perennial and fuller satisfaction of our needs as they stand but the examination and transformation of those needs” (5).

of us and distinguished from our privately owned place in it” (52). We can interpret this to mean that a public is a cultural world within which we interact as individuals, and further this to say that it is a forum for the realization of a cultural hermeneutics—a hermeneutics of collective existence, though in this case one which functions under conditions of individual freedom and private subjectivity. This of course makes for a very different social totality than one that is not functioning under such conditions. As a forum for a liberal cultural hermeneutics, a public is a place or type of space in which individuals co-create a “social imaginary” in symbolic interaction. The social imaginary is best described as “an enabling but not fully explicable matrix within which a people imagine and act as world-making agents” (Gaonkar 1). It is carried in the images, stories, and legends that allow people to “imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations” (Taylor, “Modern Social” 106).

In the course of early modern social developments, manifestations of this world-making public were lifted out of natural communities, that is, out of finite geographic contexts such as the mediaeval town or village. This development was in some ways necessitated by the fact that culture became interwoven with the reaches of the market and the emergent nation-state. It was able to do so by a whole constellation of circumstances, such as the material conditions for the printed circulation of discourse, appropriate readings practices, and a social imaginary “in which stranger-sociability could become ordinary, valuable, and in some ways normative” (Warner 75). This mutation in the moral imagination of stranger-sociability first found its roots in the emergence of the modern art world—with the early modern art of the court and patron and then with commercialized bourgeois art. It developed more importantly, however, with the formation of ‘public opinion’ as a means for civil society to monitor the activities of the state. The institutions and practices of this aspect of civil society comprise what is known as the “political public sphere.”

With this transition towards democratic practices, and concomitantly with the development of the state and market, the symbolic mediation of the “world itself” became increasingly more complex. Communicative freedom was constrained by the systems of market and state, by the media of money, and administrative power. Moreover, these important developments have to be considered in relation to the historical emergence of strangerhood as the new medium of commonality. This marked a significant expansion of world-making sociability to encompass alien forms of life, outside the commonality of kinship and comradeship.<sup>6</sup> For the first time, disparate social groups and settlements

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<sup>6</sup> As Warner notes, “One of the defining elements of modernity... is normative stranger-sociability, of a

had to arrive at a “common mind” about seemingly different concerns, which were to be discussed in the forums of the political public sphere and oriented towards the activities of the state.

The constitution of the political public sphere implied the creation of a public with a greatly extended geographic range, incorporating the disparate discourses of indefinite strangers. What is concealed within this complexity is that “the” public of the public sphere was itself composed of multiple miniature publics, that is, mediated spaces of a lesser scale, which have a tighter discursive consistency, closer to the model of corporeal conversation. “Public opinion” in the singular sense is the imaginary summary point of the multiple discussion spaces it knits together in space and time, such as with the combination of a city newspaper circuit, a national radio station and a neighbourhood tavern. Based on this understanding, Taylor describes the public sphere as “a meta-topical common space.”<sup>7</sup> The historical significance of this structural development is that while the public sphere emerged as a way of monitoring the state, it also enabled the development of the modern cultural form of a public by promoting a particular communicational *habitus*, involving a particular type of stranger-sociability. While this practice was founded in the context of the state, it eventually began to function autonomously, surpassing the limits of this orientation. Accordingly, while a public may ground itself in activities and forms of life that are relevant to the political public of the state, it can also turn away from this public towards different forms of life, mediated by different types of texts, concerned with different issues, and leading to different kinds of normative behaviour.

It is in line with this crude historical sketch that Warner attempts to define the cultural form of a public, which may be autonomous and detached from the state. He defines a public as a “notion” that “enables a reflexivity in the circulation of texts among strangers who become, by virtue of their reflectively circulating discourse, a social entity” (11). To clarify what this definition means, in light of what has already been said, I want to pick out two important traits of a public: that it is a notion and a social entity. These characteristics of the “practical fiction” of a public are built into the creative social phenomenology the form demands—in the way it requires us to imagine social discourse.

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kind that seems to arise only when the social imaginary is defined not by kinship (as in non-state societies) or by place (as in state societies until modernity) but by discourse” (299).

