THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

OLIGARCHS AMONG US: CONFRONTING WEALTH AND POWER IN A DEMOCRATIC AGE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

BY

GORDON RICKER ARLEN

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

DECEMBER 2017

To my parents, grandparents, and sister, for their love and support

Table of Contents

List of Tables iv

Acknowledgments..... v

Chapter One. Introduction: The Oligarchic Challenge to Contemporary Democratic Theory..... 1

Chapter Two. The Oligarchic Challenge in Ancient Greece: Aristotle 26

Chapter Three. The Oligarchic Challenge in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Jeremy Bentham and J.S. Mill 52

Chapter Four. The Oligarchic Challenge in Cold War America: Louis Hartz and C. Wright Mills 90

Chapter Five. The New Mixed Regime: A Framework for Plebeian Democracy..... 133

Bibliography 153

List of Tables

Table One: The New Mixed Regime 137

Acknowledgments

Doctoral study at the University of Chicago has been the most challenging and rewarding experience of my life, so it is a great pleasure to thank the people who helped me along the way.

I was blessed with a dissertation committee diverse in their perspectives but always unified in their encouragement. Through both his graduate seminars on Arendt and Habermas, and through his always stimulating role as an advisor on this project, Patchen Markell encouraged me to tackle important issues and confront those issues with a clear conceptual framework. I especially thank Patchen for his seminar on "Cold War Political Theory," which piqued my interest in the Cold War period and Louis Hartz specifically. Patchen has the remarkable ability to ask the one big question that totally reframes a student's thinking about some aspect of their work, and over the years I've benefitted from many such questions.

Much to my good fortune, Jennifer Pitts arrived at the University of Chicago just as I was beginning graduate school. Her Tocqueville and Mill seminar stoked my interest in the nineteenth-century confrontation between liberalism and democracy, especially as it relates to questions of working class power, and she remained a valuable interlocutor on these issues throughout graduate school. Jennifer's diligent attention to matters of style and argument and her insistence on letting authors speak for themselves, with a minimum of rhetorical clutter, has helped alert me to the habits necessary for good scholarly writing. Jennifer has always been extremely generous with her time and thorough in her comments. I always come away from our meetings energized by Jennifer's insistence that a rigorous attention to historical context can enliven scholarly work and contribute to its urgency.

Chiara Cordelli was gracious enough to join my dissertation committee as a busy junior faculty member, and her participation immediately gave the project a bolt of energy. I especially thank Chiara for exposing me to new perspectives from analytic political philosophy. I have only begun to scratch the surface of Chiara's feedback, and so her insights will linger on as I transition to the next stage of the project. Chiara has also made an effort to keep me on the road to professional success, and I thank her for helping me navigate several job search processes. I hope to continue learning from Chiara well into the future.

From my early years of coursework, to my middle years where I labored to conceptualize a dissertation project, to my later years spent completing the project and refining it for publication, John McCormick has been a constant stabilizing presence. His support has been essential to holding my entire academic experience together. In seminars like "Popular Government in Principle and Practice," John opened my eyes to the vivid worlds of classical Athenian, Roman, and Florentine government, with their rich institutional tapestries. Influenced by John's passion for making classic texts speak to contemporary concerns, I began composing an article on Aristotle and oligarchy which would ultimately become foundational for the dissertation. John was unwavering in his support for the article, helping me to navigate the peer review process at every stage. John has taught me the importance of taking strong positions and writing with authority and conviction. John has always given me the space to chart my own path even as my work remains heavily influenced by his own. John remains exceedingly helpful on all matters of professionalization, not simply because he understands the disciplinary landscape but because he is passionate about political theory. Finally, John has fostered a true sense of camaraderie among his students, a friendly environment which has made graduate school much more special.

I have benefitted from coursework, workshop interactions, and conversations with numerous other Chicago faculty, including: Julie Cooper, Demetra Kasimis, Matt Landauer, Emma Saunders-Hastings, Ralph Lerner, Sankar Muthu, Dan Slater, Nathan Tarcov, Linda Zerilli, Lisa Wedeen, Jim Wilson, Robert Gooding-Williams, and Dali Yang. Outside of Chicago I thank Rob Reich, Melissa Schwartzberg, and Jeffrey Winters for insightful conversations. I also thank Enzo Rossi and Eric Schliesser for offering me a platform to develop my ideas further through a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Amsterdam.

Portions of this dissertation have previously appeared in the *European Journal of Political Theory* and *Polity*, and I thank Sage Publications and the University of Chicago Press for their permission to reprint. My work has been presented to audiences at Harvard University, the University of Chicago, the University of Amsterdam, and the American Political Science Association Annual meeting, and I thank audiences at each venue for their feedback. For supporting my research on the liberal tradition during the early years of graduate school, I thank the Institute for Humane Studies. For supporting my interests in American political thought I thank the staff of the Jack Miller Center, especially Dan Cullen.

Will Levine has provided exceptional copyediting assistance, including numerous substantive comments, and the dissertation is much stronger because of it. I thank John Ellison and Catherine Mardikes for assisting me with some translation questions in the Aristotle chapter. I also thank Michael Goldman for his assistance with some of the technical aspects of formatting this document.

The friends one meets in graduate school are truly unique, bound together by a shared sense of vocation. Katerina Apostolides, Steven Klein, and Natasha Piano were my rocks throughout the latter years of graduate school. Aside from their always generous feedback on my

academic work, Natasha, Steven, and Katerina have let me into their lives and allowed me to share in their personal joys. I have also forged especially strong relationships with Yuna Blajer de la Garza, Sarah Johnson, Renee Melton-Klein, Will Levine, Daniel Luban, Emma MacKinnon, Amanda Maher, Danial Nichanian, Rebecca Ploof, Jason Rosensweig, and Tania Islas Weinstein. I will certainly miss getting everyone together for my annual birthday dinner at Pizza Capri and I'll also miss trying to recruit people to join me at various Chicago Symphony concerts. For his strong friendship over the years, and for showing the way through his own academic success, I thank Chad Marzen. Kat Henry has likewise been a friend whose companionship over the past few years made my time in Chicago more impactful.

Sometimes two people are just meant to cross paths: I first met Jason Swadley in John McCormick's graduate seminar, when we were both assigned to do a presentation on Josiah Ober's *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens*. From there came dinners at Salonica, where our chemistry as conversation partners was immediately apparent. Those conversations blossomed into a rare friendship that has enriched my life considerably and which continues to sustain me. Our shared adventures extend well beyond the academic world, but it goes without saying that Jason has provided constantly insightful feedback on numerous aspects of this project.

For their social and academic companionship I also thank: Fabian Arzuaga, Alex Bass, Amanda Blair, Marcus Board, Chris Berk, Ashleigh Campi, John Ellison, Amir Fairdosi, Samuel Galloway, Rohit Goel, Daragh Grant, Alex Haskins, Ann Heffernan, Kat Henry, Uday Jain, Lindsay Knight, Gabriel Mares, JJ McFadden, Claire McKinney, Tejas Parasher, Lucas Pinheiro, Ethan Porter, Bob Reamer, JT Scarry, Jade Schiff, Larry Svabek, Jonny Thakker, and Sarita Zaffini. Over the years I've also been fortunate to discuss political theory with Teresa Bejan,

Jonathan Bruno, Greg Conti, Gianna Englert, Ted Lechterman, Luke Mayville, Ben McKean, Julie Rose, Michelle Schwarze, and William Selinger.

Kathy Anderson has provided invaluable administrative support during my entire graduate career. I thank her for keeping me on track professionally and for her always fun conversations about classical music.

It has been a privilege to teach so many talented undergraduate students, and I have forged lasting relationships with several students in particular: Waleed Albassam, Isabel Bolo, John Colin Bradley, David Johnson, and Eliora Katz. For giving me an opportunity to mentor M.A. students, I thank Dain Borges, Chad Cyrenne, and the entire staff of the MAPSS program. I especially thank Chris Chambers and Andrew Gibson for expressing interest in my own work.

Former teachers at Dawes Elementary, Chute Middle School, Evanston Township High School, Grinnell College, and Amherst College have all contributed to my growth. I am grateful to my senior year advisors at Amherst College for encouraging me to pursue graduate study in political theory: Kristin Bumiller, Jerome Himmelstein, Pavel Machala, and Uday Mehta. For their mentorship and friendship, and for supporting my writing at an early age, I thank Dan Sullivan and Babs Smith.

The City of Chicago and the people of Hyde Park have shown immense hospitability during these years. I especially thank the Chicago Symphony for countless hours of joy. For their love and support I thank my entire extended family. By imparting lessons from their own life experience, my grandparents taught me the importance of education. To my parents, Ken and Nancy, and my sister Jessie, I can only say that without you this education would not have been possible. It has been the greatest of blessings to attend graduate school so close to home. You have showered me with love every day for the past 33 years. This dissertation is dedicated to you

Chapter One

Introduction: The Oligarchic Challenge to Contemporary Democratic Theory

In April 2016, over ten million files from the Panama-based law firm Mossack Fonseca & Co. were leaked to the Guardian newspaper. The so-called "Panama Papers" scandal that resulted brought worldwide attention to the shadowy practices that elites use to shield their assets from prying tax-collectors and scrutinizing publics. Caught up in the scandal was former British Prime Minister David Cameron, who admitted that he had profited from an offshore account. Later that summer, Cameron became the biggest political casualty of Brexit, which was propelled by ongoing resentment towards the very regime of global inequality that the Panama Papers scandal helped to uncover.

Nine months later, President Trump was inaugurated on the steps of the U.S. capital. The ceremony bore all the hallmarks of a well-functioning representative democracy; rival political parties assembled together to celebrate the peaceful transfer of power after a contested election. And yet, the man being inaugurated President had, in an unprecedented challenge to prevailing norms, refused to release his tax returns and then nominated the wealthiest group of cabinet officials in American history, worth a collective $11 billion. Among Trump's honored guests on the inauguration podium was Sheldon Adelson, the casino magnet and GOP mega donor who has pledged hundreds of millions to his favored political causes.

One weekend later, as Trump unveiled his controversial travel ban, the billionaire industrialists Charles and David Koch assembled 500 wealthy conservative activists at a luxury California resort. Their mission: to plot out a political strategy for the Trump era. Since 2003, the

Koch's have used these secretive "donor summits" to fund an intricate network of political advocacy groups, a kind of "shadow political party" which aggressively pursues a tax and regulatory agenda highly favorable to their business interests.

Can democracy survive in a context of increasing inequality, economic disruption, political polarization, corporate media, fragile job security, and fiscally unstable welfare systems? This dissertation argues that the challenges facing Western democracies extend from a broader challenge, which I refer to as the "oligarchic challenge" to democracy. How do super-rich oligarchs use their material resources to gain political influence? How do oligarchs threaten to erode democratic norms and institutions, even as they operate alongside of them? How can democratic publics vigorously contain oligarchs without succumbing to destructive forms of nationalism and populism? How should the history of democratic struggles against oligarchy inform contemporary praxis? This dissertation addresses these questions using normative, conceptual, historical, and institutional analyses. First, the dissertation seeks to understand how best to conceptualize oligarchic power, recognizing that oligarchy and democracy have a complex and intertwined relationship. Second, it seeks to understand how oligarchic power has persisted in different historical contexts, and how the specter of oligarchy has inflected the work of canonical political philosophers operating from different ideological orientations; from ancient Greek virtue ethicists like Aristotle, to nineteenth-century utilitarian reformers like Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, to twentieth-century American social scientists like Louis Hartz and C. Wright Mills. Finally, it seeks to reflect upon some of the institutional processes which might enable ordinary "plebeian" citizens to constrain oligarchic power.

Oligarchy is conventionally understood as a constitutional rival to democracy— "rule by the rich" vs. "rule by the poor." Wealthy elites who plotted to overthrow popular institutions perennially threatened ancient Greek democracies like Athens. By contrast, most modern democracies have abolished wealth qualifications for office and no longer exhibit direct, formal rule by oligarchs. However, this dissertation argues that oligarchic power operates within broadly participatory and inclusive democratic regimes.

Private modes of wealth accumulation are not *inherently* detrimental to democracy. However, political scientists like Larry Bartels, Martin Gilens, Jeffrey Winters, and Theda Skocpol have definitively shown that the wealthy enjoy a range of structural advantages in the political process. Wealthier citizens are more likely to vote, more likely to engage in broader forms of civic engagement, and more likely to hold office. Wealth confers increased policy responsiveness, agenda-setting authority, and access to the corridors of power.[1]

A range of theoretical perspectives, from liberal-egalitarians to neo-republicans and from deliberative democrats to radical democrats, have widened our understanding of the complex distributional and structural challenges associated with rising wealth inequality. I argue,

[1] Martin Gilens, *Affluence and Influence* (New York and Princeton: Russell Sage Foundation and Princeton University Press, 2012); Lawrence Jacobs and Theda Skocpol, eds. *Inequality and American Democracy* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2005); Theda Skocpol and Alexander Hertel-Fernandez, "The Koch Network and Republican Party Extremism," *Perspectives on Politics* 14 (Sept. 2016): 681-699; Kay Lehman Schlozman, Sidney Verba, and Henry E. Brady, *The Unheavenly Chorus: Unequal Political Voice and the Broken Promise of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012); Larry Bartels, *Unequal Democracy*: *The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Pablo Beramendi and Christopher J. Anderson, eds. *Democracy, Inequality and Representation: A Comparative Perspective* (New York: Russell Sage, 2008).

however, that the problem of oligarchy is not *simply* reducible to a problem of distributive injustice. For oligarchs can and do operate in a range of distinct structural and distributional environments from low-tax, authoritarian regimes like Singapore, to high-tax social democratic environments in Western Europe.

In this dissertation, I advance the following standard for defining oligarchs: oligarchs are agents who (1) retain personal access to massive concentrated wealth and (2) deploy their wealth to achieve discretionary influence in the public domain, broadly understood. Certain oligarchs may prove altruistic and civically inclined. However, because they enjoy the advantages of outsized wealth, oligarchs are positioned to evade institutional controls and exert influence in potentially harmful ways. The specter of "oligarchic harm" thus emerges as a distinct normative problem.

To be sure, most contemporary democracies do not face imminent coups from oligarchs and their armed proxies. The fact that oligarchs are content to operate within the bounds of constitutional norms does not, however, render them benign. In a seminal comparative historical study, Jeffrey Winters argues that with their property rights secured by universalist legal systems, modern oligarchs can safely disarm and withdraw from direct, formally sanctioned class-rule. But these oligarchs share with their ancient counterparts an overriding focus on wealth and income preservation. Winters exhaustively demonstrates how superrich citizens exert political influence to achieve vital material objectives. They collude to erect a massive "income defense industry" comprised of a vast army of lobbyists, accountants, and financial specialists who cater to their exclusive needs.[2] In the United States, legal decisions like *Citizens United*

[2] Jeffrey A. Winters, *Oligarchy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 217-254.

have opened the floodgates to outside money and perpetuated a new "Gilded Age" political economy.[3]

Who counts as an "oligarch" in this setting? First, oligarchs occupy the narrowest of distributional strata: ranging, for example, from the top 1/100th of 1% of American earners, a cohort with average net worth around $60 million, to the top 2/10,000th of 1%, a level sufficient for inclusion in the Forbes 400 listing of wealthiest Americans.[4] By *concentrated* wealth, I am therefore referring to private fortunes in the tens of millions to billions of dollars. Many agents reasonably classified as wealthy do not meet this threshold. Oligarchs thus constitute a narrow elite amid the broader "mass affluent" class. Although the top "1%" of Americans have seen their share of wealth increase, disproportionate gains have accrued to the super-rich. In 1973 the average CEO earned 27 times the average worker's salary; 30 years later that ratio had ballooned to 262. However, in 2007, 25 of the nation's top hedge fund managers took home a collective $22 billion in personal income, dwarfing even the average CEO's pay of $11 million.[5]

According to Thomas Piketty, wealth concentration persists in late capitalism because capital returns exceed rates of economic growth.[6] However, wealth concentration has existed throughout human history, across a range of social and political arrangements. It persists even in societies which enjoy relatively low Gini coefficients, such as Scandinavian welfare states.[7]

---

[3] On the idea of a "new Gilded Age" see Bartels, *Unequal Democracy.*

[4] Jeffrey A. Winters and Benjamin I. Page, "Oligarchy in the United States?" *Perspectives on Politics* 7 (2009): 731-751 at 736.

[5] Ibid, 734.

[6] Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014).

[7] See, for example, Matti Keloharju and Antti Lehtinen, "Shareownership in Finland 2015," *Nordic Journal of Business* 64, no. 3 (2015): 182-206.

Second, oligarchs retain *personal access* to their concentrated wealth: both private ownership and the ability to willfully allocate wealth to personal projects.[8] This standard excludes corporate managers, party bosses, or government magistrates who access organizational wealth without enjoying personal ownership over it. Oligarchs may, of course, command organizational resources in addition to their private wealth, or their wealth may be tied up in complex organizational structures. Again, the relevant test is whether one's assets are sufficiently liquid to be willfully allocated to new projects; oligarchs cannot be handcuffed entirely by prior allocation decisions.

Third, oligarchs deploy their wealth for *discretionary influence*. I very broadly conceive influence as a capacity to affect some aspect of another agent's behavior. Discretionary influence is exerted through an agent's willful allocation of personal resources. Numerous resources—charisma, formal office, mental capacity, familial affection—can produce influence of this sort. However, concentrated wealth offers qualitative advantages: it is difficult to disperse, costs of entry are high, and once accumulated it often does not require significant labor to maintain.[9]

Fourth, oligarchs exercise their influence in the *public domain*, broadly understood. I make no effort to demarcate the precise boundaries of this domain. I assume that it encompasses a range of possible activities in civil society and politics. For example: (1) running for political office; (2) founding a Super-PAC; (3) donating to an interest group; (4) making large philanthropic gifts; (5) lobbying for favorable tax and regulatory policies; or (6) pursuing material interests in the marketplace. On this conception, the category "oligarch" encompasses a range of actors: direct office-holders like Trump, Berlusconi, and Bloomberg, Super-PAC

[8] On this point see Winters, *Oligarchy*, 6-11.
[9] Winters, *Oligarchy*, 12-20.

founders like Koch and Adelson, media moguls like Rupert Murdoch, and mega-philanthropists like Bill Gates and George Soros. I exclude, however, those uses of wealth that remain private by any reasonable standard: for example, bestowing gifts on close friends or family.

The critique of oligarchy thus assumes that concentrated wealth is a power-resource of the first order, greatly enhancing one's scope of discretionary influence in the public domain. Winters and Page construct a "material-power index" based on a one-to-one correlation between wealth and political power. They conclude that each member of the Forbes 400 retains, on average, 22,000 times more political power than the average member of the bottom 90%.[10] To be sure, the actual relationship between wealth and power remains non-linear. However, on this account, and with other variables held constant, more wealth entails more power and influence.

Why does this matter? Why is oligarchy such an important normative concern? One normative objection, which I will refer to as the "unequal influence objection," worries that oligarchic power threatens democratic ideals of political and social equality by granting oligarchs disproportionate opportunities to secure their policy preferences. Such opportunities for unequal influence are of particular concern because the superrich often have *divergent* policy preferences, as numerous social scientific studies have shown. One study finds, for example, that the wealthiest Americans ($40 million or more in net worth) are far more likely than their moderately wealthy counterparts ($5 million or less) to oppose government regulations and welfare spending favored by the broader electorate.[11]

[10] Winters and Page, "Oligarchy in the United States," 736-737.

[11] See Benjamin I. Page, Larry M. Bartels, and Jason Seawright, "Democracy and the Policy Preferences of Wealthy Americans," *Perspectives on Politics* 11, no. 1 (2013): 51-73.

A second objection, the "non-domination" objection, tracks republican and neo-republican concerns that private wealth can be used as a tool of personal dominion over others. Oligarchs engage in domination, following Pettit's standard, when they effect uncontrolled interference on another agent's choices: removing options, replacing options, or misrepresenting options.[12] Oligarchic domination can take several forms. It may be exerted directly by the oligarch in his personal interactions with other agents in the public domain, or it may be enforced indirectly by the oligarch's hired agents. Winters interviews one Southeast Asian tycoon who casually estimates that for around $20 million, he can put 100,000 demonstrators in the streets for a month to articulate his political views.[13] In the United States, Super-PACs are a structural feature of the political landscape, which facilitate the discretionary influence of their wealthy contributors. Not all structural forces fit this profile, however. Oligarchs may benefit from anonymous market forces without exerting personal, discretionary influence. My conception of oligarchic influence thus excludes what Philip Pettit calls "vitiating" forms of interference: those emanating from impersonal background conditions and environmental limits, the "aggregate consequences of independently motivated actions by others…"[14] I adopt a personalist conception of influence on the premise that oligarchs can be held responsible for their use of wealth.

Finally, a third normative objection, the "sinister interest" objection, tracks the concerns of classical utilitarian reformers like Jeremy Bentham and J.S. Mill, authors whom I engage later

[12] Philip Pettit, *On the People's Terms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 50-54. For critical perspectives on Pettit see Pachen Markell, "The Insufficiency of Non-Domination," *Political Theory* 36, no. 1 (2008): 9-36; Steven Klein, "Fictitious Freedom: A Polanyian Critique of the Republican Revival," *American Journal of Political Science,* advance online publication; DOI: 10.1111/ajps.12317.

[13] Winters, *Oligarchy*, xiv.

[14] Pettit, *On the People's Terms*, 37-40 at 40.

in this dissertation. By "sinister interest" Bentham meant the entrenched privileges, and corrupt institutional practices, that enable wealthy elites to sacrifice the public interest in pursuit of private interests. Pluralist political scientists like Robert Dahl have challenged the idea of a homogenous elite interest by asserting that rival elite interests cancel out through democratic participation.[15] Oligarchs do often enter into cross-cutting coalitions on cultural and social issues. However, as Winters stresses, all oligarchs share a foundational commitment to wealth and income defense. The "income defense industry" illustrates the depths of this commitment. Through access to boutique legal and financial expertise, the superrich actively circumvent tax and regulatory burdens and shift them onto less wealthy citizens, behavior vividly exposed in the recent Panama Papers scandal. From Bentham's perspective, asset shielding activities are a prototypical example of "sinister interest" at work: they are pursued, exclusively, by a superrich elite, often with harmful consequences for the wider public.[16]

To be sure, there is a spectrum of different ways in which wealth can be deployed in the public domain, some more publically beneficial than others. One could invoke some standard of utilitarian ethics to conclude that a billionaire philanthropist who expends his fortune funding cancer research is more beneficial than one that expends it lobbying for casino gambling. Yet philanthropic activities born of altruistic motivations still enhance the discretionary influence of donors in ways that may provoke the "unequal influence" objection noted above.[17]

---

[15] For a typical expression of this view see Robert A. Dahl, *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1961).

[16] Winters, *Oligarchy,* 217-254. Indeed, as Winters emphasizes, the superrich often succeed in shifting tax and regulatory burdens onto so-called mass affluent citizens; citizens who are vulnerable to more progressive taxation, but unable to afford expensive tax avoidance strategies.

[17] On the normative dimensions of elite philanthropy see Rob Reich, "Toward a Political Theory of Philanthropy," in *Giving Well*, eds. Patricia Illingworth, Thomas Pogge, and Leif Wenar

Oligarchy in Historical Context

This dissertation centers around three historical chapters, three efforts to understand the oligarchic challenge to democracy as it unfolds in different political contexts: ancient Greece, nineteenth-century Britain, and mid-twentieth century America. In each context, the oligarchic challenge takes a distinct form. In ancient Athens, the primary threat was *oligarchic coup,* the prospect of robust democratic norms and institutions being forcibly overturned and replaced by oligarchic constitutions based on wealth qualification for office. Nineteenth-century Britain was an emerging democracy, and so the primary threat was *oligarchic retrenchment*, which came from two directions, a landed elite clinging to its archaic privileges and a rising commercial elite seeking to insulate its newfound privileges from an increasingly militant working class. Finally, postwar America was a mature, highly rationalized democracy in which the primary threat was *oligarchic consolidation*, a process whereby wealthy elites embed themselves within large corporate structures to consolidate power.

I pursue this historical exploration through the prism of several prominent political theorists, through the eyes of thinkers who confronted oligarchy on a theoretical terrain, even as they grappled with its concrete institutional ramifications. The problem of oligarchy 'shadows' the thought of each thinker explored here, coloring their work even in instances where it may not seem present or central. This point holds especially true for Louis Hartz, a thinker who offers little direct engagement with the topic of oligarchy, even as his work remains essential for

---

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 177-194; Rob Reich, "On the Role of Foundations in Democracies," in Rob Reich, Chiara Cordelli, and Lucy Bernholz eds., *Philanthropy in Democratic Societies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 64-81; Emma Saunders-Hastings, "Plutocratic Philanthropy," *Journal of Politics* (forthcoming).

understanding the problem of oligarchy in America. But the point also holds for a thinker like Aristotle who puts the problem of oligarchy front and center. For Aristotle, as for the other thinkers explored here, the problem of oligarchy thus functions as an important inflection point. By exploring how different authors navigate the problem of oligarchy, the dissertation argues for a renewed enhanced appreciation of each thinker's relevance for contemporary democratic theory.

I begin with Aristotle, who offers the first truly systematic theorization of oligarchy. As a virtue ethicist, Aristotle called attention to the deep, social-psychological tendencies that incline oligarchs to appetitive behavior, or what the Greeks called *pleonexia*. His work reminds democratic theorists that oligarchic threats arise not simply from poorly structured institutions, but also from deep moral pathologies that infest all non-ideal political societies. Moreover, Aristotle, the social scientist, provided a sophisticated account of class conflict, an account which recognized that the constitutional rivalry between democracy and oligarchy is at root a socioeconomic rivalry between rich and poor. Aristotle regarded both oligarchy and democracy as deviant regimes, because they bias the interests of a particular socioeconomic faction, the rich or the poor, resulting in destabilizing forms of factional conflict, or *stasis*. Aristotle admitted, however, that acquisitive behavior by the rich is far more destructive to city-states than is acquisitive behavior by the poor. Moreover, Aristotle recognized that the democratic demos retains a tripartite identity, the "poor," the "many," and the "free," with each aspect of this identity corresponding to different political claims: socioeconomic, epistemic, and legal. But despite these crucial insights, Aristotle deeply distrusted those Athenian institutions, like the assembly and people's courts, which enabled ordinary citizens to hold wealthier citizens accountable. Aristotle's criticism of extreme democracies which embolden the "vulgar" poor to agitate for their class interests foreshadowed the trope of popular unruliness which would survive

among a long tradition of elite-driven republican and civic humanist thinkers: Cicero, Bruni, Guicciardini, Guizot, Madison.[18] Aristotle thus remains a vital philosophical resource for present-day critics of oligarchy, but a resource with antidemocratic tendencies we must overcome.

In moving directly from ancient Greece to nineteenth-century Britain, the dissertation passes over some important episodes in the history of class politics, like the struggle between patricians and plebeians in Ancient Rome, with notable episodes like the conflict over the agrarian laws and the subsequent elite backlash that it occasioned; the tumultuous class politics of Renaissance Florence, where popular insurrections like the Ciompi Revolt were followed by the Albizzi Oligarchy and the rise of the Medici Principality; the radical efforts of the seventeenth century Levellers and the eighteenth century Jacobins.

The Florentine legacy remains especially significant. At stake, in the conflict between the *grandi* and the *popolo,* was a choice between the Venetian-style *governo stretto* long admired by aristocrats, or the *governo largo* championed by populists like the radical Friar Girolamo Savonarola. In a groundbreaking analysis, John McCormick credits Machiavelli with subtly grasping the social-psychological dimensions of class relations in materially stratified popular

[18] Marcus T. Cicero, *On the Commonwealth and the Laws*, ed. James Zetzel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Leonardo Bruni, *The History of the Florentine People*, vol. II, ed. and trans. James Hankins (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004 [1442]); Francesco Guicciardini, *"Discorso di Logrogno": On Bringing Order to Popular Government*, trans. Athanasios Moulakis (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998 [1512]); François Guizot, *History of Civilization in Europe*, trans. William Hazlitt (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund Reprint, 2013 [1828])*;* James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay (as Publius) *The Federalist Papers* (New York: Mentor, 1998 [1788]).

governments.[19] As McCormick notes, the word oligarchy is "rather scarce" in the *Discourses*; Machiavelli referred to socioeconomic elites through a wider range of terms like *ottimati, nobili, potenti*, and *senato*.[20] Nonetheless, by assigning *onestà* (decency or justice) to the poor while exposing the oppressive appetites of the wealthy, Machiavelli inverted the longstanding aristocratic biases of civic humanist writers.[21]

Machiavelli's critique thus influenced later republican authors, like James Harrington and John Adams, who regarded socioeconomic elites as lasting threats to republican liberty. Luke Mayville has forcefully demonstrated that Adams was unique among America's federalist founders in the degree to which he sensed the dangers of America's emerging wealth-based oligarchy, which consisted of an elite that derived its authority less from formal privileges than from the "widespread sympathy" afforded to those of great wealth, a form of authority Mayville aptly refers to as "soft oligarchy."[22] In Adams' eyes, it was a "fantasy to believe that aristocratic privilege would recede with the abolition of hereditary privilege." [23] The more prevalent

---

[19] John P. McCormick, *Machiavellian Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); for the authoritative edition of Machiavelli's *Discourses* see *Machiavelli's Discourses on Livy*, eds. and trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). On the socioeconomic dimensions of the republican tradition see also Eric Nelson, *The Greek Tradition in Republican Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Richard Bellamy, *Political Constitutionalism: A Republican Defence of the Constitutionality of Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[20] McCormick, *Machiavellian Democracy,* 42.

[21] On civic humanism and oligarchic rule in Medici Florence see Mark Jurdjevic, "Civic Humanism and the Rise of the Medici," *Renaissance Quarterly* 52, no. 4 (1999): 994-1020; on Machiavelli's critique of the elite-enabling of aspects of civic humanism see Danielle Charette, "Catilinarian Cadences in Machiavelli's Florentine Histories: Ciceronian Humanism, Corrupting Consensus and the Demise of Contentious Liberty," *History of Political Thought* (forthcoming 2018).

[22] Luke Mayville, *John Adams and the Fear of American Oligarchy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 15.

[23] Ibid, 151.

viewpoint, however, was espoused by framers like Alexander Hamilton, who insisted that the federal constitution, with its prohibition against titles of nobility, had indeed overcome the sway of European aristocracy. This was a view echoed in James Madison's insistence that unchecked majorities, rather than oppressive minorities, posed the gravest threat to republican government.

The American constitutional debates thus saw the climax of a centuries-long shift away from Athenian-style lottery and toward election as the dominant selection mechanism favored by partisans of representative democracy. In a seminal work, Bernard Manin argues that this shift reflected important intellectual developments that occurred during the eighteenth-century enlightenment, when political philosophers converged around the ideal of legitimacy through consent. This ideal took priority over the older, Athenian ideal of equal probability to hold office.[24] As Manin argues, the founders of representative government preferred election to lottery precisely because they expected that election would elevate men of distinction to important offices.[25]

Later utilitarian thinkers like Jeremy Bentham and J.S. Mill regarded the consent-based theories of electoral legitimacy which prevailed during the eighteenth-century as overly abstract and unsuited to the social complexities of an emerging mass democracy. Both authors were protagonists in a tumultuous era of British reform politics which brought together a range of competing political factions: a landed aristocracy clinging to its archaic privileges, an educated middle class seeking to exert its newfound moral authority, a rising industrial elite accumulating vast riches, and a mobilizing working class which was agitating for political inclusion and

[24] Bernard Manin, *Principles of Representative Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).
[25] Ibid, 104-131.

economic justice. Both Bentham and Mill understood that struggles among these competing factions would decide the fate of oligarchic power in a democratic age and both came down squarely on the side of democracy against oligarchy, even as they expressed misgiving about unregulated democracy. I begin Chapter Three by engaging Jeremy Bentham's canonical articulation of the concept of "sinister interest" as it emerged from his writings on judicial procedure. Bentham deployed the phrase sinister interest as shorthand for the social privileges and institutional conditions which enabled elites to behave selfishly—sacrificing the general interest to their own particular interests. Sinister interests thus arose from *perverse incentives* which encouraged elites to benefit themselves at the expense of everyone else. Bentham realized that these corrosive incentives filtered down to a web of officialdom—judges, lawyers, and other functionaries—who benefitted materially from placating the sinister interests of wealthy elites.

J.S. Mill famously departed from Bentham's "quantitative hedonism" and sought to infuse utilitarian ethics with a greater appreciation for "higher" pleasures. Moreover, Mill affirmed the epistemic authority of "competent" elites who could counterbalance popular energies. Nonetheless, from his early years as a reform-minded Philosophical Radical to his mature years in William Gladstone's liberal coalition, Mill identified entrenched sinister interests as a singular threat to democratic aspirations. I focus especially on Mill's confrontation with British working class power, for it is here that Mill's legacy as a democratic theorist comes into sharpest relief. Mill argued vigorously for the moral and epistemic benefits of granting workers electoral voice. He criticized industrial injustices, championed trade union rights, and advocated structural reforms, such as workplace cooperatives, to achieve a more participatory labor process.

Like Machiavelli, Mill ascribed oppressive "humors" to corrupt wealthy elites and urgently sought to safeguard the multitude from their avarice and ambition. Nonetheless, Mill

worried that working class hostility to the "few" would eventually destabilize more salutary forms of elite influence, like those based on moral and epistemic superiority. This threat reflected workers' growing reluctance to defer to their cognitive superiors. Another side of Mill's democratic theory thus emerged, one focused on directing threatening political energies to stable ends. Mill wagered that conventions of *accountability*, properly employed, could help set the acceptable bounds of working class participation by organizing workers around established norms of respectable, rational political conduct. Mill encouraged workers to express their just grievances through ordinary, elite-managed institutional channels, rather than through more radical insurrectionary activities. In short, Mill envisioned a pathway "from oligarchy to accountability." This was a provocative and forceful normative project, but it came at the cost of a full-throttled defense of "plebeian" working-class energies. Thus, as with Aristotle, Mill's legacy as a resource for democratic critics of oligarchy remains complex.

I conclude the historical section of the dissertation by turning to the mid-twentieth century American context. The early Cold War period remains an especially fruitful context for thinking about the oligarchic challenge to democracy. It was a period marked by significant structural changes, with the shift from a nineteenth-century industrial system dominated by a handful of Robber Barons to a postwar system where economic power was embedded in an array of complex organizational forms. C. Wright Mills was among the first American social scientists to theorize these changes. His seminal work, *The Power Elite*, charted the mechanisms by which wealthy and powerful actors had embedded themselves within organizational "command posts" that were both corporate, military, and governmental.[26]

[26] C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956).

What Mills' sociology lacked, however, was a more sustained reflection on the deeper historical and ideological forces which were shaping the American experience at midcentury. Louis Hartz was neither a theorist of oligarchy, nor even a democratic theorist in the conventional sense. However, Hartz's work *The Liberal Tradition in America* offered a penetrating diagnosis of America's peculiar historical predicament as a non-feudal society; a predicament which has profoundly shaped the American experience with class politics.[27] From a Hartzian perspective, the oligarchic challenge to democracy takes a distinct form in a nation which has developed outside of European social struggles, a nation consumed by the inward pressures of national conformism, or what Hartz called "Americanism." Hartz diagnosed Americanism as the byproduct of an entrenched liberal ideology which was preventing citizens from critically examining their national presuppositions. Hartz believed, however, that new forms of national enlightenment were possible if only Americans would develop an impetus for self-scrutiny. Searching for conditions that would facilitate a new experience for the entire collectivity, Hartz prophesized the Cold War moment as an opportunity to awaken Americans from their dogmatic slumber. Hartz thought the Cold War's global frame might provide the "spark of philosophy" and "sense of relativity" obtained when contact with other cultures forces people to see themselves through the eyes of another.[28] Together, then, these authors offer a set of critical perspectives on American life which were centered in the early Cold War context, but which continue to hold force in a contemporary climate which displays certain structural similarities to the Cold War period.

[27] Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1955).
[28] Ibid, 14.

The Many and the Poor: Conceptualizing Plebeian Democracy

In elevating the problem of oligarchy to the forefront of contemporary democratic theory, this dissertation seeks to recover a socioeconomically substantive understanding of democracy as a regime of the many who lack great wealth. In a crucial section of the *Politics,* Aristotle criticized the tendency to conceptualize democracy and oligarchy on *purely* numerical terms, that is, as regimes of the numerical majority or minority. According to Aristotle, this convention obscures the essential socioeconomic identity of both regimes. What *does* distinguish democracy and oligarchy is poverty and wealth. The conventional association of democracy with the many and oligarchy with the few rests, Aristotle argued, on the sociological *contingency* that "everywhere the rich are few and the poor many" (Aristotle, *Politics,* 1279b34-38).[29]

As I argue at length in Chapter Two, Aristotle brilliantly recognized that democratic regimes are perpetually torn between the numerical and the socioeconomic, the formal and the substantive. Democracy, as rule of the poor, appears to grant numerical priority to the many due to the sociological contingency that the poor are *likely* to be many. But in principle the numerical can be *disconnected* from the socioeconomic as a separate normative aspiration. This separation paves the way for the evasion of the one by the other. An utterance like "We are the 99%" often signifies a particular socioeconomic grouping (the 99% who work for a living, who are not rich). But in principle, "We are the 99%" may simply connote the general force of numbers. There is no necessary reason to specify the socioeconomic content of the "99%." The fact that democracy can be coherently distinguished from its rivals solely on the basis of a numerical bias for the "many" poses obstacles to the essential, more fundamental socioeconomic understanding of democracy.

[29] Cited from Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. C.D.C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998).

Such "evasion of the socioeconomic," as I call it, constitutes a prominent feature of democracy's discursive space since Ancient Greece. These tendencies are partially attributable to the preferences of political actors for whom the critique of class politics in favor of harmonious "civic life" augers an "aristocratic" cum oligarchic agenda. But in numerous cases the evasion occurs even among actors sympathetic to democratic struggles against oligarchy. Moreover, the evasion reflects internal conceptual properties which structure democratic discourses in ways favorable to class-neutrality and hence elite-enabling understandings of democracy.

The process of uncovering these internal properties is complicated by the fact that democracy is a highly contested concept. Minimalists maintain that democracy just is a set of institutional arrangements for securing some measure of political decision or peaceful transition of power.[30] But beyond this, ever more expansive conceptions emerge. Democracy has been conceived of as a thick communitarian civic life; an affective orientation characterized by sympathy, empathy, and the operation of generalized perspectives; a form of distributive justice; a norm of reflexivity, impartiality, and self-criticism; a discursive order; economic development, rationalization, and good government; a mode of personal self-respect and self-realization; a circle of civic subjection; an ethos of tension dwelling; an ontology of presence and attentiveness; the symbolization of collective power; legality amid transgression of legality; ordinary politics amid extraordinary politics; openness amid closure; an anti-totalitarian project; an affront to racial hierarchy; a transformation of gender roles; and so on.

[30] For a classic view, see Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1950 [1942]); for a more recent view see Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Limits of Self-Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Przeworski, "Minimalist Conception of Democracy: A Defense," in *Democracy's Value,* eds. Ian Shapiro and Casino Hacker-Cordon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 23-55.

Jacques Rancière insightfully recognizes that the classical logic of democracy, as a regime composed of component parts, ultimately renders the *counting of parts* to be politically decisive. For Rancière, politics emerges on the basis of a fundamental miscount in which the "part who has no part" emerges and demands recognition. Rancière highlights the scandalous fact that the people are "not really the people but actually the poor." And yet "the poor themselves are not really the poor" but rather the "reign of a lack of position," a constitutive wrong, an "entitlement to dispute."[31] Rancière retreats, in other words, to an ontological figuration of the poor as synonymous with "politics" as such. Rancière thus transfigures the classical regime conflict between democracy and oligarchy into an ontological conflict between the political order and the "police order." Other radical democrats like Sheldon Wolin go further, insisting that even democratic forms of popular rule can entail hierarchy and subordination.[32]

[31] Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement*: *Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 13-14; see also Rancière's *The Philosopher and His Poor*, trans. John Drury, Andrew Parker, and Corinne Oster (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2004).

[32] Sheldon S. Wolin, "Norm and Form: The Constitutionalizing of Democracy," in *Athenian Political Thought and the Reconstruction of American Democracy,* eds. Peter Euben, John Wallach, and Josiah Ober (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 29-58; Wolin, "Fugitive Democracy," in *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political,* ed. Seyla Benhabib (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 31-45. For a good overview of the tension between regime-oriented democratic theory and agonistic models see Patchen Markell, "The Rule of the People: Arendt, *Archê*, and Democracy," *American Political Science Review* 100 (2006): 1–14. As Markell observes: "although at least some of these authors flirt with a simple rejection of rule, all ultimately acknowledge that rule is unavoidable, perhaps even (partly) beneficial," at p. 3. On the idea of democracy as a paradoxical endeavor torn between openness and closure, between rule-bound forms of authority and rapturous moments, see Alan Keenan, *Democracy in Question; Democratic Openness in a Time of Political Closure* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

For radical democratic theorists, then, democracy emerges as a constantly unfolding process of social transformation in which fundamental norms and symbols are re-ordered through an agonistic politics.[33] According to Jacques Derrida, this "democracy to come" retains a self-critical, perfectionist character. Democracy simply *is* perpetual democratization, the protagonist in a hermeneutical circle, an ontological response to late modernity.[34]

Such perspectives undoubtedly respond to important democratic aspirations. One worries, however, that democracy's dominant position as a late modern political ideal leaves it conceptually overburdened as it attracts, like a magnet, such a flurry of cross-cutting normative aspirations. A less overburdened conceptual framework, which isolates class partisanship by non-rich citizens against rich ones as *the* dominant property of democratic regime-types, may be necessary.

The dissertation concludes, then, by proposing a socioeconomically substantive model of *plebeian* democracy as the appropriate normative and institutional response to oligarchic threats. Can ordinary, non-affluent citizens exert some regulatory control over their socioeconomic superiors, given the massive resource imbalances that currently persist? Scholars have long wondered why poorer majorities have difficulty controlling wealthier minorities through purely electoral means. For example, literature on the "poor voter paradox" asks why less affluent individuals vote against their apparent material interests. In the American context, scholars have

---

[33] For an important text on the agonistic and contingent dimensions of democratic agency see Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (London: Verso, 1985).
[34] See Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason.* trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004); William E. Connolly, *The Ethos of Pluralization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995); Stephen K. White, *The Ethos of a Late Modern Citizen* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2009); White, *Sustaining Affirmation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

highlighted such factors as the prevalence of cultural wedge issues,[35] a rural consciousness in which conceptions of class are entwined with conceptions of place,[36] the framing and agenda-setting success of interest groups,[37] and the tendency of voters to misunderstand economic policies.[38] More broadly, in India—which contains the world's largest population of poor voters—elitist parties service the poor through organizational affiliates, while retaining programmatic linkages to their rich supporters.[39]

These empirical findings intersect with rational choice attempts to understand distributive politics.[40] The ability of poorer agents to gain concessions from wealthier elites rests on such factors as the cost of repression, the possibility of capital flight, the prevalence of exogenous shocks, and the ability to overcome collective action problems.[41] Distributive conflicts can promote or impede pathways to democratization. But even in mature democratic contexts, elite-accountability has been shown to be lacking.[42]

---

[35] Thomas Frank, *What's the Matter with Kansas?* (New York: Holt, 2005).
[36] Katherine Walsh, "Putting Inequality in Its Place: Rural Consciousness and the Power of Perspective," *American Political Science Review* 106 (2012): 517-32.
[37] For a case study which focuses on estate tax repeal see Ian Shapiro and Michael J. Graetz, *Death by a Thousand Cuts*: *The Fight over Taxing Inherited Wealth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); see also Isaac William Martin, *Rich People's Movements: Grassroots Campaigns to Untax the One Percent* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
[38] A problem stressed in Bartels, *Unequal Democracy*.
[39] Tariq Thachil, "Elite Parties and Poor Voters: Theory and Evidence from India," *American Political Science Review* 108, no. 2 (2014): 454-477.
[40] John Roemer, "Why the Poor Do Not Expropriate the Rich: An Old Argument in New Garb," *Journal of Public Economics* 70, no. 3 (1998): 399-424.
[41] See Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Carles Boix, *Democracy and Redistribution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
[42] See the collected essays in Adam Przeworski, Susan C. Stokes, and Bernard Manin, eds. *Democracy, Accountability and Representation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

In different ways, then, these literatures question whether contemporary publics have the capacity to properly regulate wealth disparities. Yet pre-modern experience paints a different picture. Serving as assemblymen, jurors, and magistrates, the Athenian "demos" subjected its wealthiest members to vigorous accountability—enforcing norms of conduct and punishing misdeeds.[43] In Rome, wealthy patricians were accountable to "tribunes of the plebes," a class-specific magistracy which existed solely to advance plebeian interests.[44]

Liberal theorists like Rawls and Dworkin acknowledge the dangers of socioeconomic inequality translating into political inequality. They contend that when institutions are "well-ordered,"—that is, when welfare provisions are generous, and campaign finance laws robust—then these dangers can be regulated, though never eliminated.[45] Neo-republican accounts go further, advocating "contestatory" institutions as means to secure freedom as non-domination.[46] However, some scholars criticize these accounts for inadequately responding to the distinctive threats posed by the superrich. Jeffrey Green argues that liberals fixate on redressing the "least advantaged" without subjecting the "most advantaged" to appropriate regulatory scrutiny.[47]

---

[43] Josiah Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); Mogens H. Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes,* trans. J.A. Crook (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999).

[44] On the structure of Roman institutions see Andrew Lintott, *The Constitution of the Roman Republic.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[45] Ronald Dworkin, *Sovereign Virtue*: *The Theory and Practice of Equality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2001).

[46] Pettit, *On the People's Terms;* see also Philip Pettit, "Republican Freedom and Contestatory Democratization," in *Democracy's Value,* eds. Ian Shapiro and Casiano Hacker-Cordon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). For a comparative politics perspectives on contentious politics see James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

[47] Jeffrey E. Green, *The Shadow of Unfairness*: *A Plebeian Theory of Liberal Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), see especially 43-100.

Green's criticisms find a powerful ally in McCormick, whose efforts to excavate a populist strand from Machiavelli's political thought culminate in an advocacy of institutional reforms which secure greater popular oversight over wealthy elites.[48]

Both Green and McCormick sit at the vanguard, then, of the recent "plebeian" turn in contemporary democratic theory. The word plebeian refers back to the Roman plebs, who occupied a legally inscribed class position, one which entitled them to certain protective magistrates, or Tribunes. Modern representative democracies, by contrast, are committed to the idea that citizenship privileges should be assigned regardless of one's socioeconomic status, and this formal equality is considered a defining achievement. The plebeian perspective begins by acknowledging the limitations of this achievement: the failure of formal equality to fully insulate citizens from substantive inequalities of wealth and status, what Green calls the "shadow of unfairness." For Green, this shadow manifests itself in feelings of *remove*, the inescapable sense of distance felt by ordinary citizens who understand that they will likely never hold political office, or exert meaningful control over public officials.[49]

Building on these insights, the dissertation proposes a new model of plebeian democracy. In contrast to Aristotle's mixed regime, I refer to my model as the New Mixed Regime. Whereas Aristotle wants to subsume the class-based agency of the poor, this model embraces the demos in

[48] McCormick, *Machiavellian Democracy,* 170-188; see also McCormick, "Contain the Wealthy and Patrol the Magistrates: Restoring Elite Accountability to Popular Government," *American Political Science Review* 100 (2006): 147-163. On plebeianism as a normative category see also Martin Breaugh, *The Plebeian Experience*: *A Discontinuous History of Political Freedom* trans. Lazer Lederhendler (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013 [2007]). On Machiavelli and the plebeian tradition see Yves Winter, "Plebeian Politics: Machiavelli and the Ciompi Uprising," *Political Theory* 40, no. 6 (2012): 736-766.

[49] Green, *The Shadow of Unfairness*, 36-40.

its tripartite identity as “many,” “free,” and “poor.” It does so by mixing together three types of institutions: aggregative institutions, such as free and fair elections, which enact the legal authority of all citizens irrespective of economic status; deliberative institutions that are fully inclusive and descriptively representative, capturing the epistemic authority of a cognitively diverse demos; finally, plebeian institutions that respond to the specific, socioeconomic vulnerabilities of non-wealthy citizens. I use the Koch brothers, America’s most prominent billionaire political activists, to underscore the concrete regulatory challenges that would confront the New Mixed Regime in the New Gilded Age.

Chapter Two

The Oligarchic Challenge in Ancient Greece: Aristotle

Who are the oligarchs and what sort of harm do they cause? This question was first posed, with great forcefulness, by the "founder of political science;" Aristotle.[1] Born in Macedonia, Aristotle settled in Athens as a resident-alien *metic*, enjoying a lengthy sojourn at Plato's famed Academy, where he was exposed to numerous wealthy families and their offspring. After returning to Macedonia where (according to legend) he tutored a young Alexander, Aristotle resettled in Athens on the heels of Alexander's conquests. During this period Aristotle likely functioned as an ally of Athens' pro-Macedonian elite.[2]

Aristotle's familiarity with higher circles rendered his critique of oligarchy all the more personal. In developing that critique, Aristotle modified the regime typology developed by Plato before him. He contrasted virtuous regimes of the "one" (kingship) "few" (aristocracy) and "many" (polity) to deviant regimes of the "one" (tyranny) "rich" (oligarchy) and "poor" (democracy). The former govern in the common interest, while the latter govern in their narrow factional interests (Aristotle *Politics* 1279a25-1279b8; henceforth *Pol.*).[3]

Why is an Aristotelian analysis of oligarchy relevant today? Aristotle's stature within democratic theory has expanded significantly in recent years, well beyond his reputation as a

[1] Portions of this chapter first appeared as Arlen, "Aristotle and the Problem of Oligarchic Harm," *European Journal of Political Theory* (advance online publication, Aug. 26, 2016).
[2] See Ellen Meiksins Wood and Neil Wood, *Class Ideology and Ancient Political Theory* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), 210-214.
[3] Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. C.D.C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998).

philosopher mainly preoccupied with "gentlemen," as Leo Strauss argues.[4] Deliberative democrats see Aristotle's "endoxic" method as a framework for reconciling individual life with collective life.[5] Aristotle's account of the polis is said to strike a productive balance between citizenship and statesmanship, unity and diversity, civic friendship and agonistic competition.[6] His principles of distributive justice, alongside his perfectionist virtue ethics, have been deployed within theories of social democracy.[7] Moreover, scholars now read Greek thinkers beyond the parochial confines of the city-state, placing them within broader discussions of imperialism, war,

[4] Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1964), 28; for a more recent Straussian perspective see Thomas L. Pangle, *Aristotle's Teaching in the Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

[5] See James L. Wilson, "Deliberation, Democracy, and the Rule of Reason in Aristotle's *Politics*," *American Political Science Review* 105 (2011): 259-274; Jill Frank, *A Democracy of Distinction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Jeremy Waldron, "The Wisdom of the Multitude: Some Reflections on Book 3, Chapter 11 of Aristotle's Politics," *Political Theory* 23 (1995): 563-584; Stephen G. Salkever, *Finding the Mean: Theory and Practice in Aristotelian Political Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

[6] Brian Garsten, "Deliberating and acting together," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Politics,* eds. Marguerite Deslauriers and Pierre *Destrée* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013): 324-349*;* Bernard Yack, *The Problems of a Political Animal: Community, Justice, and Conflict in Aristotle's Political Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Mary Nichols, *Citizens and Statesmen: A Study of Aristotle's Politics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998).