<sup>7</sup> The full passage reads, “The public sphere, as we have been defining it... knits a plurality of spaces into one larger space of nonassembly. The same public discussion is deemed to pass through our debate today, and someone else’s earnest conversation tomorrow, and the newspaper interview Thursday, and so on. I want to call this larger kind of nonlocal common space ‘metatopical’. The public sphere that emerges in the eighteenth century is a metatopical common space” (Taylor, “Modern Social” 113).

For a public to function, that is, for it to cohere and form a social entity that it makes sense to address, instead of remaining at the level of disjointed bits of discourse, participants have to imagine that their own discourse is an integral part of a larger conversation with indefinite strangers. With this notion, which is only partly true and sustains itself in being imagined as more true than it is, bits of conversations that are fragmented across time and space can be fit together in the semblance of a social totality. If the imagining behind this notion was to cease, or if participants did not think their own discourse or that of others was worthy of attention, the social entity in question would collapse.

To say that a public—such as the public of the nation, of an interest group, or artistic affiliation—is a social entity means that it forms an interpretative world with its own use of language, its own normative assumptions, and sense of active belonging.<sup>8</sup> The various uses of language it draws on are constituted through particular media, ranging from face-to-face conversation and artistic corporeality to print and electronic discourse. In another sense, language-use has to do with the normative horizons and structures of stranger-relationality that are implicit to preferred genres and vocabularies. These substantive horizons derive their orientation from interpretations of the ethical questions common to all cultural forms, questions of what is important and possible, or, similarly, as Warner notes, of “what can be said and about what goes without saying” (119). These differences form the dividing lines in the multiplicity of autonomous publics that form our social landscape, each of which is more or less directly oriented towards the state. In the course of everyday life, individuals may choose to attend to these publics or ignore them. The consequences of these decisions translate into the sustenance of specific publics, as notional forms of life, and the dissolution of others. Based on this subtle but highly consequential interplay, Warner claims that the “projection of a public is a new, creative, and distinctively modern mode of power” (107).

### III

I began this essay by discussing two problems of liberalism—distributive justice and existential meaning—that intersect with the foundational premises and purposes of liberalism (i.e. equal rights, freedom and self-governance). One way of approaching these problems is at the level of normative relations between strangers. Accordingly, I claim we

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<sup>8</sup> Warner notes that “to address a public or to think of oneself as belonging to a public is to be a certain kind of person, to inhabit a certain kind of social world, to have at one’s disposal certain media and genres, to be motivated by a certain normative horizon, and to speak within a certain language ideology” (10).

can approach them through the lens of the cultural form of a public, which organizes strangers in various associational relations to each other. In the rest of this paper, I want briefly to pick up on the history of the modern spirit of utopianism and then focus on the idea of utopian publics, taken as social entities and associational patterns that would contrast with the problems described above, thereby serving as critique for an ill-directed liberalism. I consider two kinds of utopian publics: the first, which I simply label as *democratic*, pertains to the question of justice and has a universal orientation; the second *romantic* form pertains to the question of existential meaning and is inherently more differentiated and contingent, as will become obvious. Both forms share a basis in a distinctively modern kind of “time-consciousness,” giving them their utopian character.

Modern time-consciousness arose against the background of pre-modern modes of inhabiting time. The marked difference in the modern mode is what Taylor calls its “radical secularity.” To inhabit time in a secular mode refers to a way in which to govern actions in collective association. In the modern period, this collective governance is unlocked from both ontology and absolute history, from the inevitable “Way Things Are” and the way they have always been, since time immemorial. As Taylor points out, this secular “common action is not made possible by a framework that needs to be established in some action-transcendent dimension: either by an act of God or in a great chain or by a law that comes down to us time out of mind. It is an agency grounded purely in its own common actions” (“Modern Social” 115). Habermas interprets this historical development, which crystallized in the separation of church and state, in the context of a distinctly modern historical awareness, which understands that “exemplary periods in the past that the present might have been able to use without hesitation for orientation have faded into insignificance” (“New Obscurity” 1). In this new time-consciousness, “time is valued as a scarce resource for the future-oriented mastering of problems left to us from the past” (“New Obscurity” 1).