[7] See Martha C. Nussbaum, "Aristotelian Social Democracy," in *Liberalism and the Good,* eds. R. Bruce Douglass, Gerald M. Mara, and Henry S. Richardson (New York: Routledge, 1990), 203-252.

immigration, and multiculturalism.[8] In this respect, Aristotle's ontological orientations are regarded as more fluid and contingent than fixed and hierarchical.[9]

The portrait which emerges in the literature, then, is of a dynamic thinker who defies simple classification; a forerunner of modern social science who nonetheless was deeply rooted in classical modes of inquiry; a virtue ethicist who also embraced political activity; an aristocrat whose greatest insights are now felt on behalf of democracy.

I seek to enliven this portrait further, by reading Aristotle's critique of oligarchy as the central inflection point of his political thought. Specifically, I argue that Aristotle helps us think through two dimensions of the oligarchic threat to democratic citizenries, which I refer to as "moral" and "epistemic." First, Aristotle exposed the moral pathologies which incline elites to *appetitive* behavior. Aristotle invoked the Greek concept of *pleonexia*—roughly translated as a covetous desire for excess wealth and power. Aristotle associated *pleonexia* with a range of oppressive behaviors by rich oligarchs. He recognized that *pleonexia* can spread like a parasite, infecting the entire life of a city-state: the greedy ambitions of a wealthy oligarch are never far removed from the vulgar craftsman obsessed with acquiring new money, or the master who abuses slaves for excess gain, or even the soldier who engages in unjust conquest. Aristotle lamented the oligarchic dispositions which seep into civic culture and destroy political friendship

---

[8] Sara Monoson, *Plato's Democratic Entanglements: Athenian Politics and the Practice of Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); see also Monoson, "Navigating Race, Class, *Polis*, and Empire: The Place of Empirical Analysis in Aristotle's Theory of Natural Slavery," in *Reading Ancient Slavery*, ed. Richard Alston, Edith Hall and Laura Proffitt (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2011), 133-151; John Zumbrunnen, *Silence and Democracy: Athenian Politics and Thucydides' History* (University Park PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008).

[9] On this point see Mary G. Dietz, "Between Polis and Empire: Aristotle's Politics," *American Political Science Review* 106 (2012): 275-293; Jill Frank, "Citizens, Slaves, and Foreigners: Aristotle on Human Nature," *American Political Science Review* 98 (2004): 91-104.

(*Pol.* 1295b15-25). He cautioned that democracies can develop oligarchic customs and behaviors over time (*Pol*. 1292b11-21). Unlike some commentators, I am not arguing that liberal democracies should aspire to Aristotelian virtue in a thick sense. I do though maintain that Aristotle's moral critique of oligarchy remains relevant in "non-ideal" contexts where citizens have good reason to remain alert to the threat of proliferating *pleonexia.*

Aristotle encountered, however, an epistemic dilemma. He insisted that wealth often tracks virtue because it enables necessary leisure time. He recognized, however, that wealth is never a perfect proxy for virtue. The epistemic dilemma lies in distinguishing virtuous uses of wealth from deviant ones. Aristotle worried that people fail to make these judgments successfully, for virtue, as an internal quality of the soul, is difficult to see. Aristotle endeavored to persuade readers that true *aristoi*, those exceptionally superior in natural virtue, have a just entitlement to rule the city. But I argue that aristocratic "guardians" are incapable of protecting the multitude from oligarchic harm, for the distinction between aristocrats and oligarchs remains very fragile.

Few philosophers argue for aristocratic "guardianship" today. Nonetheless, the epistemic burden of identifying oligarchic harm persists in liberal democratic contexts. I maintain that this burden can be addressed: when empowered institutionally, ordinary citizens are competent to exert *scrutiny* over oligarchs. The legacy of Athenian democracy proves instructive on this point, as the "demos" subjected the wealthy to vigorous accountability measures.[10]

[10] Josiah Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); Jon Elster, "Accountability in Athenian Politics," in *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*, eds. Adam Przworski, Susan Stokes, and Bernard Manin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 253-278.

From this democratic vantage point, Aristotle appears more an adversary than an ally, because he was notoriously critical of democratic forms of "rule by the poor." He raised what I call the demographic objection—criticizing democracies like Athens for enfranchising excessive numbers of poor people. Aristotle recognized, however, that the democratic demos is not *simply* poor. It also retains a distinct numerical identity as "many" and a juridical identity as "free."

On this basis, I explore two possible rejoinders to the demographic objection. First, a defense of the "many" might affirm the collective wisdom of large multitudes; second, a defense of the "free" might affirm the "equal status" of free citizens. Aristotle exhibited some sympathy to both arguments, which helps explain those sections of the *Politics* most appealing to democratic theorists, such as Aristotle's famous remarks on the "wisdom of the multitude" (*Pol.* 1281a39-1282b13).[11] However, while a demos both many and free retains qualified virtues, these virtues do not, on Aristotle's terms, provide full compensation for democracy's demographic defects.

Aristotle's solution is familiar. He advocated a "mixed regime" which empowers a large middle class to focus on material improvement while leaving political duties in the hands of accountable elites. Whatever its appeal, this Aristotelian vision remains unsatisfactory amid the contemporary challenges of oligarchy. A successful response to oligarchy must ultimately move beyond Aristotle by affirming the demos' standing as many, free, *and* poor; a point I return to later in the dissertation.

1

The city of Athens, in Aristotle's time, was removed from its Periclean glory years—after war with Sparta and several oligarchic coups. Yet from the democratic restoration of 403 BC to

[11] See Waldron, "The Wisdom of the Multitude."

the Macedonian conquest of 322 BC Athens enjoyed considerable stability.[12] The Assembly and People's Court remained authoritative, though their discretion was restricted by intermediary bodies like the *boule* and *nomothetai*.[13] A proposal to reinstate property qualifications was defeated, and non-wealthy citizens continued to receive compensation for their service as assemblymen and jurors. Yet political status did not reliably track socioeconomic status. Foreign *metics* often acquired substantial wealth, while full citizens toiled in the derided "banausic" occupations—as wage laborers, small craftsmen, and so on.

In a seminal work, G.E.M. de St. Croix applies Marxist class categories to ancient Greece.[14] St. Croix's work has been criticized as reductionist.[15] But "class" distinctions were indeed central to Athenian identity, and the concept of exploitation is not entirely out of place.[16] The wealthiest Athenians profited from both free and slave labor and the broader economy relied upon intensive industrial enterprises such as the silver mines of Laurion. Citizens often toiled alongside slaves and metics with no clear division of labor.[17]

Even still, the exclusionary nature of Athenian citizenship inhibited a wider "proletarian" consciousness. Periclean citizenship laws required Athenian parentage on both sides,

---

[12] Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens*, 100-103.

[13] For background see Mogens H. Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes,* trans. J.A. Crook (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 150-153. Hansen concludes that fourth century Athenian democrats consciously sought to depart from the more radical forms of popular sovereignty blamed, in part, for their entanglement in the Peloponnesian War. However, Hansen stresses that fourth century Athenian practices remained "radical" from the standpoint of elite critics of democracy, at 300-304.

[14] G.E.M. de St. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World*: *From the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquests* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981).

[15] Yack, *Problems of a Political Animal*, 212-216.

[16] On Athenian conceptions of social class see Ober, *Mass and Elite*.

[17] Wood and Wood, *Class Ideology and Ancient Political Theory,* 46.

transforming the demos into a closed status group.[18] Yet the fourth century carried new social risks, with the decline of Athenian empire and straining state finances.[19] In this context, Athenian orators were quick to launch accusations against wealthy people suspected of abusive behavior. Demosthenes' dialogue *Against Meidias*, a diatribe against a wealthy Athenian, endures today as an especially noteworthy example of this practice.[20] Even still, Athenians remained susceptible to the appeals of wealthy people, such as Alcibiades, who insisted that personal ambition could produce public benefits.[21] Class tensions were averted, in part, through the liturgy system, which institutionalized the wealthy's support of cultural and military affairs. Scholars estimate the existence of around 1200 liturgists, representing 5% of the citizenry, of whom the 300 wealthiest bore the greatest burdens.[22] In exchange, the citizenry refrained from a broader push for redistribution, utilizing legal strategies of entrenchment to make their commitments more credible.[23]

Aristotle's writings on oligarchy and democracy occurred against this dynamic political backdrop. On Aristotle's conception, oligarchies are deviant because they grant too much esteem to wealth. Oligarchs believe that it is just for those superior in one good (wealth) to rule on the basis of this form of superiority alone. Aristocracies, by contrast, prioritize virtue. In principle, both wealth and virtue are distinct grounds for claiming membership in a governing class (*politeuma*). If political communities exist solely for property protection, then participation

---

[18] Hansen, *Athenian Democracy*, 90.

[19] Ober, *Mass and Elite*, 98-99.

[20] Ibid, 206-220. For an illuminating account which situates the trial of Socrates within broader Athenian anxieties about oligarchy see I.F. Stone, *The Trial of Socrates* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1988).

[21] On Alcibiades specifically, see Steven Forde, *The Ambition to Rule*: *Alcibiades and the Politics of Imperialism in Thucydides* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

[22] Hansen, *Athenian Democracy*, 112-115.

[23] Melissa Schwartzberg, "Athenian Democracy and Legal Change," *American Political Science Review* 98 (2004): 311-325.

should be proportional to property ownership (*Pol.* 1280a24-27). But such communities also exist for the sake of noble living (*Pol.* 1280b38-41). People who contribute most to this endeavor command priority over those who "surpass in wealth but are surpassed in virtue" (*Pol.* 1281a-7). Nonetheless, (a) living well requires freedom from necessity (*Pol.* 1278a7-10; 1269a34-35) and (b) wealth is correlated to good things (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*: 1099a31-1099b9; henceforth *NE*; Aristotle, *Rhetoric*: 1362b18-20l; henceforth *Rhet.*).[24] No prosperous city-state can subsist without rich people, who often deploy their wealth for magnificent public aims (*Pol.* 1283a16-18; 1332a19-30; *NE* 1122a34-1123a19).

Aristotle thus recognized that wealth has a functional role in strong city-states. He worried, however, that the moral pathology of *pleonexia* would emerge within the process of wealth accumulation itself. Aristotle distinguished two modes of accumulation: property acquisition and wealth acquisition. The former secures household goods necessary for self-sufficiency. "True wealth" consists of such goods (*Pol.* 1256b27-33). While property acquisition has natural limits (*Pol.* 1256b30-36) wealth acquisition has no such limits (*Pol.* 1256b39-1257a4). Rather, accumulation occurs for its own sake. Whereas primitive commercial exchange involves the transfer of essential household goods, commerce evolves into the craft of using money to beget more money (*Pol.* 1257b-25). People practice this craft to gratify their appetite for excess, or *pleonexia* (*NE* 1129a30-1129b5; *Pol.* 1257b41-1258a7; 1267a12-15).[25] Those who

[24] Aristotle, "Nicomachean Ethics," trans. W.D. Ross, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 2001) 928-1112; Aristotle, "Rhetoric," trans. W. Rhys Roberts, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 2001), 1318-1451.

[25] On Aristotle's views regarding unnatural wealth acquisition see Steven C. Skultety, "The Threat of Misguided Elites," in *On Oligarchy: Ancient Lessons for Global Politics*, eds. David E. Tabachnick and Toivo Koivukoski (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 90-109.

fail to satisfy excess through commerce "try to do so by means of something else that causes it, using each of their powers in an unnatural way" (*Pol.* 1258a7-10). Crafts like military command and medicine depart from their proper ends (victory or health) and are redirected to wealth acquisition (*Pol.* 1258a11-14). Sophists practice philosophy for money. Political rulers become similarly profit oriented (*Pol*. 1302b5-9; 1273b-4).

A city beholden to money may become bloated and drunken, but its vices transcend mere gluttony. Aristotle distinguished the incontinent man, who pursues bodily pleasures without conviction, from the self-indulgent man, who believes he is entitled to them (*NE* 1150a9-1151a29). The latter's pretensions are especially dangerous. In commercial contexts, his *pleonexia* may be satisfied through instrumentally rational financial techniques, such as usury (*Pol.* 1258b-7).

In short, a wealthy elite behaving moderately makes vital contributions to healthy city-states. However, under the sway of *pleonexia* the wealthy become harm-inducers, as their desire for more comes at the expense of others (Kraut, 2002: 138). Aristotle associated oligarchic harm with corruption, insolence, "loose living," and oppressive behavior towards the poor (*Pol.* 1307a16-20; 1267a2-6; 1305a41-42; 1305b39-41; 1310a6-11; 1311a10-14; *Rhet.* 1378b22-30; 1390b32-1391a19). Oligarchs enact tighter property requirements and pass succession laws preserving offices exclusively for their next of kin. *Pleonexia* thus entails a violation of proportionality, a taking of more than one's fair share, and the *self-corruption* produced by these acquisitive impulses.[26]

[26] See Richard Kraut, *Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 136-141; Ryan K. Balot, *Greed and Injustice in Classical Athens* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 25-56.

Aristotle admitted that all wealth projects a degree of authority. For people often believe that the rich have no material incentive to commit injustice (*Pol.* 1293b35-42). Here, Aristotle mirrored Adam Smith's claim that ordinary people are morally inclined, in sentimental terms, to bestow admiration on the wealthy. Aristotle warned, however, that communities which esteem wealth may eventually anoint the single wealthiest man as king. Aristotle, of course, argued that rule by kingship is appropriate for a godlike man (*Pol.* 1284b30-33; 1289a40-42; 1288a10-30; 1284a3-11). But such men are extremely rare (*NE* 1145a28-29). Kingship is not appropriate for a group of *aristoi* relatively similar in virtue. For this reason, Aristotle did not grant the *wealthiest* man any special entitlement to rule. Yet less affluent people, however virtuous, are vulnerable to being excluded from office through a tightening of wealth requirements under proliferating *pleonexia.* Aristotle recognized that such tightening is the main catalyst towards the formation of dynastic oligarchies (*Pol.* 1293a20-30).

2

Given the threat of proliferating *pleonexia*, how then can corrupt uses of wealth be distinguished from virtues ones? How can citizens demarcate the oligarchs from the aristocrats? This "epistemic" dilemma was pressing because Aristotle remained committed to an ideal of virtue aristocracy. However, I conclude this section by suggesting that a version of the dilemma persists in modern electoral contexts.

On Aristotle's view, true *aristoi* are not susceptible to *pleonexia.* Their natural virtues are internal properties of the soul (*NE* 1102a5-25; 1098a15-20). *Aristoi* are thus the only "good citizens" who are unqualifiedly "good men" (*Pol.* 1276b28-1277b30; 1293b3-7). However, aristocracy requires the multitude to submit to their superiors (*Pol.* 1288a9-13). Aristotle worried that inferior multitudes may misrecognize virtue, mistaking false aristocrats for true ones. These "pretenders," as I refer to them, are people who lack internal virtue but who bear some external

resemblance to *aristoi.* For example, if *aristoi* are wealthy, false pretenders also *happen* to be wealthy; if *aristoi* claim "noble birth," so too do pretenders. Pretenders who gain power on false pretenses pose a serious threat to impose oligarchic harm on the multitude.

The epistemic dilemma arises, therefore, because aristocrats lack an easily transparent way to validate their natural superiority. Aristotle admitted that the multitude cannot easily see into the souls of virtuous people (*Pol.* 1254b36-1255a). Thus, aristocrats must validate their claim to rule through more visible traits like wealth. To illustrate, let us refer to these ascribed traits as "proxies." I define proxies as externally identifiable traits that are *perceived* to correlate positively with virtue. Proxies are operable within a particular group when they are used to assign authority within that group. In principle, many different goods could be put forth as proxies for virtue. However, in order to facilitate clear interpersonal comparisons, several requirements must be met. First, people should be able to identify whether someone possesses a proxy, and to what degree. Second, different shares of the same proxy should be weighable through a common unit of comparison. Third, when different proxies are employed simultaneously, the relative value of each good should be identifiable.

These formal requirements are relatively demanding. For example, even when people agree on standards of physical beauty they may not have a metric for weighting beautiful hair against a beautiful smile, and so on. For his part, Aristotle imagined offices being distributed through "superiority in any good whatsoever" (*Pol.* 1282b22-40). People with superior complexion, height, or musicianship may put forward claims. But these disparate goods cannot easily be weighed against one another. For Aristotle, such incommensurability justifies restrictions on the list of goods used to select rulers. People should not "dispute over political office on the basis of just *any* sort of inequality" (*Pol.* 1283a 10-11, my italics). Aristotle thus identified three valid claims to office: freedom, wealth, and birth (*Pol.* 1283a14-17).

While Aristotle did not use the formal language of "proxies," he recognized that when rulers cannot appeal to natural properties of the soul, they must invoke *externally* recognizable goods like freedom, wealth, and birth status.[27] Of the three goods, freedom remains the most inclusive. Aristotle recognized that freedom can be distributed irrespective of socioeconomic status, making it accessible to the "many who are poor" (*Pol.* 1317b-10). From Aristotle's perspective, freedom is thus too inclusive to be a reliable indicator of aristocratic virtue (though Aristotle certainly considered it necessary for human flourishing).

What about wealth? Let us assume that all true aristocrats must exceed a minimum wealth threshold, a level necessary to secure adequate leisure time. There may of course be intersubjective disputes over where to set such a threshold. I assume, however, that these disputes are resolved and the community agrees that above some threshold, call it 10 units, agents do secure the leisure-time necessary for virtuous living. Even still, if Aristotle's critique of *pleonexia* holds, then at least some will have accumulated wealth out of an appetite for excess, not a desire for leisure-time.

How can these corrupt tendencies be detected? One strategy would be to employ a second good, birth status, to adjudicate the relative virtue of all agents who meet the 10 unit wealth threshold. Aristotle believed that good birth often does track virtue. In his surviving fragment "On Good Birth" he referred to noble birth as "excellence of stock." [28] Good stock is family lineage which produces numerous good men. For objects with virtuous origins have the power to produce many similar products. Aristotle's teleology effectively privileged the distant ancestors

[27] For Aristotle, this was a major concession to the unreasonableness of actual political life; in his view, political rule should ideally be assigned on pure virtue grounds alone.
[28] Aristotle, "On Good Birth," in *Select Fragments Volume XII of the Works of Aristotle*, ed. David Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), fragment 4.

who originated an excellent legacy. People are well born "not if their father is well-born, but if the originator of the stock is so," for "origin counts more than anything else."[29]

Aristotle here developed a remarkably traditionalist idea of birth hierarchy. He reached the startling conclusion that even *present* virtues are not always indicative of excellent stock.[30] Yet politically, this viewpoint only magnifies the epistemic challenge. Aspiring aristocrats cannot simply appeal to their immediate relations as evidence of good birth; they must somehow invoke an excellent ancient lineage.

Aristotle addressed this dilemma, in part, by distinguishing old from new money. Longstanding, stable fortunes are a surer sign of good lineage than new ones (*Pol.* 1294a20-22). Deviant appetites are more likely to stem from new money (*Rhet.* 1387a19-25; 1391a14-19). Vulgar craftsmen born poor are capable of becoming very rich (*Pol.* 1278a23). Yet those who have experienced radical changes in fortune arouse indignation and suspicion, especially when seeking political office (*Rhet.* 1387a22-24). New money has an ephemeral quality, Aristotle insisted; possessions of the newly rich "do not seem to be really their own" (*Rhet.* 1387a24-27).

Aristotle wrote during a period when ancient notions of pedigree had become less salient as status markers. Cleisthenes' introduction of territorial *demes* allowed territory to supersede kinship as a marker of civic status. Athens did continue to hold special kingship associations or *genē* made up of citizens who claimed noble lineage. The *gennētai* composed something of a birth aristocracy. But they increasingly lost prestige to the new commercial elite who arose during Athens' ascension as a banking hub. Josiah Ober has shown that by the fourth century, elite litigants were more likely to invoke wealth than birth in their appeals to popular juries.[31]

[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ober, *Mass and Elite*, 253-259.

For Aristotle, *source* of wealth does provide a key indicator of virtuous or deviant character. Aristotle recognized, however, that even inherited wealth can feed corrupt appetites. Moreover, Aristotle conceded that no birth lineage, however ancient or noble, will be immune from reproductive difficulties. Aristotle regarded natural beings as mutable, shaped through a productive relationship between capability (*dunamis*) and activity (*energeia*). Because this shaping is dynamic and ongoing, no natural hierarchy can ever be fully fixed.[32] "Though nature does have a tendency" to ensure that "good people come from good people," Aristotle admitted that sometimes nature is "unable to do so" (*Pol.*1255a31-1255b1; see also *Rhet.* 1390b20-31).

Indeed, Aristotle identified serious defects in purportedly stable aristocratic regimes like Carthage and Sparta. The Carthaginians were money-loving, putting offices up for sale (*Pol.* 1273a20-1273b5). Their colonies provided an outlet for people to become rich outside the city-state. However, Aristotle regarded this imperial outlet as a product of luck, not skillful legislation (*Pol.* 1273b 17-20). The Spartans also overvalued wealth, as Spartan property passed into fewer and fewer hands (*Pol.* 1307a34-36, 1270a13-16), and inequalities were exacerbated by inheritance laws which forced men to compete for the dowries of wealthy heiresses (*Pol.* 1270a22-32). Aristotle criticized Sparta's militaristic tendencies and identifies imperial conquest as an unhealthy outgrowth of acquisitive tendencies at home (*Pol.* 1324b3-38, 1333b12-41).

Herein lay Aristotle's dilemma. On the one hand, Aristotle believed that wealth often correlates with virtue because it can buy the leisure time necessary for virtue. However, the desire for *excess* wealth remains unnatural, a sign of *pleonexia*. How can citizens distinguish one effect from the other? Aristotle identified three external goods, wealth, birth, and freedom, which offer legitimate grounds for political inclusion. But as my analysis tries to demonstrate, none of

[32] Dietz, "Between Polis and Empire: Aristotle's Politics," 280-281; Frank, "Citizens, Slaves, and Foreigners: Aristotle on Human Nature," 99-100.

these goods provides an adequate "proxy" for aristocratic virtue. If the multitude could properly identify virtue in the soul, no proxy would be needed. People could simply consent to being ruled by their superiors. However, absent such consent, aristocrats must rule on the basis of ascribed traits like wealth. This fact opens the door to corrupt pretenders of virtue, who gain power on the pretense that wealth should be esteemed.

From an Aristotelian perspective, my analysis reaches a sobering conclusion. Virtuous aristocrats may exist, but true *aristoi* struggle to protect the city from oligarchic harm. Either *aristoi* fail to acquire membership in a tightening wealthy elite; or they withdraw from politics, preferring the contemplative life to complicity in corrupt oligarchies (*Pol.* 1324a24-30). For Aristotle recognized that true *aristoi* are least likely to engage in factional politics (*Pol.* 1304b1-5).

Aristotle, like Marx, lamented the tendency of money to become a "standard of value for everything else," in a world where those with money believe they can buy anything (*Rhet.* 1390b32-1391a). A passage from Euripides' *Electra* captures this restless search for stable sources of value:

> At times I have seen descendants of the noblest family grow worthless though the cowards had courageous sons; inside the souls of wealthy men bleak famine lives while minds of stature struggle trapped in starving bodies. How then can man distinguish man, what test can he use?....We can only toss our judgments random in the wind.[33]

This section's extended analysis thus highlights an essential point: there is no stable "aristocratic" solution to the problem of oligarchic harm. This conclusion is important because it underscores why oligarchic power must be contested on democratic grounds. If natural

[33] Euripides, "Electra," trans. Emily Townsend Vermeule, in *The Complete Greek Tragedies*: *Euripides V*, eds. David Grene and Richmond Lattimore (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991 [1959]), 369-380 (note: this is a line reference, not a page reference).

hierarchies are fragile, and wealth potentially corrupting, then the multitude has good reason to combat oligarchy through the "rule of the many."

Nonetheless, a less severe version of the "epistemic dilemma" persists even in modern electoral democracies. For electoral procedures retain an *aristocratic* dimension. Bernard Manin makes this point most compellingly. His argument proceeds as follows: Elections are a choice situation in which voters seek out candidates who possess relevant superiorities. Voters must sort on the basis of highly selective traits, in order to reduce the pool of candidates. Unlike formal aristocracies of wealth or birth, electoral democracies afford voters equal weight in deciding which traits will be prioritized. Moreover, voters are free to change their preferences and select on the basis of new traits. However, voters are generally unwilling to incur the information costs associated with meticulously comparing the full range of traits across a candidate pool. Voters must therefore base their assessments upon a handful of discernable traits.[34]

For our purposes, the upshot is that *wealth* can be one such trait. Thus, even if voters prefer to select virtuous rulers—what political scientists call "good types"[35]—they may be forced to use goods like wealth as a proxy for virtue. This fact reintroduces the problem of oligarchic *pretenders*: those who lack virtue and gain power solely on the basis of their wealth.

To be clear, this threat does not disqualify election as a selection procedure. Elections are an indispensable component of any liberal democratic commitment to formal political equality. However, the threat of electoral offices being "captured" by oligarchs underscores the need for a

[34] Bernard Manin, *Principles of Representative Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 134-149.
[35] James D. Fearon, "Electoral Accountability and the Control of Politicians," in *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*, eds. Adam Przeworski, Susan C. Stokes and Bernard Manin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 55-97.

more expansive institutional response to oligarchy. Can Aristotle's thought contribute to this effort? I now address that issue.

3

Aristotle's criticisms of democracy are well known. If political communities are composite wholes composed out of many different parts (*Pol.* 1274b38-39), Aristotle associated democracy with its most vulgar part. Aristotle raised a *demographic* objection to democracies that enfranchise excess numbers of poor people. This objection rested on Aristotle's prior ethical claim that poverty prohibits the cultivation of necessary virtues. It also reflected Aristotle's belief that certain forms of wealth stratification are inevitable, even desirable; a belief underscored by his resistance to the radical redistributive schemes proposed by Phaleas of Chalcedon (*Pol.* 1266b-1267b20).

As emphasized earlier, Athenian democracy was indeed unprecedented in the degree to which citizenship privileges were not tied to one's functional position in the labor process.[36] Aristotle observed that even the poorest Athenians assumed important magistracies when the lottery fell their way (Aristotle, Constitution of Athens: XLVII, 1).[37] Aristotle recognized, however, that the demos was not *simply* poor. It also had a juridical identity as free, and a numerical identity as many. In a crucial section of the *Politics* he grappled with the conceptual relationship between the "many," the "free," and the "poor." While democracy is conventionally associated with the "many who are poor" and oligarchy with the "few who are rich," this

[36] Wood and Wood, *Class Ideology and Ancient Political Theory*.
[37] In-text line reference taken from Aristotle, "Constitution of Athens," trans. J.M. Moore, in *The Politics and the Constitution of Athens*, ed. Stephen Everson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

convention fails, Aristotle argued, to anticipate other possibilities: for example, the rich ruling as many, or the poor ruling as few. "It would seem," Aristotle concluded, "that these constitutions have not been well defined" (*Pol.* 1279b18-25).

In principle, then, there are four distinct ways of conjoining the numerical categories of many or few onto the socioeconomic categories of poor or rich. Because rule by the few who are poor remains a formal possibility, it had to be incorporated into Aristotle's regime typology. Aristotle thus had two options. He could have privileged the numerical convention, in which case such rule would be oligarchic on account of being exercised by the few; or he could have privileged the socioeconomic, in which case it would be democratic on account of being executed by the poor. Crucially, Aristotle privileged the socioeconomic: "what does distinguish democracy and oligarchy from one another is poverty and wealth: whenever some, whether a minority *or* a majority, rule because of their wealth, the constitution is necessarily an oligarchy, and whenever the poor rule, it is necessarily a democracy" (*Pol.* 1279b38-1280a2, my italics). The conventional association of democracy with the many rests on the sociological *coincidence* that "everywhere the rich are few and the poor many" (*polloi*) (*Pol.* 1279b34-38).[38]

Nonetheless, Aristotle concluded the chapter with an important point. "For only a few people are rich," he observed, "but all share in freedom; and these are the reasons they both

[38] Aristotle and his contemporaries employed a range of terms to identify the "many," including *plēthos, hoi polloi,* and *ho ochlos. Plēthos* came from the root *pleious* which meant, quite literally, more. *Hoi polloi* offered a more sociological rendering of the many as an assemblage of ordinary people. Conversely, the poor were designated through terms such as *aporoi*, those "without means" or lacking abundance, and *penēs,* those who must toil for daily subsistence. As Ober notes, these terms were sometimes employed by affluent people to draw relative distinctions. A moderately wealthy individual might describe himself as penēs in contrast with the plousioi (i.e. super rich) man. On this last point see Ober, *Mass and Elite*, 196.

dispute over the constitution" (*Pol.* 1280a5-6). Aristotle presented freedom as the sort of good which could be obtained by both rich and poor. The "free" could not be synonymous with the "poor" since all did *not* share in being poor.

In this passage, Aristotle appeared to gesture towards a qualitatively different sort of constitutional dispute. A few lines back, the dispute involved rival claims between the poor who happened to be many (democracy) and the rich who happened to be few (oligarchy). But the dispute referred to at 1280a5-6 contrasted the few who are rich to *all* who share in freedom. The oligarchic element remained the same in both cases. What had changed was the democratic element—now signifying the free.

Later in Book IV chapter 4, this category shift reemerged. Aristotle insisted that "in oligarchies and everywhere else, the larger part is in authority"—in other words, all regimes employ majority decision within their governing class (1290a30-32; *Pol.* 1294a 11-14). "Thus," Aristotle said, "it is better to say that a democracy exists when the free are in authority and an oligarchy exists when the rich are; but it happens that the former are many and the latter few, since many are free but few are rich" (*Pol.* 1290a39-1290b3). This sentence almost exactly paralleled Aristotle's earlier claim that the poor happened to be many. But now it was the free (*eleutheroi)* who *happened* to be many.

In short, Aristotle's shifting usage patterns, from the "poor" to the "free," suggest an alternative pathway for defending democracy against oligarchy.[39] For Aristotle, freedom provides legitimate grounds for political inclusion, whereas poverty does not. On this basis,

[39] Of course, Aristotle regarded neither democracy nor oligarchy as monolithic; in his analysis each assumes various sub-types. For a useful account see Richard G. Mulgan, "Aristotle on Oligarchy and Democracy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Politics* eds. David Keyt and Fred D. Miller, Jr. (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991), 307-322.

Aristotle identified freedom as the "fundamental principle" of democratic constitutions (*Pol.* 1317a40). Oligarchic elites do, of course, retain legal freedom. But they *rule* on account of their wealth. A clear choice emerges: should the superior wealth of some citizens trump the equal freedom of all? When presented in these terms, the case for democracy against oligarchy no longer requires a factionalist defense of the poor. Instead it requires a defense of the "many who are free and equal" against their exclusion by a wealthy oligarchic few.

Against this backdrop we can situate those passages most appealing to democratic theorists, such as Aristotle's famous claim that those who are not individually excellent sometimes prove collectively superior; "just as feasts to which many contribute are better than feasts provided at one person's expense" (*Pol.* 1281a41-1281b2). A rich literature has emerged on this "doctrine of the wisdom of the multitude." On Waldron's influential reading, Aristotle has in mind a dialectical process of questioning and criticism, in which the collective refines its views and achieves a degree of stable belief, or *endoxa*.[40] For scholars who adopt this deliberative perspective, Aristotle's "feast" analogy conveys the experience of a potluck dinner. Just as dinner guests contribute distinct dishes to enhance overall taste, diverse multitudes enhance the "taste" of collective judgments.[41] However, other scholars challenge this interpretation, suggesting that the benefits Aristotle assigns to collectives are primarily aggregative, not deliberative.[42]

[40] Waldron, "The Wisdom of the Multitude."
[41] Wilson, "Deliberation, Democracy, and the Rule of Reason," 263-264.
[42] Daniela Cammack, "Aristotle on the Virtue of the Multitude," *Political Theory* 41 (2013): 175-202 at 184-187; Melissa Lane, "Claims to rule: the case of the multitude," in *Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Politics,* eds. Marguerite Deslauriers and Pierre Destrée (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 247-274.

While I cannot adjudicate this debate here, several points bear mentioning. First, Aristotle did suggest that virtue (*aretē*) can be amplified in group settings, especially the virtue associated with hoplite warfare.[43] However, Aristotle also asserted that ordinary citizens lack the most advanced epistemic competences, both *sophia* (wisdom) and *phronēsis* (practical reason) (*Pol.* 1277a13-16; 1281b25-28). [44] It is generally "not safe," Aristotle argued, to let ordinary people participate in important offices, lest they "inevitably" make mistakes (*Pol.* 1281b25-28). He endorsed Solonic reforms that restricted popular participation to the narrow function of electing and inspecting officials (*Pol.* 1281b30-35). [45]

The multitude deserves electoral authority, Aristotle argued, because its collective property assessment often proves greater than the individual assessments of those who hold important offices (*Pol.* 1282a37-40). The dilemma, however, is that once political entitlements are tied to aggregate wealth, one moves closer to oligarchic standards of justice; those which make participation proportional to wealth. An epistemic defense of the sort advanced by the Condorcet jury theorem does not carry this risk, for it rests on numerical attributes of the "many" which hold independent of wealth distribution.

---

[43] See Cammack, "Aristotle on the Virtue of the Multitude," 184-190. Cammack forcefully argues that Aristotle was less focused on the multitude's capacity to "pool knowledge" than on its capacity to enhance virtues like bravery and justice. See also Kevin M. Cherry, "Aristotle's 'Certain Kind of Multitude," *Political Theory* 43 (2015): 185-207.

[44] The multitude does retain that "part" of prudence involved in *sunesis*—the judging of other's actions. On this point see Cherry, "Aristotle's 'Certain Kind of Multitude," 194-203; see also Bryan Garsten, "Deliberating and acting together," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Politics,* eds. Marguerite Deslauriers and Pierre Destrée (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 338-340.

[45] As Lane stresses, the multitude have a role in judgment as users rather than makers. Lane thus reads Aristotle as a forerunner of Schumpeterian "minimalism." See Lane, "Claims to Rule: The Case of the Multitude," 266-269.

There is, though, another basis for justifying the electoral authority of the "many." One could appeal directly to each free citizen's "equal status." Athenians took civic pride in norms of *isonomia* (equality before the law) and *isegoria* (equal right to address the assembly), which were ensured to all citizens. At several points Aristotle gestured in this direction. He identified "reciprocal equality" as the defining feature of good citizenship. He forcefully intimated that polis life requires some degree of equal status among citizens, lest it dissolve into non-political mastery. He instructed all regimes to honor reciprocity by utilizing "democratic means," such as majority decision-rules, within their governing class (*Pol.* 1308a10-20; 1294a11-14).

On this basis, Aristotle established a generalizable link between citizenship, equality, and democratic procedures.[46] However, Aristotle also criticized democrats for prioritizing numerical equality at the expense of proportional equality. When "each of the citizens should have an equal share" irrespective of merit, "the poor have more authority…For they are the majority…This, then, is one mark of freedom…" (*Pol.* 1317b5-10; 1291b30-37).

Aristotle recognized that numerical equality favors the poor—those superior in quantity but inferior in quality. The radical expansion of legal freedom proved especially empowering for laborers, whose economic position most resembled that of slaves. Aristotle observed that poor laborers were akin to slaves before Solon's reform of debt bondage secured their freedom (Aristotle, Constitution of Athens: II, 2). While famously defending slaveholding hierarchies based on nature, Aristotle saw democracies upending the master-slave hierarchy in several ways. First, they granted citizenship to numerous people who bore resemblance to natural slaves (and often descended from slave ancestors). Second, these "vulgar" people, once empowered as a

[46] Melissa Schwartzberg insightfully excavates these egalitarian strands in Aristotle. See Schwartzberg, "Aristotle and the Judgment of the Many: Equality, Not Collective Quality," *Journal of Politics* 74 (2016): 733-745.

demos, used conscripted slave labor to indulge their collective mastery.[47] In effect, some people naturally suited for manual labor enjoyed citizenship through the good fortune of native birth; others with similar natures had the misfortune of being foreigners conscripted into slavery from the battlefield. Arbitrary legal conventions maintained these distinctions. Aristotle was certainly aware that ordinary Greeks saw themselves as ethnically superior. Numerous slaves hailed from foreign lands like Lydia, Phrygia, and Syria.[48] Yet Aristotle reminded his readers that even well-born Greeks could be enslaved in an unjust war (*Pol.* 1255a15-28). Those who would limit slavery to foreign ethnicities are "seeking precisely the natural slave we talked about in the beginning. For they have to say that some people are slaves everywhere, whereas others are slaves nowhere" (*Pol.* 1255a25-32). Here, Aristotle played on the nativism of Greek democrats to problematize their own commitments to legal conventions.

From Aristotle's perspective, democracies succumb to the demographic objection, then, because they assign citizenship on the basis of a legal status of reciprocal freedom and equality; a membership criterion that can be distributed irrespective of material status, and thus used to enfranchise excessive numbers of poor people.[49] Aristotle believed that the virtues of "good citizenship" can only be ascribed to those freed from necessary tasks (*Pol.* 1278a7-10). Democrats violate this precept by granting people with radically different natures a share in rule. Neither the epistemic capacities of the collective multitude nor the moral value of "equal status" provide full compensation for this problem.

---

[47] Thomas Lindsay offers a poignant analysis on this point in "Liberty, Equality, Power: Aristotle's Critique of the Democratic 'Presupposition,'" *American Journal of Political Science*, 36 (1992): 743-761 at 749-753.

[48] Hansen, *Athenian Democracy*, 119.

[49] To be sure, *metics* were also "free," strictly speaking; but they did not enjoy their freedom on the same terms of reciprocal equality as did full citizens.

Aristotle appears to have reached an impasse. Both oligarchy and democracy retain a *part* of justice, but they engage in factional conflict (*stasis*) that mistakes the part for the whole (*Pol.* 1280a7-15). Aristotle admitted, however, that acquisitive behavior by the rich is more destructive to city-states than acquisitive behavior by the poor (*Pol.* 1297a6-12). Under lawful conditions, the multitude are generally content with an equal share, while the rich "act arrogantly and try to get even more for themselves" (*Pol.* 1307a12-20). By "making officials elected, as in an oligarchy, but not on the basis of a property assessment, as in a democracy" (*Pol.* 1294b6-15) the people will consent without envy to being ruled by their superiors (*Pol.*1318b27-1319a4). The well-regulated "mixed regime" perfectly balances democratic and oligarchic conceptions of justice.[50]

On this basis, Aristotle famously argued for moderate forms of "rule by the many": *politea* in the ideal case, farmer's democracy in the less ideal. The properties of these regimes have been well discussed in the literature.[51] Aristotle observed that a slightly crooked nose can still be beautiful so long as it does not deviate radically from correct proportions (*Pol.* 1309b23-30). Similarly, a polity which blends into moderate democracy or moderate oligarchy can still be stable (*Pol.* 1309b30-40, 1298a35-40). Aristotle envisioned a range of possibilities, from moderate to extreme, mixed to pure, virtuous to deviant. Ultimately, both polity and aristocracy blend together (*Pol.* 1295a30-35).

Of course, Aristotle's *ideal* regime, as articulated in *Politics* Book VII, is not a polity, but a virtue aristocracy. The ideal regime encompasses those with unqualified virtue, while polity is composed of many good citizens who are not good men in the fullest sense (*Pol.* 1293b-7).

---

[50] On the Aristotelian mixed regime as a framework for containing class-conflict, see Yack, *Problems of a Political Animal*, 231-238.

[51] Wilson, "Deliberation, Democracy, and the Rule of Reason," 268-271; Yack, *Problems of a Political Animal*, 209-231; Nichols, *Citizens and Statesmen*, 85-100.

Nonetheless, the ideal regime remains an object of prayer; it requires true blessedness and "external things" furnished by chance (*Pol.* 1332a29-30; 1289a29-33; 1325b37-38; 1295a28-29). Polity is less lofty, but more stable overall, because it does not depend on these exceptional qualities.

Aristotle conceded, however, that polity does not occur often (*Pol.* 1293a40-41). In polity's less desirable alternative, farmer's democracy, citizens remain politically passive, too busy to regularly attend assembly (*Pol.* 1292b25-29). Yet their modest property ensures a degree of political moderation. Democracies of this sort can be stably governed by middle class leaders such as Solon, whom Aristotle praised for being moderate on socioeconomic matters (*Pol.* 1296a17-20; 1274a14-21).

Ultimately, Aristotle relied upon a vision of demographic progress, imagining a well-ordered city in which class tensions would be neutralized by a stable middle class majority. Aristotle could make this leap only because the "many" were "poor" by sociological contingency, not necessity. Aristotle thus had conceptual space to imagine a democracy composed of the "many in the middle." Yet as Sarah Monoson stresses, the Athenian demos had not yet consolidated its middle class; Aristotle's demographic appeal involved a significant leap of faith.[52]

Conclusion

Despite his elitist biases, Aristotle's political thought can still serve as a valuable resource for contemporary democratic critics of oligarchy. From an Aristotelian perspective, oligarchic tendencies are pervasive in all "non-ideal" political contexts because they are internal to the psyche of those who pursue unnatural forms of wealth acquisition; those who seek excess power

[52] Monoson, "Navigating Race, Class, *Polis*, and Empire," 146.

on the basis of their wealth. However, Aristotle also understood the importance of private wealth to strong city-states. He rejected as naïve the idea that human greed could be tamed through "equalization" schemes (*Pol.* 1266b-1267a15). Wealth leads to corruption, but also magnificence. "Good citizens" must learn to distinguish one effect from the other.

Aristotle went astray, however, in his insistence on *severing* the ethical and institutional connection between democracy and the poor. While anticipating Machiavelli's view that acquisitive behavior by the wealthy poses far graver risks than any parallel behavior by the poor, Aristotle's aristocratic outlook prevented him from assigning any decency or virtue (*onestà* in Machiavelli's sense) to the poor. Ultimately, Aristotle never fully succeeded in overcoming the specter of the poor, the "scandalous" dimension of class-politics. Thus there is ample space for recovering the socioeconomic (poor) as a constitutive aspect of the demos' authority, alongside the epistemic (many) and legal (free) dimensions. This recovery requires democratic theorists to move beyond the Aristotelian mixed regime and embrace what I will refer to later as the New Mixed Regime. I now move to another political context dominated by the specter of oligarchy: nineteenth-century Britain. It was a context where the legacies of Athenian democracy loomed large, as thinkers like Jeremy Bentham and J.S. Mill came to terms with the dilemmas of an emerging democratic age.

Chapter Three

The Oligarchic Challenge in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Jeremy Bentham and J.S. Mill

How can a consolidating democracy contain oligarchic elites while simultaneously responding to the demands of a mobilizing working class majority? This question dominated the intellectual landscape of the utilitarian reformers Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. Both men devoted their lives to unsettling entrenched socioeconomic privilege. They probed rhetorical fallacies, revealed institutional absurdities, and unmasked the "sinister interests" that compel people to sacrifice the general welfare for personal gain. They turned utilitarian ethics into a broader public philosophy, a radical reform agenda intent on eliminating obstacles to the "greatest happiness" of the political community.

Has utilitarianism lost its political bite? Will Kymlicka contends that advances in technical precision have occurred alongside a retreat from radicalism, so that contemporary utilitarianism "no longer defines a distinct political position."[1] For Kymlicka, this creeping conservatism reflects renewed sensitivity towards the challenges which come with applying utilitarian principles for programmatic aims. It also reflects a sense that the great nineteenth-century struggles between the "many" and the "few" have given way to new struggles, such as those involving vulnerable cultural minorities. By implication, the triumph of formal equality has rendered utilitarianism's original resistance to corrupt elites less politically salient.[2]

Such conclusions are premature. Contemporary democracies do still face many of the

[1] Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 48.
[2] Ibid, 46-48.

challenges which animated nineteenth-century reformers. Utilitarian ethics have certainly come under strong criticism in recent decades, from philosophers who argue that utility calculations place unrealistic cognitive demands on agents while hollowing out important moral and aesthetic concerns. However, as Robert Goodin argues, many of these supposed flaws recede when one moves into the realm of public affairs, that is, when utilitarianism comes to operate less as a personal ethic, and more as a "public philosophy," a response to pressing public problems.[3] I argue that the public philosophy advanced by Bentham and J.S. Mill offers powerful resources for critiquing contemporary oligarchic threats. Bentham's public philosophy centered around the term "sinister interest," a term he first deployed as shorthand for the corrupt privileges, and perverse institutional practices that were enabling elites to sacrifice the general interest for their own particular interests. Sinister interests filtered down to a web of officialdom—judges, lawyers, and other functionaries—all of whom profited by placating wealthy elites.

J.S. Mill was raised, by his father James, to carry on Bentham's reform legacy. While the younger Mill famously refined Bentham's "quantitative hedonism" with a greater appreciation for "higher pleasures," he shared with Bentham a visceral disgust of entrenched privilege. Mill saw wealthy elites pursuing class legislation, while also committing individual acts of violence, rapine, and arbitrary interference, as when they restricted foot-paths that laborers had relied on for centuries, merely to protect their hares and partridges.[4] Mill exposed the absentee landlords who exploited Irish peasants, the rural magistrates who profited through archaic privileges, the "gentlemen" officers who abusively flogged common soldiers, and the entitled youth who

[3] Robert E. Goodin, *Utilitarianism as a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3-27.

[4] John Stuart Mill, "Reorganization of the Reform Party," (1839) in *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume VI—Essays on England, Ireland, and the Empire,* ed. J.M. Robson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), 484. Hereafter cited as CW VI.

recklessly fired air-guns from their coach-windows.[5] Mill deplored the "*pleonexia* of the Greeks," that self-corruption through excess which Greek moralists associated with oligarchic appetite.[6] Influenced by George Grote, the utilitarian historian whose landmark *History of Greece* painted a deeply unflattering picture of ancient oligarchy, Mill decried the "men of rank and fortune" who "on first show of opportunity, were ready to compass the subversion of democracy…"[7] He instructed the newspaper press to expose wrongdoing, while advocating investigative commissions and anti-corruption tribunals to stamp out corruption. In parliament, he passionately advocated for campaign finance reform.

Moreover, Mill went well beyond Bentham in developing a strategy of working class incorporation. Early engagement with the French historical method of Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte encouraged Mill to think of society as an interrelated whole in which the "division into classes, and the relations of those classes to one another," forms a crucial part.[8] He argued vigorously for the benefits of granting workers electoral voice. In striking neo-Roman language, Mill urged reformers to serve as "tribunes" of the poor, to push against all forms of "robbery" and "insolent interferences" in working people's lives.[9] Like Aristotle, Mill associated oligarchy with an overvaluation of wealth: oligarchs felt *entitled* to influence on account of their wealth, conflating wealth with virtue. Like Aristotle, Mill held out the possibility of aristocratic rule by

---

[5] Ibid, 483.

[6] Mill, "On Liberty," in *On Liberty and Other Essays* ed. John Gray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 87.

[7] Mill, "Grote's History of Greece [II]," in *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume XI—Essays on Philosophy and the Classics*, ed. J.M. Robson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 327-328. Hereafter cited as CW XI.

[8] Mill, "A System of Logic," in *The Collected Works of J.S. Mill, Volume VIII—A System of Logic Ratiocinative and Inductive Part II* (1843), edited by John M. Robson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 912. Hereafter cited as CW VIII.

[9] Mill, "Parties and the Ministry," (1837) in CW VI, 396-397.

skilled functionaries. However, Mill believed Britain's hereditary aristocracy had forfeited its claims to moral and intellectual preeminence. Britain had entered a transitional moment, Mill declared in 1831, one that required a "moral and social revolution" to redress all measures of "unearned importance."[10]

By contrast to thinkers like Machiavelli, however, Mill never advocated "class-specific" assemblies composed exclusively of non-wealthy citizens. Rather, he envisioned a stylized model of elite-dominated parliamentary deliberation. Mill's representative ideal was, of course, far more participatory than the Platonic, Burkean, or Schumpeterian elitisms to which it may be compared. Recent scholarship makes this point definitively.[11] Nonetheless, Mill's well-documented commitment to "competent" rule came in tension with some of his more radical reform tendencies. As Joseph Hamburger has provocatively argued, Mill was as much concerned

[10] Mill, *The Spirit of the Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), 33.

[11] On Dennis Thompson's influential reading, Mill seeks a productive interplay between principles of competence and participation, in order to safeguard citizen interests and educate them. But these two principles serve the "protective" and "educative" functions in different ways and Thompson recognizes that Mill never provides a rigorous formula for resolving their inevitable tradeoffs. Thompson argues, however, that participation retains normative priority, since participation taken to its ideal can fulfill the principle of competence, but not vice versa. Mill thus deserves to be considered a partisan of democracy. Nadia Urbinati, too, reads Mill as a democrat *par excellence*, one who successfully reconciles an Athenian "agora" model—based on agonism and speech— to conditions of modern representation. See Dennis Thompson, *John Stuart Mill and Representative Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976); Nadia Urbinati, *Mill on Democracy*: *From the Athenian Polis to Representative Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002). For a different perspective that situates Mill within a tradition of aristocratic liberalism that wearily embraced democracy see Alan S. Kahan, *Aristocratic Liberalism*: *The Social and Political Thought of Jacob Burckhardt, John Stuart Mill, and Alexis de Tocqueville* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

with *control* as with liberty; he was preoccupied with moral authority, discipline, stability, and social cohesion.[12]

These tensions came to a head in Mill's engagement with British working class power. On the one hand, Mill believed that large portions of the working class had progressed far enough on the developmental trajectory that they could participate in robust practices of democratic accountability. [13] But accountability also required forms of self-discipline among the workers, a view notably expressed in Mill's Malthusianism, which enjoined workers to assume control over their reckless reproductive practices.

Mill's discourse of accountability thus entailed exertion and restraint, action and "forbearance." [14] Mill believed that if oligarchs were tamed and workers were stably incorporated into the political system, then democracy could progress in a more just direction. Mill emerged as an ambitious public figure eager to guide the transition he theorized. But Mill's pathway "from oligarchy to accountability" is not entirely fulfilling. While forcefully demanding a post-oligarchic moment in which workers could assume significant political agency, Mill also imposed constraints on their agency; constraints which risked neutering the democratic energies

[12] Joseph Hamburger, *John Stuart Mill on Liberty and Control* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); on similar themes see Bruce Baum, *Rereading Power and Freedom in J.S. Mill* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

[13] For comparative and historical perspectives on working class incorporation, see Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne H. Stephens, and John D. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Ruth B. Collier, *Paths Toward Democracy*: *The Working Class and Elites in Western Europe and South America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Charles Tilly, *Popular Contention in Great Britain: 1758-1834* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

[14] Mill, "Considerations on Representative Government," in *On Liberty and Other Essays* ed. John Gray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 208.

necessary to combat oligarchy most effectively. Mill thus emerges as a decisive ally of contemporary critics of oligarchy, but an ally not without significant limitations.

1

The term "sinister interest" first emerged out of Jeremy Bentham's landmark critique of judicial procedure.[15] Bentham found English common law to be irrational and corrupt, as judges and lawyers exerted enormous procedural discretion through ritualized practices that resembled a priesthood.[16] With useless formalities, prohibitive fees, and constant delay came "profit, as much as could be extracted, with as much ease as was consistent with the extraction of it."[17] Outright bribery was unnecessary when judges could enrich themselves through lawfully imposed fees.[18] *Mala-fide* suitors, those intent on avoiding compliance with just demands, benefited most from this delay and expense.[19] Bentham argued that a structure of perverse institutional incentives cemented an entrenched "law partnership" whose sinister interest inhibited reform.