This secular mode of inhabiting time forms the basis of the modern utopian spirit. Out of it, Habermas notes, there slowly emerged a utopian narrative common to the project of modernity, having to do with the emancipation of labour and taking the form, often equated with the picture of the Phalanstere, of a labouring society of “free and equal producers.” The utopian core of this vision was “deliverance from heteronomous labour.” This vision, however, is not the only utopian product of modern secular time. With the Romantic period, there emerged a private ethic of self-realization, taken as a type of utopian self-perfection, also known as moral perfectionism. This latter ethic has been interpreted in at least two different currents of thought: as self-realization according to one’s own nature and as the spontaneous generation of a new “self-born self.” What both have in common is a basis in something Richard Rorty sketches as “spiritual

development,” which he describes as “any attempt to transform oneself into a better sort of person by changing one’s sense of what matters most” (“Redemption” 262). Both these utopian strains—the emancipation of labour and an ethic of self-realization—set the stage for the patterns of utopian publics I develop below.

In referring to the possibility of utopian publics in a way that coincides with the problems of liberalism, I am pointing to various ways in which strangers can organize their relations with each other through discourse. Speculating about two such forms of publicness is therefore a conceptualization of two patterns of stranger-relationality. Romantic publics are pertinent here insofar as the purpose for encounter and conversation with which they are charged coincides with problems of meaning and happiness. The basis of this romantic view is formal, in the sense of having to do with the conditions of “unbound subjectivity” and not with the substantive content of subjectivity itself. Utopian publics of a democratic type on the other hand, have more to do with conditions of “undamaged intersubjectivity.” More specifically, they pertain to the development of new relations between self-organized discussion matrixes and the self-regulating mechanisms of state and market.

#### IV

Let us turn to an interpretation of romance as “a faith in the future possibilities of moral humans, a faith which is hard to distinguish from love for, and hope for, the human community” (Rorty, *Philosophy* 160). Taken as such, romance serves as a kind of utopian energy, its faith providing us with the power to imagine better conditions for humanity. The idea of a *romantic public* draws on a specific kind of romanticism, which focuses on individual as opposed to collective self-realization, though without excluding the latter. There are many approaches for speculating about the history of the modern utopian ethic of self-perfection. Consider, for example, the forms of individualism that developed and evolved throughout Western history, the decline of social ontological hierarchies and the rise of notions of universal dignity over the ancient honour ethic. I approach it here with an emphasis on the ethical predicament of secular modernity, where existential meaning has been loosened from its traditional moorings.

The background condition behind all frameworks of existential meaning is formed around the necessity for cultures and individuals to answer the questions of what is important, of what is possible to achieve, according to their own terms. Rorty claims that on this inescapable terrain, humans are faced with having “to dream up the point to life and cannot appeal to nonhuman standards to determine whether they have chosen wisely” (Rorty, *Philosophy* 266). We can further define this distinctly modern predicament

by noting that our answers to these questions cannot carry any moral weight unless the goal is human happiness. Such a strongly anthropocentric view might provoke opposition and lead some to retort, with William James, “that the best things are the more eternal things” (29), in which case we might respond, with early American Romantics such as Emerson and Thoreau, by positing that “perfection is eternal.”

As noted above, the post-romantic elaboration of an ethic of self-realization has been worked out according to two rival spiritual outlooks: 1) self-exploration against the background of an essential self and 2) generative, open-ended self-creation, which occurs through a conscious overcoming of one’s private past. The first outlook can be read in the tradition of Augustinian inwardness (“we discover God within ourselves”). Montaigne attempts to reconcile this perspective with a modern stance by attempting to achieve “a certain equilibrium even within the ever changing by identifying and coming to terms with the patterns which represent his own particular way of being in flux” (Taylor, “Inwardness” 106). The self-creationist tradition is more recent, finding its main sources in Nietzsche and Emerson. Rorty describes the conscious overcoming of one’s private past that self-creation requires as the self-fueling process of making “the past itself, including those very causal processes which blindly impressed all her [one’s] own behaviors, bear her impress” (*Contingency* 29).

I see the controversy between these rival outlooks as largely moot from a pragmatic perspective, where the goal—the kind of spiritual development referred to above—is what matters. Rorty and Taylor for example, being split on the substance of the self, represent opposite outlooks, yet they consider the task of self-realization to require similar things. They both point to the importance of language, history, and narrative. Further, they both see the aim of self-realization in a similar fashion: aligning one’s self-resolution and self-transformation with a narrative sensitivity for changing one’s sense of what matters most. Stanley Cavell describes this as a sensitivity for “momentarily stopping, turning yourself away from whatever your preoccupation and turning your experience away from its expected, habitual track, to find itself, its own track: coming to attention” (12).

Another point of controversy that arises with an ethic of self-realization revolves around the question of whether it is public or private. Considering the history of romantic individualism and its privileging of the private sphere as the site of humanity, one might speculate that there is cultural bias towards emphasizing the private character of self-realization. Rorty strengthens this bias in borrowing Harold Bloom’s conception of the “strong poet” whose most important purpose is to overcome incongruous public conventions and to create her own private answers to the questions that most concern her. Achieving this purpose is a lifelong journey founded on a primacy of the will—the will

for self-knowledge through recollection, description, and redescription. Rorty's position means finding one's own voice to escape the oppression of other-dependant relationships—of finding one's own system instead of being enslaved by that of another. He furthers this to make a distinction between 'private self-creation' and 'public mutual accommodation'—which is where he confuses things.<sup>9</sup> My view is that the crude simplicity of his distinction is a heuristic device aimed at promoting the self-image of an ideal, liberal community. Still, the distinction would have been more tenable along the lines of 'private' and 'political,' since while there are private matters that are of no political concern in a liberal society, all matters are of a social nature and hence of great 'public' relevance.<sup>10</sup>

Rorty himself alludes to the necessarily public character of self-creation with reference to poetry and poets, the literal sense of which can be made metaphorical with a conception of "lives-as-poems" or an "aesthetics of existence." No matter how much the strong poet is determined to face death with his own answers to the questions life poses, as to one's needs and identity, the best answers come from the pockets he has picked from poets that preceded him. One's best answers come from encounters and, in a public sense, from openness to indefinite strangers. Taylor pushes this perspective further in claiming that the agent is not the "final authority" in orienting her life; as he says, she can be wrong about what she wants.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, she must be wrong on a perfectionist view, where perfection is taken as eternal. On this view, self-realization is the process of striking a balance between the education and instruction one receives and then offers in return through "expressiveness and joy." This reciprocity can circulate in books and films just as well as in the midst of "a meet and cheerful conversation." Cavell defines this balance of public and private as "learning neither to impose your experience on the world nor to have it imposed upon by the world" (12).

The position I have developed underlines the importance of private connections with the public, or rather with a public or publics, as defined above. The early romantics referred to 'the' public as the public of the nation and the romantic relevance of this public still holds today, to some extent, though perhaps more with regard to the utopian potential of that collective than with regard to the self-realization of individuals belonging to it. We can undoubtedly continue to imagine a place for the representative human in

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<sup>9</sup> See *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, chapter 3.

<sup>10</sup> Hannah Arendt emphasizes the importance of this aspect of publicness when she states, "Being seen and being heard by others derive their significance from the fact that everybody sees and hears from a different position. This is the meaning of public life, compared to which even the richest and most satisfying family life can only offer the prolongation or multiplication of one's own position with its attending aspects and perspectives" (57).

<sup>11</sup> See his *Philosophical Arguments*.

the context of the nation but not without a liberal self-image that shows the social virtue of ever flourishing diversity in “unrelated sorts of excellence.” Such excellence is contingent upon particular life histories in the same way that the pragmatic value of art is more local than it is universal. Romantic publics are places or types of spaces in which one’s words and deeds find a unique kind of resonance in a wider self.

## V

Anything like the flourishing of romantic publics is inconceivable without the security of a political framework of some sort. This framework, if democratic, would itself have to be self-organized in discourse with the use of publics. The discursive organization of these publics has to be structured in function of communal problems, namely, the problem of distributive justice. Before sketching a utopian version of this public or set of publics, which we can associate today with the imperative of increased scope and mobility across different spheres of governance, I should note that while they imply different patterns of stranger-relatedness than romantic publics, they are likely to share in participant bases, insofar as existential interests, needs and concerns are likely to coincide with political ones at some level. The freedom of self-realization must rest on the non-arbitrary security of political rights.