Eventually, Bentham came to regard the entire political establishment as complicit, those "ruling classes connected in so many points of sinister interest with the lawyers."[20] By appointing special jurymen who received substantial emoluments for their services, judges

---

[15] See Philip Schofield, *Utility and Democracy: The Political Thought of Jeremy Bentham* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 109-136.
[16] For background see Nancy Rosenblum, *Bentham's Theory of the Modern State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 130.
[17] Jeremy Bentham, *Scotch Reform* (London: Richard Taylor and Company, 1808), 6.
[18] Bentham, "Observations on Peel's Speech," (1825) in *Official Aptitude Maximized; Expense Minimized,* ed. Philip Schofield (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 181-187.
[19] Schofield, *Utility and Democracy*, 119.
[20] Bentham, *the Elements of the Art of Packing, as applied to Special Juries, particularly in cases of libel law* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1825), 71.

produced libel verdicts favorable to powerful figures like the Duke of York, who once accused twenty-six printers of slander. Bentham thus saw libel prosecution as the nexus forging political and legal elites together.[21] By "packing" juries, judges exerted their power to extract whatever the wealthy desired, as if the judge should "lend his hand for the purpose of the mortal stab" if the price was right.[22] The "villainy" of venality hit poorer citizens especially hard.[23] Unable to afford the heavy fees and blocked from seeking justice, the poor were left to be "oppressed and plundered" by the wealthy.[24] Ultimately, Bentham compared the abuses of corrupt judicial officials to those of colonial proprietors and slaveholders.[25] What united their abuses were pecuniary interests, "the most uniformly active and generally irresistible of all *sinister interests*…"[26]

Bentham's critique came directly from his utilitarian insistence that all "springs" of human action are traceable to interest. Desire for pleasure and aversion to pain are both ends of action and motives *to* action.[27] These two "sovereign masters" govern legislators no less than citizens. Bentham sensed the challenges of conducting proper utility calculations, but he believed that unlike principles of natural right or sympathy, utility has a firm basis in the "real"

---

[21] See Schofield, 132-135. The fact that jury-packing had become a threat to liberty was ironic, as Schofield notes, since the jury system was traditionally hailed as a guarantor of English liberties.

[22] Bentham, "Appendix C," in *Official Aptitude Maximized; Expense Minimized*, ed. Philip Schofield (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 368-391 at 376.

[23] Ibid, 376-377.

[24] Ibid, 376.

[25] Ibid, 377. See also Bentham, "Indications Respecting Lord Eldon," in *Official Aptitude Maximized; Expense Minimized*, ed. Philip Schofield (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 203-289 at 254.

[26] Bentham, *the Elements of the Art of Packing*, 59.

[27] See discussion in Schofield, *Utility and Democracy*, 34.

physiological experience of pleasure or pain.[28] Interests are constituted from possible pleasures or pains, and happiness entails the maximizing of pleasure and minimizing of pain.[29] On this basis, Bentham distinguished "particular interests" from a community's "universal" or "aggregate interest." Identification ensues when good or bad outcomes befall the community in proportion as they befall specific members.[30] When identification loosens, opposition ensues.[31] Sinister interests are thus a subset of "particular" interests; those "detrimental to the greatest happiness, of the greatest number," by which "a man is promoted to sacrifice to it that all-comprehensive interest."[32] This sacrifice Bentham termed the "sinister sacrifice."[33]

Though Bentham understood that all persons are capable of indulging sinister interests, he recognized that social privileges and political power magnify selfish tendencies.[34] They enlarge an agent's set of sinister interests and maximize the private benefits of pursuing them, while minimizing the external constraints which inhibit their pursuit. Monarchs are an extreme example. Their interest is "in every part of it a sinister interest."[35] Aristocrats prioritize the sinister interests they share with the Monarch.[36] Soldiers, priests, lawyers, and other functionaries likewise serve these privileged classes through force, intimidation, corruption, and "delusion."[37]

---

[28] Ibid, 1-14, 28-32.
[29] Ibid, 28-32.
[30] Bentham, *First Principles Preparatory to Constitutional Code*, ed. Philip Schofield (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 125.
[31] Ibid, 125-126.
[32] Ibid, 151.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid, 27-29, 44, 58.
[35] Ibid, 153-161 at 153.
[36] Ibid, 191-192.
[37] Ibid, 183-187.

Bentham encountered vested privilege firsthand when attempts to purchase land for his Panopticon prison scheme were undercut, he believed, by the sinister interests of influential landowners. [38] While developing his Constitutional Code and fixating on government efficiency under the slogan of "official aptitude maximized, expense minimized," Bentham targeted the ruling aristocracy with increasing fervor. The "virtue" aristocracy was just a "money aristocracy," he argued, dependent upon public provisions to maintain its opulence.[39] In a scathing attack on Edmund Burke, who defended emoluments on behalf of aristocratic grandeur, Bentham exposed Britain's "Venetian style" government, where "titled and confederated imbecility" could, "behind the screen of secrecy, waste, oppression, and peculation," maintain themselves in comfort.[40] Britain's "aristocratic paupers" fed off the public weal in a convoluted "arithmetic," a vicious circle whereby money bestows power, the powerful command a sense of dignity and status, and this status must then be preserved through ever greater amounts of money.[41] In Bentham's eyes, government expense was a *constitutional* problem which the profligate rich were incapable of resolving.[42]

2

Bentham recognized, then, that socioeconomic privileges amplify the problem of sinister interest in several ways. Firstly, they enhance the incentive structures which motivate selfish

[38] For background on the episode see Schofield, *Utility and Democracy,* 110-111.
[39] Bentham, "Defense of Economy Against Rose," in *Official Aptitude Maximized; Expense Minimized,* ed. Philip Schofield (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 127-128.
[40] Bentham, "Defense of Economy Against Burke," in *Official Aptitude Maximized; Expense Minimized,* ed. Philip Schofield (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 39-94 at 83.
[41] Bentham, "Defense of Economy Against Rose," 131-132.
[42] As Frederick Rosen stresses, Bentham was exceptional in the history of political thought in the degree to which he treated government expense as a constitutional problem. See Rosen, *Jeremy Bentham and Representative Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 94.

activity. Secondly, they enhance one's ability to act on those incentives and realize personal benefits at public expense. To illustrate by way of a contemporary example, consider the problem of "tax avoidance," by which I mean both criminal tax evasion, and a broader set of activities, such as "tax strategizing" and "tax lobbying;" activities through which agents minimize tax burdens without overt criminal liability. From Bentham's perspective, all taxpayers have a "sinister interest" in skirting personal contributions to the public weal. However, since tax avoidance is an activity whose potential benefits are directly correlated with tax liability, more affluent taxpayers stand to gain more, in absolute terms, from reducing their liability; a fact which enhances their incentives to pursue this activity.

Today, globally, trillions in assets are parked offshore. An elaborate "income defense industry" devises tax avoidance schemes with favorable risk/reward profiles, as exposed in the recent Panama Papers scandal. The industry focuses on maximizing the "income-defense spread," the gap between published tax rates and what a wealthy client actually pays.[43] Wealth management companies use "family offices" to attract "Ultra-High Net-Worth Individuals," devising tax shelters, partnerships, trusts, shell corporations, and other exotic instruments which function as "pass-through" mechanisms and produce "paper losses" to reduce liabilities.[44] One popular strategy has hedge fund managers investing in offshore companies which then reinvest in their hedge funds, allowing profits to accrue at the lower "long-term" capital gain rate. The boundaries of legality are opaque, and tax avoidance specialists have vested interests in maintaining complexity. As Bentham recognized, "complication is a Jungle in which sinister

[43] On the "income defense industry" see Winters, *Oligarchy*, 217-254. See also Noam Scheiber and Patricia Cohen, "For the Wealthiest, a Private Tax System That Saves Them Billions," *New York Times*, Dec. 30, 2015. Proquest. Web. Dec. 17, 2016.
[44] Winters, *Oligarchy*, 233-244.

interest has its lurking place."[45] Tax-related crimes are difficult to prosecute. Proceedings are clouded in the privacy of attorney-client privilege, and those under investigation often reach favorable settlements through direct negotiations with tax collection agencies. "Compromise is a viable collection tool," the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has admited.[46] The agency retains a "wealth squad," but its resources have succumbed to recent budget cuts.[47]

Just as the super-rich minimize present tax burdens, they proactively lobby for favorable tax policy. The Managed Fund Association, a hedge fund lobby, has spent millions fighting to maintain the "carried interest" provision, which reduces taxes on investment income. Another lobby, the Private Investor Coalition, successfully fought to shield "family offices" from SEC scrutiny, pursuing a loophole which enabled hedge fund managers like George Soros to evade regulations by converting their funds into "family offices."[48] The Club for Growth Action Fund, a conservative interest group, spent millions aiding congressional candidates deemed critical of the IRS. The majority was raised from twelve mega-donors; one donor, Robert Mercer, saw his hedge fund save $6.8 billion through well-played loopholes.[49] Mercer and his family were among the single largest contributors to the Trump presidential campaign.

This entire tax avoidance machinery would, no doubt, have enraged Bentham. His own egalitarian commitments emerged from a core utilitarian assumption. If each person's happiness commands equal respect, then their interests should command equal consideration.[50] From here

[45] Bentham, *First Principles Preparatory to Constitutional Code*, 102.
[46] Cited in Winters, *Oligarchy*, 224.
[47] Scheiber and Cohen, "For the Wealthiest, a Private Tax System."
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Schofield, *Utility and Democracy*, 148-149.

came Bentham's evolving commitments to such radical items as suffrage expansion, the secret ballot, annual elections, church disestablishment, and press freedom,[51] commitments which Bentham often defended by way of the American experience with popular government.[52]

Bentham, the advocate of stringent publicity, official responsibility, and salutary distrust, argued that sinister interests must be contained through external sanctions when an agent's own "moral aptitude" proves lacking.[53] The *regime* of publicity, lodged in an informal "Public Opinion Tribunal," found its institutional analogue in representative governments where the "democratic interest" remained ascendant.[54] Bentham's characteristic safeguards, from probity in record-keeping to the transparent design of public space, all presupposed that structural pressures, no less than moral failings, facilitate corruption.

However, amid his preoccupation with political tactics, "securities against misrule," came a recognition of deeper structural injustices. Bentham assailed the "non-productive" classes for extracting wealth from productive laborers. He criticized gender oppression at home, and colonial rule abroad. He exposed fallacious reasoning and "interest-begotten prejudice," those

---

[51] Throughout the 1790s Bentham took a more cautious approach on parliamentary reform, influenced, in part, by his concerns over the tumultuous events in France. By the early 1800s, Bentham's commitment to parliamentary reform emerged. On the timing of this conversion see Schofield, *Utility and Democracy*, 137-170.

[52] On Bentham's praise of the United States see, for example, *First Principles Preparatory to Constitutional Code*, 145-146. On Bentham's theory of popular sovereignty see Rosen, *Jeremy Bentham and Representative Democracy*, 47-49.

[53] Bentham, *First Principles Preparatory to Constitutional Code*, 139, 27-29. Importantly, Bentham believed that publicity and vigilance could serve not simply as a check on abusive authorities, but also as the enabler of their rightful authority. On this point see Jonathan Bruno, "Vigilance and Confidence: Jeremy Bentham, Publicity, and the Dialectic of Political Trust and Distrust," *American Political Science Review* 111, no. 2 (2017): 295-307.

[54] Bentham, *First Principles Preparatory to Constitutional Code*, 74-76.

epistemic failures which allow sinister interests to go unacknowledged by the interest-holders themselves; as when birth aristocracies rationalize their privileges through blood-based "interest-begotten prejudice."[55] Bentham recognized that when sinister interests express themselves as "class-interests," such interest-begotten prejudices are especially pervasive.[56]

Notwithstanding his prolific attempts at descriptive classification, these *prescriptive* commitments, forged through the "greatest happiness" principle, formed the core of Bentham's utilitarian public philosophy. [57] It was J.S. Mill who would extend Bentham's fight through the nineteenth century. In so doing, Mill looked to incorporate the vast, disenfranchised working classes into the coalition against oligarchy.

3

"It was said without exaggeration before the Reform Bill, it may be repeated with very little exaggeration even yet, that the English Government is an oligarchy of landholders."[58] So J.S. Mill proclaimed in 1839, after a decade of vigorous political activism. Raised, by his father James, to carry on Bentham's legacy, the younger Mill eventually departed from orthodox Benthamism under the influence of continental thinkers like Comte, St. Simon, and the German Romantics. Nonetheless, throughout his life, Mill remained a staunch partisan of utilitarian politics and ethics, identifying the "justice which is grounded on utility" as "incomparably the most sacred and binding part, of all morality."[59]

---

[55] Ibid, 110.
[56] Schofield, *Utility and Democracy*, 126.
[57] A point stressed in Rosen, *Jeremy Bentham and Representative Democracy*, 12.
[58] J.S. Mill, "Reorganization of the Reform Party," (1839) in CW VI, 470.
[59] Mill, "Utilitarianism," in *On Liberty and Other Essays* ed. John Gray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 195; see also Mill, "On Liberty," 15. *On Liberty* remains the focus of

Mill regarded Bentham's corpus as a seminal contribution to practical ethics. Bentham was the "great *subversive*" thinker of his time, committed to resolving wholes into parts, the abstract into the concrete, by making systematic inferences from the principle of utility.[60] Mill applauded Bentham for exposing sinister interest "through all its disguises," most notably those interest-begotten prejudices which transform class-interests into a "class morality."[61] Thus, while Mill resisted Bentham's strongest claims about the motivational primacy of selfish behavior, he understood how relevant the category of "sinister interest" had become in the non-ideal circumstances of nineteenth-century Britain.[62]

Beginning in his youthful years, Mill allied with the Philosophical Radicals, a group of Bentham's followers who agitated passionately for reform.[63] Confronting a "selfish oligarchy,"[64] Mill and the Radicals saw their struggles against British landowners as mirroring ancient Greek

---

most Mill scholarship. For an illuminating reassessment that situates the harm principle within Mill's position on the Contagious Diseases Acts see Jeremy Waldron, "Mill on Liberty and on the Contagious Diseases Acts," in *J.S. Mill's Political Thought*: *A Bicentennial Reassessment*, eds. Nadia Urbinati and Alex Zakaras (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 11-42. On the tensions between *On Liberty* and Mill's wider thought see Gertrude Himmelfarb, *On Liberty and Liberalism*: *The Case of John Stuart Mill* (New York: Knopf, 1974). On Mill's moral psychology see Wendy Donner, *The Liberal Self: John Stuart Mill's Moral and Political Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); see also Candace A. Vogler, *John Stuart Mill's Deliberative Landscape: An Essay in Moral Psychology* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

[60] Mill, "Remarks on Bentham's Philosophy," (1833) in *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume X—Essay on Ethics, Religion and Society*, ed. J.M. Robson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), 10 and 79 at 79. Hereafter cited as CW X. Mill, "Bentham," (1838) in CW X, 86.

[61] Mill, "Bentham," (1838) in CW X, 109-110.

[62] Thompson, *J.S. Mill and Representative Government,* 14-16.

[63] On Mill and the Philosophical Radicals see Joseph Hamburger, "Introduction," in CW VI, vii-liii; for a classic study, see Elie Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955 [1928]).

[64] Mill, "Reorganization of the Reform Party," (1839) in CW VI, 479.

struggles against oligarchic factions. Greek history instructed Mill that degeneration through sinister interest, the "incessant, ever-flowing current of human affairs towards the worse," always threatened democratic progress.[65] Mill read Greek history as an epic in which Athens "may be called the hero."[66] He drew inspiration from George Grote's defense of Athens against the "pro-Spartan" biases of Tory classicists. Grote presented Sparta as a corrupt oligarchic republic and Mill likewise ridiculed the Spartans, those "hereditary Tories and Conservatives of Greece" who paled in comparison to "greater and wiser Athens."[67]

Importantly, Mill regarded Athenian superiority as "wholly" the fruit of its democratic institutions.[68] Though sometimes wrong, the demos' judgment proved more often right, and Mill read Pericles' *Funeral Oration* as a fitting tribute to Athenian civic freedom and public spiritedness.[69] From the assembly came a love of publicity and speech, an unparalleled *parrhésia;* from the judiciary, a love of fairness and impariality.[70] These institutions fostered a "course of political education" no society has since replicated.[71] While Greek slavery inhibited Athens from realizing democracy in its "purest and most honorable" form,[72] Mill celebrated Athens as a regime which, unlike the "aristocratic Roman republic," granted free laborers equal access to office.[73]

---

[65] Mill, "Considerations on Representative Government," 223-224 at 224.
[66] Mill, "Grote's History of Greece [II]" in CW XI, 316.
[67] Mill, "Grote's History of Greece [I]" in CW XI, 303.
[68] Ibid, 324. For an illuminating analysis of Mill's Athenian foundations see Urbinati, *Mill on Democracy*, 14-42 especially.
[69] Mill, "Grote's History of Greece [I]" in CW XI, 316-321.
[70] Ibid, 324-325.
[71] Ibid, 324.
[72] Ibid, 324.
[73] Ibid, 324.

Mill emphasized Grote's point that so-called "demagogues" like Cleon served as vital checks on the influence of wealthier Athenians.[74] The worst demagogues, Mill surmised, were the oligarchs themselves.[75] Mill thus regarded ordinary Athenians as exemplary in their respect for legal forms, unlike the oligarchs who constantly violated them.[76] Indeed, Mill attributed Athens' extortion of subject peoples to rich expedition leaders, connecting their unjust behavior abroad to oligarchic corruption at home.[77] He stressed, however, that subject peoples could rely upon the demos for some degree of judicial fairness.[78] He invoked Thucydides' account of Phyrnichus, an "oligarchical conspirator" who cautioned fellow conspirators to expect no good will from other cities who saw the oligarchs as threats, and the Athenian demos as their protector.[79]

Like all "well-constituted" democracies, the Athenians gravitated to intellectual exemplars, who guided against their errors, and Mill saw Demosthenes and Pericles as embodying good democratic oratory.[80] While Plato correctly grasped the "transcendent" value of government expertise, he thus overreacted to the defects of popular government, expounding doctrines of obedience "quite to the taste of Mr. Carlyle."[81] From Mill's perspective, Plato was thus foremost among those epic moralists who grasped "only one half of the truth."[82]

---

[74] Ibid, 331-332.
[75] Ibid, 328.
[76] Ibid, 326-327.
[77] Ibid, 321-322.
[78] Ibid, 322.
[79] Ibid, 322-323.
[80] Mill, "Inaugural Address Delivered to the University of St. Andrews," (1867) in *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill Volume XXI—Essays on Equality, Law, and Education,* ed. J.M. Robson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 230-231. Hereafter CW XXI.
[81] Mill, "Grote's Plato," (1866) in CW XI, 432-436 at 433.
[82] Ibid, 436.

4

Conversing in outlets like the *London and Westminster Review,* Mill and other Radicals sought a "big tent" reform party arrayed against the Tories and sidelining the Whigs. For although Mill respected the "speculative" side of Toryism, as embodied by intellectuals like Samuel Coleridge, he regarded the Whigs as mere opportunists who failed to contribute anything substantive.[83]

Mill thus drew a stark contrast between two orders, the "privileged" and the "disqualified." The former included large landowners and the richest commercial men—those capable of purchasing landed estates, should they choose. Outward from this landowning elite sprang the privileged members of the army, clergy, and West India trade.[84] The "disqualified," by contrast, encompassed the middle classes enfranchised in 1832, small manufacturing interests outside of the protected trades, dissenters of various sorts, educated men lacking commensurate social prestige, and the vast working class assemblage.[85] Mill envisioned a broad "phalanx" spanning from more cautious "Whig Radicals" to militant "Ultra-Radicals" among the working classes.[86] He instructed each side to ensure that their separate objectives, "however legitimate," did not undermine cooperation.[87]

[83] See Hamburger, "Introduction," in CW VI, vii-liii.
[84] Mill, "Reorganization of the Reform Party," (1839) in CW VI, 470-475.
[85] Ibid, 475-478.
[86] Ibid, 467.
[87] Ibid, 478.

Throughout the 1830s, Mill saw sinister interest on full display among wealthy factions who conspired with the ruling ministry to defeat taxes on the affluent,[88] thwart trade unions,[89] paternalistically regulate beer houses,[90] and prop up inept local functionaries.[91] Landowners commanded archaic rural magistracies.[92] Commons were enclosed with no regard for the aesthetic life of the poor, even as public expenditures went toward Correggio paintings favored by wealthy connoisseurs, practices which motivated Bentham's longstanding critique of taxpayer subsidized artistic indulgences.[93] Oxford and Cambridge were bastions of wealthy youth who feasted on constant nepotism.[94] The military had become so nepotistic, Mill charged, that it functioned as an "engine for extracting large annual sums from the people under false pretenses, to give to the sons of the rich…"[95] Common soldiers endured the brutish treatment "inherent in an army or a navy exclusively officered by gentleman."[96] When the wealthy misbehaved, police imposed trivial fines, while the poor were imprisoned "on some trifling accusation."[97] In a note titled "The Rich and the Poor," Mill invoked the case of Major Pitman, a magistrate in the county of Devon, convicted by a petty court for the most "brutal assaults" against a female maid-servant, but absolved by a higher court. The weak should be grateful for those "modern"

[88] Mill, "Notes on the Newspapers," (1834) in CW VI, 162.
[89] Ibid, 206-2011.
[90] Ibid, 212-214.
[91] Ibid, 205-206.
[92] Mill, "Reorganization of the Reform Party," (1839) in CW VI, 471.
[93] Mill, "Notes on the Newspapers," (1834) in CW VI, 249. See also Rosen, *Jeremy Bentham and Representative Democracy,* 107.
[94] Mill, "Notes on the Newspapers," (1834) in CW VI, 250, 259.
[95] Mill, "Postscript: The Close of the Session," (1835) in CW VI, 316.
[96] Mill, "Notes on the Newspapers," (1834) in CW VI, 268-270.
[97] Mill, "Reorganization of the Reform Party," (1839) in CW VI, 483.

manners, Mill remarked ironically, which enable the great to indulge their every caprice. For "who ever heard of a magistrate dismissed for oppressing the poor…"[98]

Commenting on French affairs during the tumultuous early 1830s, Mill worried that the French people were on the verge of exchanging a "feeble despotism for a strong and durable oligarchy."[99] When excluded from power, the moneyed interests held common cause with the people. Now, they indulged the same selfish pursuits of any oligarchy wherein "32 millions are governed by the 88 thousand richest."[100] Mill regarded England's Glorious Revolution, where reform culminated in the primacy of an oligarchic parliament, as a cautionary tale.[101] England's experience underscored that the corrosive effects of local oligarchic interests often surpassed "even the great Oligarchy itself."[102]

Among Radicalism's chief targets was the protectionist Corn Law interest, that "master-evil."[103] The failure of Corn Law reform reinforced Mill's worry that a sea of sinister interests imperiled the 1832 reforms. In commentaries like *Civilization* and *Spirit of the Age*, Mill lamented the wealthy's tendency to choose lethargy and live "the life of a Sybarite," while uncritically peddling the aphorisms of their hereditary orders, an "idolatry of certain abstractions called church, constitution, agriculture…."[104] These elites were blessed with an economic

---

[98] Mill, "Notes on the Newspapers," (1834) in CW VI, 267.
[99] Mill, "Prospects of France, I" (1830) in *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill Volume XXII—Newspaper Writings Dec. 1822-July 1831*, eds. Ann P. Robson and John M. Robson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 130. Hereafter CW XXII.
[100] Ibid, 132-133 at 133.
[101] Mill, "French News [9]," (1831) in CW XXII, 224-225.
[102] Mill, "French Elections," (1830) in CW XXII, 124.
[103] Mill, "Reorganization of the Reform Party," (1839) in CW VI, 470-476 at 476.
[104] Mill, *The Spirit of the* Age, 91-92.

security which, in previous ages, would have required their active exertion to maintain.[105] With success resting on external appearances, "arts for attracting public attention" prevailed. Labor and capital were being "expended less in doing anything, than in persuading other people" that things had been done.[106] Increasingly the public went without "those simple criteria of desert" necessary for moral judgment.[107] Echoing Tocqueville, Mill argued that the very pervasiveness of public opinion was nonetheless weakening the "precision and force with which its judgment is brought home to individuals."[108]

In his review of *Democracy in America,* Mill sympathized with Tocqueville's anxieties about the oppressive yoke of majority opinion.[109] Nonetheless, Mill insisted that America's moral defects—the restless "treading upon the heels of another," the "rage of money-getting," the absence of philosophical cultivation, also prevailed in Britain.[110] For these defects were less the product of democratic government per se, than of a "*bourgeois* opinion" which had become the main "arbiter of fortune and success."[111] As Mill warned, the "unbalanced influence" of a middle rank, left to the "habits and instincts of a commercial community," threatened a tyranny that was "not the less irksome because most of the tyrants may not be manual laborers."[112]

Consider the contrast with his father. As the closing lines of *On Government* make clear, James Mill imagined a paternalistic arrangement in which a virtuous "middle rank" would

---

[105] Mill, "Civilization," (1836) in *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill Volume XVIII—Essays on Politics and Society,* ed. J.M. Robson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 146-147. Hereafter CW XVIII. See also Mill, *The Spirit of the Age,* 52-53.
[106] Mill, "Civilization," (1836) in CW XVIII, 133.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Mill, "De Tocqueville on Democracy in America," (II) in CW XVIII, 176-178.
[110] Ibid, 193-199 at 193 and 198.
[111] Ibid, 194-196 at 194 (Mill's italics).
[112] Ibid, 198 and 200.

mediate between higher and lower classes.[113] While self-identifying with the middle rank, J.S. Mill proved far more alert to the threat of a hegemonic middle—the tyranny of opinion described in *On Liberty*. He thus believed that workers could usefully check the hegemonic pretensions of the "middle rank," while at the same time having their numerical superiority constrained by an active middle.

Yet this delicate class analysis rested on successful working class incorporation. When Mill's dream of a Radical coalition failed to materialized, he blamed reform leaders in parliament. In "Reorganization of the Reform Party," (1839) an important article in the *London and Westminster Review*, Mill speculated on the movement's future.[114] Angered by the harsh Poor Law, workers were mobilizing around Chartism, with its ominous slogan "peacefully if we may, forcibly if we must."[115] Mill implored Radicals to hear out workers' grievances: "no other political duty is more important."[116] Yet Radicals had failed to seize their mantle:

> Hence it is that the poor do not love them, do not rally round them. They *must* be tribunes of the poor, and to some purpose too, if they mean to be anything. Those who will not flatter the people must make it doubly obvious that they are willing to serve them.[117]

---

[113] See James Mill, *Essay on Government*, ed. Currin V. Shields (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1955), 89-91.

[114] Mill, "Reorganization of the Reform Party," (1839) in CW VI, 467-495.

[115] For literature on the chartist movement and nineteenth century class dynamics more generally see the classic E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966 [1963]); Gareth Stedman Jones, "Rethinking Chartism," in Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class*: *Studies in English Working-Class History 1832-1982* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Richard Ashcraft, "Liberal Political Theory and Working-Class Radicalism in Nineteenth-Century England," *Political Theory* 21, no. 2 (May 1993): 249-272; Keith McClelland, "England's Greatness, the working man," in Catherine Hall, Keith McClelland, and Jane Rendall eds., *Defining the Victorian Nation*: *Class, Race, Gender and The British Reform Act of 1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 71-118.

[116] Mill, "Parties and the Ministry," (1837) in CW VI, 396.

[117] Ibid.

Mill's dilemma was acute. A premature push for universal suffrage would endanger middle class support.[118] Yet workers had to be treated fairly—"if Universal Suffrage is ever to come without a civil war."[119] For "the men of thews and sinews will never give their confidence to a party recommended only by willingness to take from the aristocracy and give to the shopocracy."[120] Here, in the heated class politics of his day, Mill's discourse of "accountability" emerged.

5

I am not imposing the term "accountability" on Mill as a "criteria of description not available to the agent," to reference Quentin Skinner's critique.[121] Indeed, accountability (sometimes rendered as 'responsibility to the governed') was prominent within Benthamite phraseology, and Mill identified it as a "fundamental doctrine" of Bentham's political philosophy, perhaps Bentham's most original and enduring contribution.[122] For Bentham correctly grasped that "no rulers have their selfish interest identical with that of the governed, unless it be rendered so by accountability."[123] However, Mill criticized Bentham for ignoring those "habitual sentiments and feelings," those "general modes of thinking" which prevail within a particular community or class.[124] Mill thus prioritized the link between accountability as a

[118] Mill, "Reorganization of the Reform Party," (1839) in CW VI, 482.
[119] Mill, "Reorganization of the Reform Party," (1839) in CW VI, 483. Hence the radical motto: "gov. *by means* of the middle for the working classes," in CW VI, 483.
[120] Mill, "Reorganization of the Reform Party," in CW VI, 482.
[121] See Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics,* vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 77.
[122] Mill, "Bentham," (1838) in CW X, 106-107.
[123] Mill, "System of logic," CW VIII, 890-891.
[124] Ibid. See also "Bentham," (1838) CW X, 154; "Remarks on Bentham's Philosophy," (1833) in CW X, 16-17.

formal legal principle, and the patterns of character and cognition that determine its successful implementation.

Building on Bentham's idea of the Public Opinion Tribunal, Mill saw newspapers as the linchpin of a practice of scrutiny, evaluation, and punishment; a practice that could bridge the spatial and temporal distance between government and civil society and enable collective action, by telling "every person what all other persons are feeling, and in what manner they are ready to act." [125] Newspapers were to be supplemented by constituent meetings, in which representatives could justify their fitness for office and articulate their views on contentious policy issues. Much appears normatively appealing about Mill's vision, which he described as an "unbounded publicity, and an ever present newspaper press," which gives "the representative assurance that his every act will be immediately known, discussed, and judged by his constituents, and that he is always either gaining or losing ground in their estimation."[126] But Mill recognized that, "if the people can remove their rulers for one thing, they can for another," which led him to worry that citizens may enforce accountability unwisely, by imposing pledges or punishing elites based on mistaken cognitive assumptions.[127]

How was Mill to proceed? Throughout the 1840s and 1850s, Mill endorsed a twofold liberal reform strategy, appeasing middle class moderates by moving gradually on universal

---

[125] As Mill argued in a famous passage: "The newspapers and the railroads are solving the problem of bringing the democracy of England to a vote, like that of Athens, simultaneously in one *agora*." See Mill, "De Tocqueville on Democracy in America (II)," (1840) in CW XVIII, 165. For good discussion of this passage and its related themes, see Urbinati, *Mill on Democracy,* 72-122.

[126] Mill, *Considerations,* 371.

[127] As Mill argued: "If the agents, or those who choose the agents, or those to whom the agents are responsible, or the lookers-on whose opinion ought to influence and check all these, are mere masses of ignorance, stupidity, and baleful prejudice, every operation of government will go wrong," at 226.

suffrage, while aggressively incorporating workers into the informal public sphere. He had to convince fellow reformers that working men could submit to the *conventions* of accountability—of scrutiny, evaluation, and punishment—in productive, orderly ways. He did so, in part, by arguing that a more educated stratum of workers was already participating in this public sphere. "The working classes themselves contain a middle as well as a lowest class," Mill stressed. While repudiating the "Operative Radicals," men confined to a "narrow district in the North," Mill praised the Working Men's Association in London, who "framed the People's Charter" and continued to advocate for it in the newspaper press, as the "best and most enlightened aspect of working-class Radicalism."[128] Mill believed enlightened labor leaders harbored conventional political ambitions and would willingly submit to the conventions of British politics. For "hardly any drunken or profligate working man is a politician. Such men do not read newspapers, or interest themselves in public measures; they take part in strikes, but not in Political Unions."[129]

Given the developmental status of the lower working class, Mill hoped the "intelligent working classes" could be persuaded that Universal Suffrage should come gradually.[130] Nonetheless, Mill cast a critical eye on those new modes of philanthropy through which "the possessors of property are to resume their place as the paternal guardians of those less fortunate."[131] Likewise, Mill did not want working men to view upper class privileges as a mere

[128] Mill, "Reorganization of the Reform Party," (1839) in CW VI, 485-486.
[129] Ibid, 486.
[130] Ibid, 488.
[131] Mill, "The Claims of Labour," (1845) in the *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill Volume IV—Essays on Economics and Society*, ed. J.M. Robson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press; Kegan Paul, 1967), 372. Hereafter CW IV. On Mill's critique of philanthropy see Emma Saunders-Hastings, "No Better to Give than to Receive: Charity and Women's Subjection in J.S. Mill," *Polity* 46, no. 2 (2014): 233-254.

"stewardship, of which an account is to be rendered to them."[132] Mill recognized that Britain had entered a "political age," in which the "desire of political rights, or the abuse of political privileges by the possessors of them, are the foremost ideas in the minds of most reading men—an age, too, the whole spirit of which instigates everyone to demand fair play for helping himself, rather than to seek or expect help from others."[133]

In his reflections on French affairs, Mill praised the events of February 1848 as "alone among revolutions, in having placed power in the hands of men who neither expected nor sought it," in "unselfish politicians" who sought to maintain power through "opinion and discussion."[134]

> The provisional government, therefore, did what any government, situated as they were, must have done. They associated with themselves, in the supreme authority, two of the socialist chiefs, M. Louis Blanc and M. Albert. And things not being ripe for the adoption of practical measures of a socialist character, they did the only thing which could be done—they opened an arena for the public discussion of the problem, and invited all competent persons, under the auspices of the government, to contribute their ideas and suggestions towards its solutions.[135]

Mill recognized, however, that if workers remained dissatisfied with this deliberative process, further agitation would ensue. The insurrection of June 1848, its violent suppression, and the ascension of Louis Napoleon through plebiscite—all of which Mill disapproved—vividly underscored this threat.

---

[132] Mill, "Letter to William Tait," (1844) in *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume XIII—Earlier Letters, 1812-1848*, ed. Francis E. Mineka (Toronto: University of Toronto Press; Routledge & Kegan Paul), 643-644. Hereafter CW XIII.

[133] Mill, "The Claims of Labour," (1845) in CW IV, 383.

[134] Mill, "Vindication of the French Revolution of February 1848," (1849) in *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill Volume XX—Essays on French History and Historians*, ed. J.M. Robson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press; Routledge & Kegan Paul), 320. Hereafter CW XX.

[135] Ibid, 352-353.

Mill argued that the June insurrection arose not from any "inherent tendency in the principles or teaching of the Socialist chiefs," but rather from the "suddenness and unexpectedness of the Revolution of February."[136] This event "brought socialist opinions into a position of apparent power, before the minds of the community generally were prepared," and in June, "discussion and explanation had nearly all their work to do." [137] Resting on fragile foundations, the provisional government failed to consolidate institutions that could reorient workers around conventions of accountability. Britain, by contrast, possessed parliamentary traditions and a stable, if evolving constitution. 1832 had provided an incomplete but workable foundation.

To be sure, Mill saw significant obstacles to working class advancement. His *Political Economy* underwent numerous revisions throughout the 1850s and 1860s, reflecting an evolving political outlook. One constant, however, was a Malthusianism that viewed population control as essential to any progress on working class suffrage.[138] Mill outlined a sobering scenario in which surpluses were absorbed and poor relief engrossed national income: "the payers and receivers would be melted down into one mass…everything which places mankind above a nest of ants or a colony of beavers, having perished in the interval."[139] Mill lamented those elites who treated Malthus with "sentimental horror," both employers keen to enjoy cheap labor, and gentry who insisted that "God has decreed there shall be poor people."[140] Mill praised the original Poor Law

---

[136] Ibid, 353.
[137] Ibid, 353-354.
[138] On Mill's Malthusianism see, for example, Linda Zerilli, *Signifying Woman: Culture and Chaos in Machiavelli, Burke, and Mill* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 95-109.
[139] Mill, "Principles of Political Economy," (1848-1871) in *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill Volume II—Principles of Political Economy, with Some of Their Applications to Social Philosophy, Books I-II,* ed. J.M. Robson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), 358. Hereafter CW II.
[140] Ibid, 370.

commissioners for grasping the need for proper restraints. The commissioners "fully proved the compatibility of any Poor Law, in which a right to relief was recognized, with the permanent interests of the laboring class." They did so by showing how support could be combined with "conditions which they [laborers] disliked, consisting of some restraints on their freedom, and the privation of some indulgences."[141]

Mill likewise worried that a politically ascendant working class would impose class legislation, "government intended for (whether really effecting it or not) the immediate benefit of the dominant class, to the lasting detriment of the whole."[142] For democracies are also susceptible to the "sinister interest" of those numerically powerful classes who achieve their ascendency "under pretense of equal justice…"[143] Democracies which disenfranchise minorities are akin to oligarchies, Mill insinuated; both function as a "government of inequality and privilege."[144]

Mill's well-known flirtation with plural voting, the Hare Plan of proportional representation, and public balloting took hold in this context. Yet Mill fully recognized that even under the Hare Plan, the representatives of the majority would "indeed outnumber the others."[145] Mill understood that the ascending majority must be checked by the "good sense, moderation, and forbearance" of the workers themselves.[146]

---

[141] Ibid, 359-360 at 360.

[142] Mill, *Considerations*, 299.

[143] Ibid, 299 and 317. Mill suggests that England's working classes do not presently harbor such an intention (i.e. replacing class ascendency by the rich with class ascendancy by the poor). He acknowledges, however, that "opportunity and demagogic artifices" may ignite such intentions at 317-318.

[144] Ibid, 303-304 at 303.

[145] Ibid, 314.

[146] Ibid, 326.

6

By the mid-1860s, as constitutional reform reemerged, Mill undertook a brief but memorable career as MP in William Gladstone's liberal coalition.[147] Competing against a well-financed Tory to represent the prestigious Westminster constituency, Mill's electoral speeches railed against a broken campaign finance system.[148] Without drastic reform, Britain would morph into a "Venetian Constitution, and that in a very bad form."[149] Mill decried the "plutocratic" evils of those seeking the political power which "wealth alone has not yet given them…"[150]

Candidate Mill met frequently with disenfranchised workers to press his critique of plutocracy. Attendees had good cause to "know my opinions and have an opportunity of judging for [themselves]…whatever you think right to ask concerning my political opinions, it is my duty to tell you."[151] The term "working class" is objectionable in principle, Mill was reported to have proclaimed; for it "implied the existence of non-working classes, and nobody in this country had any business to be idle."[152]

---

[147] On Mill's parliamentary career, see Bruce Kinzer, Ann P. Robson and John M. Robson, *A Moralist in and Out of Parliament*: *John Stuart Mill at Westminister 1865-1868* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

[148] On Mill's critique of electoral corruption see William Selinger, "Fighting Electoral Corruption in the Victorian Age: An Overlooked Dimension of John Stuart Mill's Political Thought," *European Journal of Political Theory* (Published online Sept. 7, 2016; forthcoming in print).

[149] Mill, "Corruption at Elections," in *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill Volume XXVIII—Public and Parliamentary Speeches*, eds. J.M. Robson and Bruce L. Kinzer (Toronto: University of Toronto Press; Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1988), 10-11. Hereafter CW XXVIII.

[150] Ibid, 10.

[151] Mill, "The Westminster Election of 1865 [2]," in CW XXVIII, 21.

[152] Ibid, 28.

While insisting that no person "competent to manage his own affairs" should lack voice, Mill reiterated that workers had no inherent claim to "outvote everybody else."[153] As in 1839, Mill recognized that a premature push for universal suffrage would jeopardize his standing with middle class electors. Nonetheless, he praised those laborers, such as the Lancashire cotton workers, whose access to newspapers allowed them to grasp the causes of their economic suffering during the American Civil War.[154] Conversely, Mill painted the aristocracy's pro-Confederacy sentiment as symptomatic of sinister interest, with their sense of privilege inhibiting serious reflection on "what a dreadful thing slavery really is."[155] In repudiating these pro-slavery apologists, Mill drew heavily upon political economist J.E. Cairnes, whose work "The Slave Power" depicted a plantation society embodying "the distinctive vices of an oligarchy" (in Cairne's words).[156] In Mill's view, pro-slaveholder sentiments only reinforced "how far men could be carried away by their bias,"[157] and why rich MPs could not be trusted to look after the interests of workers.

Mill's argument for working class participation thus included a strong epistemic dimension.[158] Workers' epistemic authority encompassed both axioms of "common sense and common observation," and more specialized knowledge on subjects like trade unionization.[159] Privileged classes could rarely comprehend "what a working man has in his mind," Mill argued,

[153] Ibid, 29-30.
[154] Ibid, 31.
[155] Mill, "Westminster Election of 1865 [4]" in CW XXVIII, 32-33.
[156] Mill, "The Slave Power," [1862] in CW XXI, 143-165; see also, Mill, "The Negro Question," [1850] in CW XXI, 85-87, 95.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid, 64-65.
[159] Ibid.

"because they do not know what is in his mind."[160] Let reasonableness prevail, and if workers "do not obtain what they desire, they will as readily acquiesce in defeat, or trust to the mere progress of reason for reversing the verdict, as any other portion of the community."[161]

Ultimately, Mill believed that constituent meetings, the very forum in which competent elites were supposed to account for *their* character, could also be used to account for the character of the constituents themselves. At precisely those moments when Mill appeared in front of working men as an accountable political actor, he sought to persuade them that the conventions of accountability were suited to the character and collective development of their class. Mill often spoke of working class "purity." Workers had yet to be corrupted by upper class feelings of entitlement, or the middle class hegemony over popular culture.[162] Such purity provided Mill an expansive space to mold political subjectivity. And yet the consequence of this molding was to bring workers closer to political maturity.

7

Mill was enthusiastically elected by the constituents of Westminster. "This is the first time since 1832," Mill observed, "that a Government has pledged itself to stand or fall by a

---

[160] Ibid.

[161] Ibid.

[162] Mill, "Letter to David Urquhart, Oct 26, 1866" in *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume XVI, The Later Letters of John Stuart Mill Part III, 1849-1873,* eds. Francis E. Meneka and Dwight N. Lindley (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), Letter 1003. Hereafter CW XVI. On Mill's idea of character see Janice Carlisle, *John Stuart Mill and the Writing of Character* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1991). On Mill's encounter with working class character during his tenure as MP see Janice Carlisle, "Mr. J. Stuart Mill, M.P., and the Character of the Working Classes," in *Mill and the Moral Character of Liberalism,* ed. Eldon J. Eisenach (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 143-168; see also C.L. Ten, "Democracy, Socialism, and the Working Classes," in *The Cambridge Companion to Mill,* ed. John Skorupski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 372-395.

Reform Bill."[163] Nonetheless, Gladstone's reform effort was stalled in June 1866 with continued conservative opposition. In this tense climate, the Reform League, a prominent post-Chartist organization, announced intentions to stage a mass public meeting in Hyde Park.[164] At 6:00 p.m. on July 23, Reform Leaguers arrived at the park and were confronted by locked gates and a police barricade. Some protestors broke the barricades and descended on the park. Mill later recalled a scuffle in which "many innocent persons were maltreated by the police."[165] In parliamentary discussion on July 24, he criticized the Home Secretary's crackdown.

Claiming right of free assembly, the League was set to defy their restraining order with a July 31 meeting. As Mill recalled, the protestors "shewed a determination to make another attempt at the meeting in the Park, to which many of them would probably have come armed."[166] Disturbed, Mill attended a July 26 conference of Leaguers and persuaded them to move the protest to a nearby agricultural hall. For a violent stand in Hyde Park was only justified "if the position of affairs had become such that a revolution was desirable….to this argument after considerable discussion, they at last yielded."[167]

When the group reconvened at the agricultural hall, Mill accepted an invitation to address the League:

> Ladies and gentleman, this vast meeting is a sufficient guarantee that the cause of reform will suffer nothing by your having determined to hold your meeting here instead of repeating the attempt to hold it in the park….You have been very much attacked for

[163] Mill, "Representation of the People [1]," (1866) in CW XXVIII, 57.
[164] For literature on the Reform League see John Breuilly, Gottfried Niedhart and Antony Taylor eds., *The Era of the Reform League*: *English Labour and Radical Politics 1857-1872* (Mannheim: Palatium Verlag, 1995); McClelland, "England's Greatness, the Working Man," 71-118.
[165] Mill, *Autobiography of John Stuart Mill* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1924), 203.
[166] Ibid.
[167] Ibid, 204.

> holding such large meetings, on the ground that they are inconsistent with discussion. But discussion is not the only use of public meetings. One of the objects of such gatherings is demonstration. You want to make a display of your strength, and I tell you that the countries where the people are allowed to show their strength are those in which they are not obliged to use it.[168]

This episode figured prominently in Mill's autobiography. "No other person," Mill insisted, "had at that moment the necessary influence for restraining the working classes."[169] Mill's intervention, though overstated, underscored his belief that structural circumstances did not justify revolution.

Five months after Hyde Park, Mill read accounts of an angry Reform League meeting, in which a general strike was entertained. In a letter to William Randal Cremer, a key trade union leader, Mill criticized the meeting's "direct appeal to revolutionary expedients" and the readiness among some attendees to "proceed at once to a trial of physical force if any opposition is made" to their demands.[170] Mill emphasized again that Britain's parliament system provided for the "redress of grievances to be sought by peaceable and legal means."

With the 1867 Reform Act, suffrage expansion finally arrived at the hands of Benjamin Disraeli's conservative coalition.[171] With Disraeli aggressively advocating for working class support, Mill urgently sought reelection in 1868. "We are assembled here under new

---

[168] Mill, "Reform Meeting in Hyde Park," [4] in CW XXVIII, 103-104.

[169] Mill, *Autobiography*, 205. With the exception of "Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Bright," Mill argued, "none of whom was available." See *Autobiography,* 205.

[170] Mill, "Letter to William Randal Cremer, March 1, 1867" in *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume XVI, The Later Letters of John Stuart Mill Part III, 1849-1873,* eds. Francis E. Meneka and Dwight N. Lindley (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), Letter 1049.

[171] On the Reform Act of 1867 see F.B. Smith, *The Making of the Second Reform Bill* (Cambridge University Press, 1966); Gertrude Himmelfarb, "Politics and Ideology: The Reform Act of 1867," in Himmelfarb, *Victorian Minds* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968).

circumstances," he announced to his Westminster constituency. The moment now required positive agendas for a "state of society which never existed in the world before."[172] Now more than ever, the plight of laborers must be carefully scrutinized by those "organising and contriving minds" who understand the art of governance.[173] Electors had a "peculiar obligation" to find "the very best men," for the "course of history for a whole generation may depend on it."[174] Most everybody at these meetings should now be an elector, Mill quipped.[175] Having finally achieved a Reform Bill, would the working classes "have as the fruits of that Reform Bill a Tory Administration?"[176] Observers throughout Europe and America have their "eyes on this country at this moment. They want to see whether the masses of this country who have received the franchise are worthy of it or not," whether working men "have got opinions of their own," and will elect men competent enough to deliberate about their just grievances.[177]

Yet Mill was defeated, along with numerous other liberal candidates.[178] Leaving office, Mill continued aggressive outreach, arguing for greater worker voice in the selection of liberal candidates.[179] And with his *Chapters on Socialism*, Mill returned to questions of political economy.[180] Skeptical of communism for endangering liberty and spontaneity, Mill was more complimentary of Owenism and Fourierism, a continuation of themes first developed in his

[172] Mill, "The Westminster Election of 1868 [1]," in CW XXVIII, 320-321.
[173] Ibid, 323.
[174] Ibid.
[175] Mill, "The Westminster Election of 1868 [3]," in CW XXVIII, 335.
[176] Ibid, 336.
[177] Ibid, 339.
[178] See background in Kinzer et al., *A Moralist in and Out of Parliament*.
[179] Mill, "Letter to Edward Lyulph Stanley, January 7, 1869" in CW XVI, Letter 1374A.
[180] John Stuart Mill, *On Socialism,* ed. Lewis S. Feur (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1976).

Political Economy.[181] There, Mill had argued that the proper relationship between exertion and reward was collapsing under unequal conditions,[182] and he criticized the public's overly sentimental view of unearned inherited wealth.[183] To clamp down on tax evasion, the "unscrupulous use of riches" to evade the law,[184] Mill advocated enhanced financial disclosure laws and other transparency measures.[185] Likewise, he argued that landowners were morally obligated to use their holdings productively. He assailed Dukes who maintained vast private tracts of uncultivated Highland scenery and frequently invoked Ireland as a textbook case of unproductive land stewardship.[186]

In this non-ideal context, Mill conceded that "the working classes are entitled to claim that the whole field of social institutions should be reexamined, and every question considered as if it now arose for the first time."[187] Yet the challenge was that "the great increase of electoral power which the Act places within the reach of the working classes is permanent," while the "circumstances which have caused them, thus far, to make a very limited use of that power, are

---

[181] On Mill and socialism see Bruce Baum, "J.S. Mill and Liberal Socialism," in *J.S. Mill's Political Thought*, eds. Urbinati and Zakaras, 98-123; John Medearis, "Labor, Democracy, Utility, and Mill's Critique of Private Property," *American Journal of Political Science* 49, no. 1 (2005): 135-49; Richard Ashcraft, "John Stuart Mill and the Theoretical Foundations of Democratic Socialism," in Eldon J. Eisenach ed. *Mill and the Moral Character of Liberalism* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998).
[182] Mill, "Principles of Political Economy," in CW II, 208.
[183] Ibid, 218-226.
[184] Mill, "Principles of Political Economy," in *The Collected Works of J.S. Mill Volume III—Principles of Political Economy, with Some of Their Applications to Social Philosophy, Books III-IV and Appendices*, ed. J.M. Robson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), 886. Hereafter CW III.
[185] Ibid, 831.
[186] Mill, "Principles of Political Economy," in CW II, 230-232.
[187] Ibid, 64.

essentially temporary."[188] Working men would soon engage in actions "instrumental to the promotion of their collective objects."[189] They would act not in the "disorderly and ineffective way" of those unfamiliar with the "legal and constitutional machinery," nor would they act rashly, through the mere "instinct towards leveling."[190] Rather, the instruments will be "the press, public meetings and associations, and the return to Parliament of the greatest number of persons pledged to the political aims of the working classes."[191] For politics was now "scientifically studied from the point of view of the working classes."[192]

This was precisely the sort of instrumentally rational behavior Mill supported. But Mill worried that such action threatened to explode the social and economic fabric. In response, Mill reaffirmed his longstanding support for workplace cooperatives, associations "of the laborers themselves on terms of equality, collectively owning the capital with which they carry on their operations, and working under managers elected and removable by themselves."[193] By defusing capital labor-tensions and replicating, at a micro level, the stabilizing conventions of democratic accountability, Mill saw cooperative production as well-suited to the struggle against sinister interest.

Ultimately, in the closing years of his life, Mill continued to believe that if oligarchs were defeated and workers were incorporated into the political process and organized into cooperatives, the corrupting effects of sinister interest could be contained, though never

[188] Mill, *On Socialism*, 57.
[189] Ibid, 58.
[190] Ibid, 58.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Ibid.
[193] Mill, "Principles of Political Economy," in CW III, 775.

eliminated. Mill's utilitarian public philosophy culminated in an ambitious vision of democratic progress.