The romance of the future possibility of moral humans takes shape here as a type of collective utopian horizon, though one that is tempered according to a modern ethic of procedural justice and tolerance. I referred above to the utopian vision of a laboring society of “free and equal producers,” pictured in the image of the Phalanstere. This nineteenth century vision had important consequences for at least three historically significant political movements of the twentieth century: Soviet communism, authoritarian corporatism (Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany), and social democratic reformism. The latter movement used its utopian energy to establish Western mass democracies and for the creation of the social welfare state, which aimed at giving workers security and empowerment through political rights of negotiation and social rights to ownership (Habermas, *Habermas: Autonomy*). An idea of democratic publics can be seen as following this achievement, if only to the extent of providing political discourse-participants with the capacity for domesticating the inhumane forces of capitalism, such as the unequal distribution of resources.

While a utopian vision of democratic publics can borrow from the goals of the narrative of labour emancipation (i.e. political empowerment and redistribution), it must reconsider the means for achieving them. Whereas in the labour narrative the administrative power of the state was thought to be a neutral medium for adjusting the

affairs of society, a renewed vision of democratic discourse must approach this medium as oppositional to collective emancipation because of the negative consequences it carries for social solidarity and private well-being. As Habermas (*Habermas: Autonomy*) notes, the principle insight of the Right is that the instrument of bureaucratic state power extends deep into the structures of society, inhibiting the potential for autonomous political empowerment (consider here the bureaucratic web that entangles collective bargaining processes). The popular, affective recognition of the limitations of state-based political empowerment may be linked to the fading of the utopian idea of labour, the fragility of the welfare state compromise and the rise of a “new obscurity.”

A renewed utopian vision that takes into account the shortcomings of the labour narrative and the problem of distributive justice, among others, would best be formulated according to radical democratic ideals. Habermas (“What Does Socialism”) claims that the utopian core of this formulation has to arise from new relations between autonomous, self-organizing publics and the whole range of activities governed by the state and market—by administrative power and money. In order to avoid the constraining consequences inherent in the use of administrative power, the new relations have to be structured according to indirect forms of procedural regulations. Yet they would still have to make use of the old formula that served to guide the innovative work of the welfare state compromise, which emerged as a “combination of power and intelligent self-restraint” (Habermas, “New Obscurity” 13). Further, they would have to find their potential for reflection “in the form of sovereignty, made fluid by being made communicative, that makes itself heard in topics, arguments and proposes solutions in free floating, public communication” (Habermas, “What Does Socialism” 18).

Zygmunt Bauman claims that the specific form these new relations will have to assume in order to challenge the unfavourable consequences of economic globalization is dependant on “our shared inventiveness and political practice of trial and error” (9). But, the utopian precondition of the form of these relations, he notes, is that they have the capacity for generating extensive social solidarity. There is an important type of solidarity that can be cultivated through sentimental education and “a progress of the sentiments” tending towards altruistic dedication. A stronger type would seem necessary at present however, one which can generate enough force to regulate the market and state towards egalitarian ends. Taylor (*Philosophical Arguments*) posits that this stronger type of solidarity (Montesquieu’s ‘vertu’) can only be experienced through participant involvement in the patriotism of a common enterprise.<sup>12</sup> In the context of large-scale political

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<sup>12</sup> Taylor notes that patriotism “is based on an identification with others in a particular common enterprise... [and] is somewhere between friendship or family feeling, on the one side, and altruistic dedication on the other. The latter has no concern for the particular: I’m inclined to act for the good

frameworks, this patriotism must be generated as an abstract idea; that is, as a legitimate, “intersubjectively shared expectation,” where each can assume to have the same capacity for actively choosing the sort of society they want to inhabit. Habermas (“What Does”) claims that the utopian plausibility of democratic publics conceived as such, as “placeless places” capable of bringing the state and market to justice through indirect forms of discursive regulation, cannot be measured at the level of theory but can only be reformulated, practically and politically.

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of anyone anywhere. The former attaches me to a particular people. My patriotic allegiance doesn't bind me to individual people in this familial way; I may not know most of my compatriots, and may not particularly want them as friends when I meet them. But particularity enters in because my bond to these people passes through our participation in a common political entity. Functioning republics are like families in this crucial respect, that part of what binds people together is their common history. Family ties or old friendships are deep because of what we have lived through together, and republics are bonded by time and climactic transitions” (1995, 187-188).

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