Conclusion

Contemporary democratic theorists can learn much from the political struggles of Jeremy Bentham and J.S. Mill. Bentham developed a vocabulary for exposing the perverse institutional practices which permeate government and society. Mill went further in connecting the critique of "sinister interest" to the fight for working class incorporation. To be sure, the legacy of nineteenth-century utilitarianism cannot be embraced uncritically, given the prevalence of so-called "government-house" utilitarianism; utilitarian complicity in imperial rule. There is, for example, a troubling sense in which J.S. Mill's estimation of British working class "progress" remained parasitic on his estimation of colonial "backwardness," and his insistence on holding corrupt colonial administrators accountable often served to deflect a more systematic critique of the imperial project.[194] Bentham was far less willing to base justifications for representative government on ideas of national 'character,' or arguments about social and civilizational development, and on this score Bentham remains a far better model for contemporary democratic theorists.[195]

Moreover, Mill's insistence on setting the horizon of workers' acceptable political conduct—arbitrating the grounds of rational speech and debate—underscores that his investment in working class issues was also about tutelage. This tutelage came to the fore during the Hyde

[194] On this point see Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2005), 150-160.
[195] Ibid, 103-122.

Park protests, where Mill would simultaneously defend workers' right to public assembly while imploring workers to express their grievances rationally and deliberatively.

Nonetheless, the forcefulness of Mill's social criticism cannot be minimized. Mill recognized that workers have distinct, *class-based* vulnerabilities to what I call "oligarchic harm." He believed that—as in Rome—the people are entitled to allies, or "tribunes," who can fight on their behalf and mediate between the orders. Mill styled himself as just such a "tribune;" one capable of sympathizing with workers, but also remonstrating with them; one fiercely protective of their "legitimate" claims, but willing to draw boundaries around those claims. Mill sought to frame workers' struggles within a larger narrative of social progress, to grasp the fine balance between social forces, and to translate these insights into a responsible political strategy. Mill's critique of oligarchy reflected the broader social consciousness that saw him viciously contest Britain's pro-slavery apologists, while exposing the "latent germs of selfishness" that man's dominion over women brings out.[196] Ultimately, Mill saw "love of gain, unmixed and undisguised,"[197] as a common thread linking oligarchy to slaveholding to male domination, a triad that captures the expansiveness of his critical project.

Democratic theorists can adopt the language of "sinister interest," I think, without committing, full-on, to a thick utilitarian ethics. To be sure, there is no necessary connection between utilitarianism and democracy. However, Jonathan Riley pointedly criticizes those who would combine "faith in democracy with strident anti-utilitarianism."[198] As Riley contends,

---

[196] Mill, "The Subjection of Women," in *On Liberty and Other Essays,* ed. John Gray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 510.
[197] Ibid, 480.
[198] Jonathan Riley, "Utilitarian Ethics and Democratic Government," *Ethics* 100 (Jan. 1990): 335-348 at 337.

democratic egalitarian norms are more likely to produce outcomes that satisfy utilitarian goals because they respond to the core utilitarian premise that everyone's interests are worthy of equal consideration. Moreover, as Bentham first argued, diminishing marginal returns to wealth justify an egalitarian distribution of goods.[199] In this regard, as Robert Goodin notes, most basic welfare interests can be standardized across recurring situations. Thus, rather than seeking to maximize utility "at the margins," a utilitarian public philosophy can proactively support those institutions and social rules which are publically accessible, and responsive to the recurring welfare interests of democratic citizens.[200] In so doing, it can help articulate the social rules necessary to regulate and constrain oligarchic power. Such rules may include campaign finance reforms and spending limits; transparency mechanisms such as asset disclosure requirements; financial and legal reforms which regulate the activities of the "income defense industry;" and other regulatory measures which help democratic publics identify and correct perverse institutional practices of the sort Bentham and Mill identified. This project is fully consistent with the legacy of nineteenth-century utilitarianism; but it does not, in my view, require any kind of comprehensive commitment to utilitarian ethics.

Both Bentham and Mill feared that oligarchic power would prevent ordinary people from achieving what was justly theirs; the problems they identified, if not always their solutions, should continue to be our guide.

[199] On this point see Rosen, *Jeremy Bentham and Representative Democracy,* 214.
[200] Goodin, *Utilitarianism as a Public Philosophy,* 22.

Chapter Four

The Oligarchic Challenge in Cold War America: Louis Hartz and C. Wright Mills

In 2004, Thomas Frank's much-publicized book *What's the Matter with Kansas* brought a provocative question to national attention: why has middle America, once a bastion of agrarian radicalism and the progressivism of Eugene Debs and Robert M. La Follete, drifted into the hands of a Republican party whose policy priorities seem more aligned with the Wichita-based Koch brothers than with the ordinary Kansan? Frank argued that the rise of cultural wedge issues (abortion, gay marriage, immigration) had crowded out earlier traditions of economically oriented prairie radicalism, with many working-class Kansans voting against their economic interests.[1]

What's the Matter with Kansas was only the latest volley in a longstanding debate about class politics in America, a debate fixated on the absence of socialism in America, or as one book bluntly put the problem, "it didn't happen here."[2] From the perspective of oligarchic theory, the American case presents the paradox of an egalitarian national creed that coexists alongside massive substantive inequalities; a society which repudiated European feudal hierarchies even as it re-inscribed severe racial hierarchies; a society which has long celebrated localism and the yeoman small-proprietor, even as it spawned the most monopolistic Robber Baron industrialists and the most elaborate modes of Fordist mass production. The critique of oligarchy in America might begin by heeding Alexis de Tocqueville's warning about the dangers

[1] Thomas Frank, *What's the Matter with Kansas*: *How Conservatives Won the Heart of America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2004).
[2] Seymour Martin Lipset and Gary Wolf Marks, *It Didn't Happen Here*: *Why Socialism Failed in the United States* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000).

of "industrial aristocracy;" the possibility that American democracy might unleash new forms of oligarchic power that are more difficult to contain precisely because they are more novel.[3] One could heed the warnings of Progressive intellectuals, activists, and politicians who grappled with the dark underbelly of American capitalism and urban life in the early twentieth century: from Upton Sinclair to Jane Adams, Eugene Debs to Teddy Roosevelt, Charles Beard to Herbert Croly, John Dewey to Louis Brandeis. One could heed critics of American racial hierarchy like W.E.B DuBois, Ralph Ellison, and Martin Luther King; figures who exposed the deep nexus between economic power and racial injustice.

In this chapter, however, I focus on two thinkers who, in distinctive ways, tried to understand the sheer messiness of the American experience at midcentury: Louis Hartz and C. Wright Mills. Both men hailed from the country's midsection—Hartz from Kansas and Mills from Texas—before ascending to the pinnacle of American academia at Harvard (Hartz) and Columbia (Mills). Both men were iconoclasts, critical of prevailing scholarly conventions, conventions which they regarded as complacent. Both men were misunderstood in their own time, and continue to exert a complex legacy today.

Mills' seminal work, *The Power Elite,* fixated on the "command posts" of postwar American society: a triangle of interlocking corporate, military, and governmental institutions. [4] Jeffrey Winters has criticized the tendency of twentieth-century social scientists to conflate oligarchic power with organizational power, a tendency he traced to Mills but especially to Robert Michels, whose "iron law of oligarchy" found oligarchical tendencies in all large

[3] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 530-532.
[4] C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956).

organizational structures.[5] I share the view that oligarchy must be conceptually distinguished from organizational power *as such.* Nonetheless, Mills' sociological analysis of an organizationally situated "power elite" proves quite illuminating: not only because wealthy individuals often have incentives to vest their resources in complex organizational forms, but also because organizational networks often provide fertile opportunities for oligarchic entrenchment, new efforts by oligarchic elites to proactively secure their power position. These trends are as true today as they were in Mills' day.

Several years before Mills came to scholarly prominence, Louis Hartz offered up a far-reaching set of reflections on the ideological and historical forces which condition American life, forces which bear directly on the problem of oligarchy in America.[6] In his most famous work, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (1955), Hartz insisted that two centuries of liberal dominance had left Americans in a state of blindness, robbed of alternative perspectives that could awaken them to what was valuable, but also condemnable, within their liberal experience.[7] Hartz attributed the triumph of liberal ideology to two factors: first, Americans' non-feudal birth, that is, their experience of being "born equal" without the need for social revolution; second, America's descent into an "irrational Lockianism," a submerged Lockean consensus that

[5] Winters, *Oligarchy*, 2, 31-32, 275; Robert Michels, *Political Parties*: *A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1949 [1911]).

[6] I concede, of course, that Hartz never fully connected those dots in his own work.

[7] Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1955). Portions of my Hartz reading first appeared as Arlen, "Cold War Prophecy and the Burdens of Comparative Thought: A Case for Revisiting Louis Hartz." *Polity* 49, no. 4 (2017): 548-574.

cemented the "fixed, dogmatic liberalism" of the "American Way of Life."[8] Thus, unlike the mainstream social scientists of their day, both Mills and Hartz refused to attribute to America a happy pluralist landscape marked by benign agreement over basic values. Aspects of their work resembled the critiques of Frankfurt School émigrés like Herbert Marcuse, who traveled to America and encountered a "one-dimensional" society.[9] However, as native sons, neither of these authors could retreat to the foreigner's perspective; each felt burdened to find solutions to their country's troubles. Together, then, they elaborated a set of critical perspectives on American life which were centered in the early Cold War context, but which continue to hold force in a contemporary climate that displays certain structural similarities to the Cold War period. I begin with some background context before turning to Hartz and Mills.

1

The "socialism in America" question first evolved from a longstanding debate among Marxist intellectuals, who wondered why an intensely capitalist society had not yet experienced a revolutionary anti-capitalist response.[10] From the perspective of academic historians like Eric Foner, the salient topic is less the absence of a communist revolution then the question of why American workers never gravitated to a social democratic party like Britain's Labor Party or France's Socialist Party.[11] Numerous factors have been noted from the early triumph of universal white male suffrage, to the geographic mobility afforded by Western frontiers, to the persistence

[8] Hartz, *Liberal Tradition,* 9–11. Hartz used "Lockianism" in place of the more conventional "Lockeanism."
[9] Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991 [1964]).
[10] Eric Foner, "Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?" *History Workshop* 17 (1984): 57-80 at 57. As Foner argues, "Marx and Engels could never quite answer such questions to their satisfaction," at 57-58.
[11] Ibid, 59.

of racial and ethnic cleavages.[12] Socialist organizing was inhibited, Foner argues, by the tendency of American populists to couch their critiques of monopoly within a republican ideal of small property.[13] Moreover, as Seymour Martin Lipset and Gary Marks emphasize, American workers (unlike their European counterparts) were not unified by a mass suffrage movement at the onset of industrialization.[14] The two-party biases of the American electoral system, along with the Socialist Party's own strategic blunders, including its unpopular opposition to World War I, also inhibited movement-building. American socialists were in fact *more* ideologically militant than many of their Western European counterparts, and this extremism prevented socialists from leveraging the crises-ridden 1930s to forge policy alliances with the political mainstream.[15]

Especially noteworthy was the failure to cultivate a union base, a failure which left the Socialist Party "a minnow in an age of whales."[16] As Lipset and Marks argue, American unions differed from their European counterparts in developing outside the confines of an exclusively "working-class" political party.[17] Whereas European laborers saw home-life as an extension of their class-identity, American laborers, steeped in immigrant experiences, were sheltered in ethnically oriented "city-trenches," as Ira Katznelson refers to them. These trenches centered on

---

[12] On the Western frontier as a safety-valve for diffusing class conflict, see Frederick Jackson Turner's classic *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920).
[13] Foner, "Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?" 63.
[14] Lipset and Marks, *It Didn't Happen Here,* 34-35. As the authors point out, however, the Australian case indicates that labor parties can gain momentum even in an environment characterized by early suffrage. See Lipset and Marks, 268.
[15] Ibid, 231-232. Socialists were thus more marginalized than even the American Communist Party which, for a short period during the late 1930s, participated in a popular front government and supported the New Deal coalition. See Lipset and Marks, 230-231.
[16] Ibid, 109.
[17] Ibid, 85-124.

a strong functional differentiation between work-life and home-life. This segmentation impaired class-based solidarities.[18] Only in German immigrant bastions like Milwaukee did the American Socialist Party came close to functioning as a European-style social democratic civic movement.

To be sure, American labor history is a history of industrial agitation; the nation has historically ranked near the top among industrial democracies in the number of militant strikes.[19] The forces that inhibited socialist organizing in America did not, in other words, inhibit all forms of working-class radicalism. David Greenstone has written of a "working-class interlude" in American history, a period from the Great Depression to the Second World War when working-class consciousness was at its apex.[20] During this period, the AFL and CIO forged powerful linkages inside the Democratic Party, as organized labor focused on mobilizing the entire Democratic coalition,[21] a big-tent orientation underscored by the nearly half-million African-Americans who eventually joined CIO affiliates.[22] The magnitude of these interparty linkages is obscured, Greenstone argues, by pluralist accounts which tend to treat labor unions as only one among several competing interest groups. Union influence climaxed with the 1935 Wagner Act, which secured collective bargaining rights, and with industrial actions like the 1937 strike in Flint, Michigan, where workers successfully halted operations at a GM plant.[23]

---

[18] Ira Katznelson, *City Trenches*: *Urban Politics and the Patterning of Class in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).
[19] Lipset and Marks, *It Didn't Happen Here*, 131.
[20] J. David Greenstone, *Labor in American Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 70-71.
[21] Ibid, 15-17.
[22] Marc Stears, *Demanding Democracy*: *American Radicals in Search of a New Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 112.
[23] Greenstone, *Labor in American Politics,* 43-46.

This "working-class interlude" was threatened, however, by ongoing racial polarization of the sort documented by Katznelson, who argues that New Deal programs took hold in a period when "affirmative action was white."[24] Social Security benefits were initially withheld from agricultural and domestic laborers, such that 65% of African-Americans were denied benefits.[25] These exclusionary measures were spearheaded by Southern Democrats who saw the New Deal's pro-labor agenda as fully compatible with racial hierarchy. However, as unions began infiltrating the South through campaigns like the CIO's "Operation Dixie,' Southern Democrats shifted to an anti-union posture, painting union leaders as communist sympathizers bent on recruiting Negroes.[26] Having earlier endorsed the Wagner Act, Southern Democrats later swung to support the Taft-Hartley Act (1947), which placed significant restrictions on collective action.[27] In effect, labor legislation had become a "referenda about the durability of Jim Crow."[28] Ultimately, unions receded from their Southern organizing efforts, a move that presaged the broader decline of union power during the second half of the century.

Nonetheless, the twentieth-century American radical tradition stretched well beyond organized labor, back to the prewar Progressives and forward to the Civil Rights activists and student radicals of the 1960s. Their differences notwithstanding, all of these activists resisted entrenched concentrations of economic power, a position which sometimes led them to support localism and "direct" democracy, but which also prompted influential Progressives like Herbert

[24] Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White*: *An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005).
[25] Ibid, 43.
[26] Ibid, 73.
[27] Ibid, 63-67.
[28] Ibid, 67.

Croly and Walter Lippmann to argue for national-level reform, a so-called "New Nationalism."[29] Thinkers like John Dewey and Louis Brandeis highlighted the tensions between democratic ideals and industrial practices. Civil Rights activists went further, exposing the gaps between American liberal values and racialized power structures, and engaging in militant forms of non-violent protest.

Indeed, as Mark Stears argues, many American radicals were democratic realists who endorsed militant tactics even as they refrained from overt revolution.[30] New Left movements like Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) functioned as the "last iteration" of this tradition, embracing participatory democracy as "both an idealized object and a practiced democratic form."[31] SDS activists resisted any co-optation into established institutional channels, including a trade union movement which SDS leader Tom Hayden considered overly "mainstream."[32] In retrospect, Hayden acknowledged that SDS's ethos of participatory democracy sometimes inhibited movement-building efforts.[33] Nonetheless, Hayden's *Port Huron Statement* was a high-point of American radicalism, with its fierce critique of concentrated wealth, and its recognition that unaccountable private economic actors wielded profound influence over ordinary citizens' lives. Hayden's critique stemmed from a frustration that existing labor unions and public

[29] A position advanced in publications like the *New Republic.* See Stears, *Demanding Democracy*, 26-27.
[30] Ibid, 13.
[31] Ibid, p. 176.
[32] Tom Hayden, *The Port Huron Statement*: *The Visionary Call of the 1960s Revolution* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2005 [1962]), 84.
[33] Ibid, 26 (from the preface).

institutions had failed to corral a corporate and military "oligopoly" which was defying "real initiative or popular control."[34]

New Left intellectuals thus saw themselves departing from an earlier generation of "Cold War liberals" who were regarded as overly complacent; too hysterically anti-communist, and too willing to accommodate the Cold War's military-industrial apparatus. As historians stress, the Cold War epoch had social, cultural, and political contours that stretched well beyond the narrow confines of great power diplomacy.[35] By throwing geopolitical realities into sharp relief, the Cold War placed special burdens on contemporary American social scientists. Originally deployed by Walter Lippmann to describe the onset of suspended animation, a kind of global stasis, the term "Cold War" soon conjured to many a Manichean struggle against an implacable enemy, communism. [36] "Few conflicts have been as intrinsically ideological," as the historian Andrew Preston argues.[37] The Cold War thus saw the rise of an activist social science that tasked itself with projecting American ideals abroad. Influential modernization theorists advocated a new policy science marked by tight interconnections between academia and government.[38] Positioning themselves as indispensable "mandarins of the future," they offered up the most

---

[34] Ibid, 72, 138-139.

[35] On the Cold War as an object of periodization, see Joel Isaac and Duncan Bell, "Introduction," in *Uncertain Empire: American History and the Idea of the Cold War*, ed. Joel Isaac and Duncan Bell (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2012), 3–16. See also Anders Stephanson, "Cold War Degree Zero," in *Uncertain Empire*, ed. Isaac and Bell, 19–49.

[36] Stephanson, "Cold War Degree Zero," 26-35.

[37] Andrew Preston, "The Spirit of Democracy: Religious Liberty and American Anti-Communism During the Cold War," in *Uncertain Empire*, ed. Isaac and Bell, 141–63 at 142.

[38] These initiatives were spearheaded by empirical political scientists such as Harold Lasswell. See Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future*: *Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 155–65; Michael E. Latham, *The Right Kind of Revolution* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2011), 44–64.

"systematic blueprint ever created by Americans for reshaping foreign societies."[39] Scarred by the tumultuous experience of fascism and total war, pluralists like David Truman, Charles Lindblom, and Robert Dahl sought the sources of stability that were upholding liberal institutions at home.[40] Other liberal thinkers probed deeper into the moral and ontological foundations of a free society.

Amid these intersecting intellectual strands, what, then, is "Cold War liberalism?" As Duncan Bell and John Gunnell have argued, the idea of liberalism is itself rather capacious, with a complex history in the Anglo-American academy. Prior to the 1930s, the term "liberal democracy" was barely visible, and accounts of Locke as a liberal thinker were generally absent.[41] By mid-century, however, under the influence of elite theorists such as Joseph Schumpeter, political scientists increasingly embraced liberalism as an alternative to mass democracy.[42] At the same time, émigré critics like Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin assailed liberalism for succumbing to relativism.[43] The defense of liberalism against totalitarianism was undertaken by a range of thinkers: in Europe, by Isaiah Berlin, Raymond Aron, and Karl Popper; in America, Sidney Hook, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Arthur Schlesinger Jr.

---

[39] Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future*, 5.

[40] They collaborated through venues like the Seminar on the State at Columbia University. For a sympathetic history see Ira Katznelson, *Desolation and Enlightenment: Political Knowledge after Total War, Totalitarianism, and the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

[41] Duncan Bell, "What is Liberalism," *Political Theory* 42 (2014): 682–715; John Gunnell, *The Descent of Political Theory*: *The Genealogy of an American Vocation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 126–45.

[42] Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (New York: Harper and Bros, 1947 [1942]).

[43] On the émigrés see Gunnell, *The Descent of Political Theory*, 175–98.

Today, Cold War liberalism is primarily regarded as a negative "liberalism of fear,"[44] lacking both the systematic rigor and the egalitarian social priorities of Rawlsian liberalism. Nonetheless, as Jan Werner-Müller insists, Cold War liberals did retain core commitments: a conception of the limits of political knowledge and a conception of political action attuned to those limits; a devotion to the anti-Marxist war of ideas, combined with a value pluralism that sometimes produced existential angst; a Weberian ethics of responsibility that entrusted liberal society to elite management; and finally, a visceral sense of the psychological value of security in a free society.[45] For Werner-Müller, Cold War liberalism thus entailed more a set of attitudes and dispositions than a comprehensive legal or institutional theory.[46]

Consider the Harvard historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr: perhaps *the* quintessential establishment Cold War liberal. An advisor, speechwriter, and later court historian to President Kennedy, Schlesinger's political activism began young. In 1947 he co-founded, with Eleanor Roosevelt, John Kenneth Galbraith, Reinhold Niebuhr, and others, Americans for Democratic Action, a liberal anti-communist advocacy group. In his most philosophic work, *The Vital Center*, Schlesinger called for a "new and distinct political generation" to translate New Deal

[44] See Judith Shklar, "The Liberalism of Fear," in *Liberalism and the Moral Life*, ed. Nancy L. Rosenblum (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 21–37. For an insightful attempt to broaden Shklar's legacy beyond the liberalism of fear, see Katrina Forrester, "Hope and Memory in the Thought of Judith Shklar," *Modern Intellectual History* 8 (2011): 591–620.
[45] Jan Werner-Müller, "Fear and Freedom: On 'Cold War Liberalism,' " *European Journal of Political Theory* 7 (2008): 45–64. On totalitarianism as a novel political form, see Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965 [1956]). On the liberal confrontation with totalitarianism, see Katznelson, *Desolation and Enlightenmen*; and David Ciepley, *Liberalism in the Shadow of Totalitarianism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006).
[46] Werner-Müller, "Fear and Freedom," 59.

hope into Cold War victory.[47] Facing totalitarian threats, America must "rediscover the great tradition of liberalism," a "reasonable responsibility about politics" and "moderate pessimism about man," seen from Jacksonians to New Dealers, Hawthorne to Niebuhr.[48] "I am certain," Schlesinger said, "that history has equipped modern American liberalism with the ideas and the knowledge to construct a society where men will be both free and happy." But "whether we have the moral vigor to do the job depends on ourselves."[49]

To reinforce liberalism's ideological position, Schlesinger advocated a revitalized anti-communist Left that could overcome both an impotent progressivism and a bankrupt conservativism. Schlesinger envisioned a space where individuals could make a firm, masculine decision for liberalism, his eroticized language reflecting a climate where the "Red menace" was often attributed to failures of masculine vigor.[50] Schlesinger offered no assurance, however, that his fellow liberals were vigorous enough to command the center. Hence, he appealed to the broader arc of American history. Hope lay in the great tradition of American liberalism that had demonstrated vigor before, as when Andrew Jackson confronted the national bank.[51] Schlesinger's liberal faith was in large part a faith in his fathers.

What happens, though, if American history is no longer a beacon of hope? For Louis Hartz, the present moment required more than a muscular attempt to secure liberal ideology,

---

[47] Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *The Vital Center*: *The Politics of Freedom* (New Brunswick, NJ.: Transaction Publishers: 1998 [1949]), xix.
[48] Ibid, 165.
[49] Ibid, xxii.
[50] See K.A. Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War* (New York: Routledge, 2005).
[51] An argument developed most expansively in Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *The Age of Jackson* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1945).

because the problem remained internal to that ideology. Hartz saw the Cold War crisis exposing the epistemological deficits of national mythologies. "Not only have we been told that our history provides us with an 'American proposition' applicable to all countries East and West," Hartz observed, "but we have also been told that it is we, not the Russians, who are the most 'revolutionary' nation on earth. Nothing is farther from the truth and we may as well face the fact."[52] The proper question was "not whether our history has given us something to 'export' but whether it has given us the right thing. And this question has to be answered in the negative."[53]

These epistemological burdens, these concerns with the persistence of American blindness in a dangerous world, are what compelled Hartz's journey into the recesses of American history, to which I now turn.

2

"Can a people 'born equal' ever understand peoples elsewhere that have to become so? Can it ever understand itself?"[54] Hartz asked this probing question in his landmark work *The Liberal Tradition in America* (1955). The search for an answer took Hartz into the deepest recesses of American history, a history he associated with the spectacular triumph of liberal ideology. Today, Hartz is often dismissed as just another consensus historian, expounding Cold War conceits of American exceptionalism.[55] Moreover, Hartz's liberal society thesis has been

[52] Hartz, *Liberal Tradition*, 305–06.
[53] Ibid, 305.
[54] Ibid, 309.
[55] For noteworthy celebrations of "American exceptionalism" see Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Genius of American Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953); Seymour Martin-Lipset, *The First New Nation*: *The United States in Historical and Comparative Perspective* (New York: Basic Books, 1963).

vehemently challenged by republican historiographers, such as J.G.A. Pocock, who sought to replace Hartz's "Lockean monolith."[56] Although *Liberal Tradition* "influenced nearly every aspect of the study of American politics,"[57] Hartz's prestige among political scientists waned considerably after Rogers Smith's seminal call to go "beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz." Smith contests a Tocquevillian thesis that has emphasized egalitarian origins while overlooking America's ascriptive and hierarchical traditions.[58] Recent reappraisals of Hartz's legacy have so far failed to extricate him from his current place in a "nether world suspended somewhere between life and death."[59] James Kloppenberg echoes widespread sentiment: Hartz's "oracular"

---

[56] J.G.A. Pocock, "Between Gog and Magog: The Republican Thesis and the Ideologia Americana" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 48 (1987): 325–46, at 341. On the republican and "New Whig" historiography that emerged largely in response to Hartz, see J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975); Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967); Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776–1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998 [1969]). For spirited defenses of Hartz, see Catherine A. Holland, "Hartz and Minds: The *Liberal Tradition* after the Cold War," *Studies in American Political Development* 19 (2005): 227–33; Philip Abbott, "Still Louis Hartz after All These Years: A Defense of the Liberal Society Thesis," *Perspectives on Politics* 3 (2005): 93–109.

[57] Abbott, "Still Louis Hartz after All These Years," 93. For American political development scholarship influenced by Hartz, see J. David Greenstone, *The Lincoln Persuasion*: *Remaking American Liberalism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993); John P. Diggins, *The Lost Soul of American Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

[58] Rogers M. Smith, "Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions in America," *The American Political Science Review* 87 (1993): 549–66. For a trenchant critique of Hartz for marginalizing religion, race, and gender (among other omissions) see James T. Kloppenberg, "In Retrospect: Louis Hartz's *The Liberal Tradition in America*," *Reviews in American History* 29 (2001): 460–78; see also Carol Nackenoff, "Locke, Alger, and Atomistic Individualism Fifty Years Later: Revisiting Louis Hartz's *Liberal Tradition in America*," *Studies in American Political Development* 19 (2005): 206–15.

[59] See Mark Hulliung, "What's Living, What's Dead, in the Work of Louis Hartz," in *The American Liberal Tradition Reconsidered*: *The Contested Legacy of Louis Hartz,* ed. Mark

writing, based on allusions and epigrams, now feels stale.[60]

In my view, Hartz's detractors significantly underappreciate the full radicalism of his contribution as a "prophetic" critic of American life. Prophetic appeals to redemption from collective sin are a longstanding feature of American discourse. Unlike the biblically informed prophecies of civil rights activists such as Martin Luther King Jr., Hartz forewent scripture. I follow George Shulman, though, who stresses prophecy's *secular* possibilities as a genre of "living poetry" that is "open to reworking."[61] According to Shulman, prophets help articulate the shared struggles of a political community by bringing the "constitutive power of *the past*" to bear on present dilemmas.[62] Prophets are thus messengers who announce unwelcome truths and incite the community to self-reflection and acknowledgment, "mediating its relationship to the larger realities conditioning its existence and choices."[63] Hartz undertook a version of this prophetic form of mediation: alerting his countrymen to acute defects within their national experience, and showing how these defects inhibited Americans from understanding themselves and understanding their place within the world.

Thus, although Hartz was not a theorist of oligarchy in the classical Aristotelian sense, his work exposed the deeper pathologies to which any critique of oligarchy in America must attend. These pathologies, Hartz recognized, were not simply institutional but *perspectival.* From

---

Hulliung (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2010): 267–73, at 267. For a well-balanced assessment of Hartz's methods see Mark Hulliung, "Louis Hartz, His Day and Ours," in *American Liberal Tradition Reconsidered*, ed. Hulliung, 11–52.

[60] James T. Kloppenberg, "*Requiescat in Pacem*: The Liberal Tradition of Louis Hartz" in *American Liberal Tradition Reconsidered*, ed. Hulliung, 90–124, at 108.

[61] George Shulman, *American Prophecy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 3, 28.

[62] Ibid, 35.

[63] Ibid, 2–6.

a Hartzian position, social scientific critiques of entrenched economic power cannot merely reproduce the parochial "Americanism" which Hartz associated (fairly or unfairly) with earlier Progressive thinkers. Rather, such critiques must go further to expose the historical amnesia and patriotic myopia which undergirds the American liberal experience.

3

Hartz was, by many accounts, an imposing presence in Harvard's Department of Government. His heroes, according to former student Benjamin Barber, were French thinkers like Constant, Montesquieu, and especially Tocqueville.[64] Hartz's scholarly career can thus be seen working through Tocqueville's claim that "peoples always feel [the effects of] their origins."[65] In *Liberal Tradition*, Hartz presented the feudal factor as "the mother factor of modern life."[66] He complained, however, that most historians failed to analyze America by reference to European feudalism. *Liberal Tradition* invited historians to "make that journey to Europe and back," while interrogating the circumstances preventing past historians from making this journey.[67] Hartz lamented that Tocqueville, the "greatest foreign critic America ever had," never inspired an American historiography built around his distinctive comparative insights.[68] Hartz reserved his strongest criticisms for Progressive historians, such as Charles Beard, J. Allen

[64] See Benjamin R. Barber, "Louis Hartz," *Political Theory* 14 (1986): 355–58. On the Hartz-Montesquieu link see Hulliung, "Louis Hartz, His Day and Ours," 20–23. Hartz's views on European thinkers are outlined in course lecture notes, edited by a former student; see Louis Hartz, *The Necessity of Choice*, ed. Paul Roazen (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1990).
[65] Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 28.
[66] Hartz, *Liberal Tradition*, 24.
[67] Ibid, 4–5.
[68] Ibid, 31.

Smith, and Vernon Parrington, whose paradigm he found to be interpretively shallow.[69] Understanding America required some understanding of European societies that did contend with feudalism and social revolution. Failing to grasp this insight, Progressive historians succumbed to cycles of interpretive negligence that rendered them an "erudite reflection of the limited social perspectives of the average American himself."[70] Nonetheless, Hartz shared with the Progressives a keen interest in the conditions which informed American class consciousness, an interest evident in his earliest published article, one on antebellum labor organizer Seth Luther.[71] In *Liberal Tradition*, Hartz employed a class analysis bearing affinities to authors such as Marx and Gramsci, who emphasized the problematic revolutionary potential of American workers. However, Hartz criticized Marx for fixating on the objective movement of economic forces.[72] Rather, Hartz stressed that socialism arose primarily out of the liberal revolt against feudalism.[73] As a non-feudal society, America averted both social revolution and conservative counter-reaction, and so lacked a true socialist promise.

In Hartz's analysis the feudal factor intersected with an ideological factor. Hartz referred to a liberal idea cloaked in "irrational Lockianism" (his spelling), and argued that the spirit of Locke was "implanted" in America. [74] Hartz focused less on how Locke came to America than on why Locke has never left. For an American society "which begins with Locke, and thus transforms him, stays with Locke, by virtue of an absolute and irrational attachment it develops

[69] Ibid, 12–13, 27–29, 63, 248–55.
[70] Ibid, 29.
[71] Louis Hartz, "Seth Luther: The Story of a Working-Class Rebel," *New England Quarterly* 13 (1940): 401–18.
[72] Hartz, *Liberal Tradition*, 6.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid, 10–11, 20, 122.

for him."[75] What explained this absolute attachment to Locke? Hartz suggested that America's earliest social conditions rendered Locke's fundamental norm of "atomistic social freedom" closer to "sober description of fact."[76] Atomistic freedom became the "master assumption of American political thought," as "instinctive to the American mind" as "the concept of the polis was instinctive to Platonic Athens or the concept of the church to the mind of the middle ages."[77]

Hartz insisted that Americans tended to overlook Locke's roots in Enlightenment rationalism. Locke was himself consumed by a nationalist Americanism that often "does not know that Locke himself is involved."[78] In a nation missing liberal parties and liberal intellectuals, Locke allowed liberalism to remain "a stranger in the land of its greatest realization and fulfillment."[79] In this way, Hartz argued, the American liberal tradition achieved a "Hegelian-like revolution in historic perspective" that shattered the "time categories of Europe" and negated previous antagonisms.[80] Hartz stressed that the European rivalry between radicalism

---

[75] Ibid, 6. Hartz's argument for Lockean supremacy was, of course, vehemently challenged by revisionist historiographers. See Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*. Even before Pocock's "republican" reframing, Locke's legacy was debated in important works by Leo Strauss and C.B. Macpherson. See C.B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2011 [1962]), 194–257; Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 202–50. For recent recoveries of a Lockean sympathy in early American thought see Joshua Foa Dienstag, "Serving God and Mammon: The Lockean Sympathy in Early American Political Thought," *American Political Science Review* 90 (1996): 497–511. Dienstag usefully situates Hartz within post-war debates over Locke's legacy at 498–501.

[76] Hartz, *Liberal Tradition*, 60–62.

[77] Ibid, 62.

[78] Ibid, 10–11. Hartz used phrases such as "Americanism," "irrational Lockianism," and "liberal absolutism" in tandem to diagnose an entrenched liberal ideology functioning as an "absolute national morality." Hartz, *Liberal Tradition*, at 286; see also 11–14, 305–07.

[79] Ibid, 11.

[80] Ibid, 50.

and conservatism, between Bentham and Burke, made little sense in America. These European categories were "twisted entirely out of shape by the liberal flow of American history."[81]

Hartz's problem-space was particularly influenced by Karl Mannheim, a Weimar sociologist whose 1936 work *Ideology and Utopia* aroused substantial interest among American social scientists. Mannheim wrote of "total ideology," overarching belief-systems entrenched in particular social orders.[82] Hartz did not naïvely present America as conflict-free; he acknowledged its inevitable political battles.[83] But with Mannheim urging analysts to look beyond particular contests to deeper ideological wholes, Hartz probed the underlying sources of liberal unity. He identified an "instinct of friendship" beneath the "heroic surface of America's political conflict."[84]

Hartz's emphasis on ideology thus cut against prevailing tendencies in mid-century, behavioralist political science.[85] In celebrating the free play of pressure groups, pluralists viewed their empirical methods as transcending Europe's tired ideological struggles.[86] They seconded Daniel Boorstin's insistence that the "genius" of American politics lay precisely in its escape from ideology.[87] Hartz took the pluralist ideal to be a "reflection of the relative conditions of America's liberal life" rather than a model of political behavior writ large,[88] echoing other critics

---

[81] Ibid, 48–50.
[82] Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1936). On Mannheim and the American academy see Gunnell, *Descent of Political Theory*, 158–64.
[83] See, for example, Hartz, *Liberal Tradition*, 89.
[84] Ibid, 140.
[85] On behavioralism, see Gunnell, *Descent of Political Theory*, 221–50.
[86] See, for example, David B. Truman, *The Governmental Process* (New York: Knopf, 1965 [1951]); Robert A. Dahl, *Who Governs* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1963 [1961]).
[87] Boorstin, *Genius of American Politics*.
[88] Hartz, *Liberal Tradition*, 250–51.

of mid-century political science; not only C. Wright Mills, but also thinkers like Theodore Lowi, Bernard Crick, and Sheldon Wolin.

Fixated on the sweep of "irrational Lockianism," Hartz's narrative glossed over religion, race, and gender.[89] Scholars criticize his caricature of Progressivism[90] and his neglect of state theory.[91] Even sympathetic interpreters acknowledge Hartz's tendency to "clumsily" juxtapose positivism and historicism.[92] Historical errors have not, however, kept political theorists from grappling with works like Weber's *Protestant Ethic* or Arendt's *The Human Condition*. As John Gunnell argues, Hartz does construct something like a Weberian ideal-type: an abstraction from accepted facts that still captures the "underlying essence of the phenomenon in question."[93] For Gunnell, Hartz's distinctive contribution thus lay in his "therapeutically oriented" genealogy of American life.[94] This genealogy required Hartz to flatten historical details, to construct a metaphorical liberal tradition that could be thrown back in history and attached to specific figures like Locke and Horatio Alger. Gunnell sees Hartz excavating the space between America's metaphorical liberal tradition, and the very *real* tradition of European liberalism.

---

[89] Kloppenburg, "In Retrospect," 460–78.

[90] Recent scholarship emphasizes the ambitious, forward-looking orientations of Progressive reformers, quite against Hartz's depiction of an effete and nostalgic movement. See Marc Stears, *Demanding Democracy*, especially 21–55; Marc Stears, "Change We Already Believe In? The Liberal Tradition and the American Left," in *American Liberal Tradition Reconsidered,* ed. Hulliung, 184–204; James Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory*: *Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought, 1870–1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Kloppenberg, "*Requiescat in Pacem*," 103–06.

[91] Desmond King and Marc Stears, "Capitalism, Democracy, and the Missing State in Louis Hartz's America," in *American Liberal Tradition Reconsidered,* ed. Hulliung, 125–83.

[92] Hulliung, "Louis Hartz, His Day and Ours," 31–32.

[93] John Gunnell, "Louis Hartz and the Liberal Metaphor: A Half-Century Later," *Studies in American Political Development* 19 (2005): 196–205, at 204.

[94] Ibid, 197.

However, Gunnell laments that Hartz's critics, and sometimes Hartz himself, "reified the metaphor and treated it as a claim about an actual tradition."[95]

While sympathizing with Gunnell's reading, I stress that Hartz's account is never *wholly* metaphorical. Hartz does situate liberalism in the concrete workings of particular actors. Consider Hartz's first published book, *Economic Policy and Democratic Thought: Pennsylvania 1776-1860*. A seminal study of antebellum political economy, this work focuses entirely on a single state during a bounded time period; it traces in minute detail the historical evolution of a complex set of regulatory policies; and it draws upon exhaustive empirical evidence, both qualitative and quantitative. At issue was the practice of state governments issuing special charters to business corporations. Charters were favored by big industrialists seeking state protection, but opposed by a vibrant anti-charter movement, composed of both laborers and small entrepreneurs who employed democratic ideals to attack corporate privileges. Hartz vividly demonstrated how the anti-charter movement was supplanted by an anti-state movement that sought to rationalize the business corporation against robust government oversight. Triumphing after the Civil War, this movement deployed many of the individualistic, Lockean discourses of the earlier anti-charter activists. In so doing, Hartz argued, it appealed back, with "messianic vigor," to an original period of laissez-faire regulation—one Hartz insisted had never actually existed.[96] The study thus illuminates how an underlying constellation of liberal discourses (in the

[95] Ibid, 198–99. On Hartz's effort to "divine the mythological structure" of American liberalism, see also Edmond Fong, "Reconstructing the 'Problem' of Race," *Political Research Quarterly* 61 (2008): 660–70, at 666.

[96] Louis Hartz, *Economic Policy and Democratic Thought: Pennsylvania 1776-1860* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968 [1948]), 320.

Hartzian sense) can be deployed by different actors, to different political ends, while remaining entrenched.

For Hartz, the nineteenth-century contest between populists and Whig elites thus resembled "two boxers, swinging wildly, knocking each other down with accidental punches."[97] Their eventual synthesis in democratic capitalism was implicit from the outset, Hartz argued, a synthesis that culminated in Horatio Alger's success ethic.[98] Whigs affixed Algerism with the "grand and glorious label of 'Americanism' " and proceeded to hurl it at democrats who succumbed because Algerism unleashed capitalist impulses already burning within them.[99] The North's triumph in the Civil War subsequently removed any final impediment to liberal dominance. Hartz conceded to the radical nature of certain New Deal reforms, but argued that Roosevelt never felt compelled to explain why departures from Locke never went so far as a fully socialist or Marxist alternative.[100]

On balance, then, Hartz depicted the American liberal tradition as an entrenched, blob-like Americanism confounding all in its path. He argued that America's "liberal absolutism," based in the "sober faith that its norms are self-evident," was so self-assured that it could remain inarticulate, and produce the "death by atrophy of the philosophic impulse."[101] Hartz worried,

---

[97] Ibid, 90.

[98] Ibid, 89, 95–96.

[99] Ibid, at 205–06; also 111–12, 134–35, 219. Nineteenth-century social conflicts remained, of course, quite trenchant; see Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: Norton, 2005).

[100] Hartz, *Liberal Tradition*, 260–63.

[101] Ibid, 58, 285. As Thomas Dumm argues, Hartz thus offers an extended lament on the conditions "under which a polity might be able to grow without maturing"; See his *United States* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994), 15.

that underneath the pluralist façade lay an American general will that was violently seeking conformity.[102] In a neo-Tocquevillian mood, Hartz highlighted the dangers of atomistic individualism and state coercion, never suggesting that America had become totalitarian, but worrying that the pressures imposed by Americanism could lead to the oppressive social compulsions that Tocqueville feared.[103] Surveying the intellectual and political landscape of the early 1950s, Hartz thus saw the consequences of liberal hegemony looking ever graver. No purely domestic crisis had ever uprooted this Americanism, Hartz insisted, but the "age of purely domestic crisis apparently is over."[104]

4

Hartz identified the Cold War as a decisive moment in the broader sweep of American history. By elevating America to the forefront of a global ideological competition for human loyalties, the Cold War brought "into the plainest view America's psychological pattern."[105] Whereas previous "hot wars" smothered ideological currents in the fog of battle, Hartz argued, the Cold War let them bubble up, placing unprecedented demands on America's ability to project its image abroad. Hartz lamented, however, that the American liberal creed was not easily intelligible to other peoples, especially those Asian societies at the fulcrum of the conflict.[106] Moreover, Americans struggled to grasp the deeper social struggles informing communism's

[102] Hartz, *Liberal Tradition*, 58–59.
[103] Ibid, 11, 56–57, 225–27.
[104] Hartz, *Liberal Tradition*, 283.
[105] Ibid, 305.
[106] Ibid, 305–06.

global appeal, and this difficulty estranged Americans from even their social democratic allies in Western Europe.[107]

Instead of acknowledging their blinders, many Americans turned inward with greater fury. Hartz saw Red Scare tendencies as the purest form of the "inward passion of 'Americanism.' "[108] For Hartz, Joseph McCarthy and A. Mitchell Palmer were only symptoms of a broader malady, what Michael Rogin later called the "countersubversive" impulse in American life; impulses which emerged from a "rigid insistence on difference" and fear of the unknown.[109] The Cold War risked exacerbating counter-subversive tendencies, Hartz worried, because the "judgment of others by our norms brings, by automatic reflex, the passionate and fearful intensification of those norms" at home.[110] The alien became unintelligible, and eccentricity became sin.[111] For Hartz, the Red Scare was not simply a domestic thorn, but an international problem of the first order.[112]

Hartz held out hope, however, that blindness could be counteracted through new forms of national enlightenment. While encounters with alien things drove Americans inward, those encounters might also provoke that "spark of philosophy, that grain of relative insight" that militates against provincialism.[113] Hartz recognized that the new internationalism could no

---

[107] Ibid, 285, 306.
[108] Ibid, 293–306, at 303.
[109] Michael P. Rogin, *Ronald Reagan, the Movie*: *and Other Episodes in Political Demonology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 236–40, at 237. Rogin considered Hartz to be "in a class by himself" among post-war historians; see footnote 9, at 351–52.
[110] Hartz, *Liberal Tradition*, 302.
[111] Ibid, 12, 285.
[112] Ibid, 285.
[113] Ibid, 287.

longer be a messianic project. Rather, it had to become an enlivening, self-aware search for new perspectives.

In a prophetic mode, Hartz depicted a redemptive struggle, "evil eliciting the challenge of a conscious good."[114] This battle between enlightenment and blindness had entered its decisive hour; "the race between the two is a fateful one indeed."[115] Must America be "saddled forever with the peculiar limitations of its own perspective," compounded by the "massive problems of diplomacy and freedom any great nation faces?"[116] Hartz saw this "final problem" reaching a tipping point.[117] Yet the path ahead held out a "new level of consciousness, a transcending of irrational Lockianism, in which an understanding of self and an understanding of others go hand in hand."[118] Citizens could not merely repeat propositions like the Declaration of Independence, which, as Hartz reminded readers, the editors of *Fortune* magazine had labeled the "American Proposition."[119] Rather Hartz compelled Americans to look abroad in a confessional mood,

[114] Ibid, 14. Despite this moralizing language, Hartzian prophecy abstained from the apocalyptic worldview of authors who prophesized the Cold War conflict in starkly theological terms. See, for example, Hal Lindsey's best-selling book, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1970). Moreover, by side-stepping the existential significance of nuclear weapons, Hartz deviated from realist intellectuals, like Hans Morgenthau, who framed the threat of nuclear catastrophe in secular apocalyptic terms. On Morgenthau and Cold War apocalyptic thinking, see Alison McQueen, "Salutary Fear: Hans Morgenthau and the Politics of Existential Crises," *American Political Thought* 6 (2017): 78–105.
[115] Hartz, *Liberal Tradition*, 287.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid, 14.
[118] Ibid, 308.
[119] Ibid, 305.

acknowledging the limitations of their historical experience in order to transcend the perspectives that such propositions contained.[120]

Hartz conceded that American politics had thus far evolved without the counsel of intellectuals schooled in European liberal traditions. But the Cold War made these intellectuals, whom Hartz referred to as "liberal society analysts," indispensable to national judgment.[121] This phrase implies a certain social scientific, value-neutral orientation. Yet Hartz could not stay neutral in the ideological conflict of his time.

> It would be an all too easy defense of "neutralism" to say that Western Europe, having originated both liberalism and socialism, confronts them twisted alike in America and Russia by laws of "combined development." The fact is, Russian development has turned its back on the Western concept of personality while American development, what ever its provincialism, rests still on that concept… In any case, given the totalitarian nature of Russian socialism, the hope for a free world surely lies in the power for transcending itself inherent in American liberalism.[122]

Hartz conceded that "there is nothing in an analysis of American history which gives us a final answer" to the question of whether transcendence would succeed.[123] If America always had the luxury of youthful beginnings, transcendence would bring something like a coming of age. Once new enlightenment was attained, there could be no going back; "as for a child who is leaving adolescence, there is no going home again for America."[124]

---

[120] Ibid, 305. Hartz may well overstate the provincialism of the Declaration and other American propositions. Danielle Allen has forcefully argued that the Declaration offers a profound mediation on political equality whose resonances stretch across time and place. See her *Our Declaration: A Reading of the Declaration of Independence in Defense of Equality* (New York: Liveright Publishing, 2014).

[121] Hartz, *Liberal Tradition*, 31-32.

[122] Ibid, 308–09.

[123] Ibid.

[124] Ibid, 32.

5

Hartz's American prophecy thus culminated in an urgent defense of the comparative vocation. Hartz wrote as comparative politics had achieved new prominence within political science, aided by the foreign policy establishment.[125] Hartz aspired, however, to a more pedagogically radical practice of *comparative political theory*. Unlike later communitarians such as Robert Bellah and Michael Walzer, whose social criticism sought to recover a community's internal values and "civil religion," Hartz focused on how the community could be drawn outside of itself.[126]

This aspiration found its mature expression in Hartz's 1964 work *The Founding of New Societies*. Here, Hartz developed his fragment theory of development, which analyzed the ways European ideas had been implanted, and thus transformed, in various colonial and post-colonial contexts. Hartz saw European civilization dissolving into separate fragments: the United States, English Canada, and Dutch South Africa each carried on its liberal fragment; Australia and British South Africa each its radical fragment; and Latin America and French Canada each its feudalist one.[127] Hartz argued that each fragment had become insulated from the broader set of

---

[125] On the Cold War backdrop to comparative political science see Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future*, 115–55.

[126] Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," *Daedalus* 96 (1967): 1–21; Michael Walzer, *Interpretation and Social Criticism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987).

[127] Louis Hartz, *The Founding of New Societies* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1964). Hartz's contributions are flanked by a team of scholars he assembled for their regional expertise. For another attempt at comparative history, see C. Vann Woodward, ed., *The Comparative Approach to American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997 [1968]).

European antagonisms, thus losing the stimulus toward change that the European whole provided.[128]

To be sure, Hartz's fragment method remained highly Eurocentric, charting deviations from European patterns. Still, the normative considerations driving Hartz's comparative method did occasion more extensive engagement with non-Western traditions. Hartz lamented Americans' general ignorance of Asian societies, while criticizing Eurocentric scholars for failing to apply a comparative method within Europe and beyond. He insisted that European hegemony had produced its own set of inarticulate phenomena.[129] As if to escape that hegemony, Hartz spent his final years pursuing a grand synthesis of Eastern and Western philosophy. Hartz's privately published *Synthesis of World History* sought a unifying framework that could account for different cultural forms (Islam, Confucianism, Christianity, Buddhism, Marxism, natural law) in terms of their psychological tendency towards action or passivity.[130] Though the work was weighed down by Hartz's deteriorating mental condition, it reveals an ambitious search for synthesis between Western and non-Western traditions.

By the early 1960s, Hartz could still insist that the "world impact of the present time…brings with it a moral liberation, an enlargement of consciousness, which for its own sake would be well worth the struggle."[131] The nationalist forces drawing America back to its insular

---

[128] Hartz, *Founding,* 3.

[129] Ibid, 24–27.

[130] Louis Hartz, *A Synthesis of World History* (Zurich: Humanity, 1984). For the most charitable attempt to reconstruct Hartz's argument in this book, see Patrick Riley, "Louis Hartz: The Final Years, the Unknown Work," *Political Theory* 16 (1988): 377–99.

[131] Hartz, *Founding,* 20–23, at 23. Even as geopolitical realities evolved between 1955 and 1964, Hartz's mature corpus thus displayed a degree of normative consistency, as he continued to appeal for that "spark of philosophy" achieved through external contact at 65, 120–21.

life as a liberal fragment would not "prevent men from seeing what they see outside it. The man who has left the Platonic cave is never the same."[132] Hartz often lamented that America was prone to either "withdraw from 'alien' things or to transform them; it cannot live in comfort constantly by their side."[133] Hartz's comparative pluralism aspired to a vision of American coexistence that was neither isolationist nor messianic.

Ultimately, Hartz never naively assumed that Americans would successfully find enlightenment abroad. He conceded that the question of "whether a nation can compensate for the uniformity of its domestic life by contact with alien cultures outside it" lacks historical precedent.[134] Hartz would thus resist the triumphalist impulses placing America at the vanguard of grand processes of modernization or globalization. If modernization theory remains a "very American effort to persuade the developing countries to base their revolutions on Locke rather than Marx," as Arthur Schlesinger argued, then Hartz provides good reasons to doubt its potential success.[135] Hartz recognized that Americans "cannot out of their own experience prescribe" for the rest of the world.[136]

Of course, Hartz's scholarship displayed its own amnesia on issue like race. According to one former student, Hartz quietly regretted *Liberal Tradition*'s inadequate treatment of race, and Hartz's later works more fully engaged the subject.[137] Moreover, Hartz's critique of "creedal"

---

[132] Ibid, p. 22.
[133] Hartz, *Liberal Tradition*, 286.
[134] Hartz, *Liberal Tradition*, 14.
[135] Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), 589.
[136] Hartz, *Founding*, 46.
[137] Paul Roazan, "Introduction," in *The Necessity of Choice*, 14. Hartz insisted, for example, that feudal "fragments" in Latin America could treat slaves humanely without violating their

thinking offered a rejoinder to those, like Gunnar Myrdal, who responded to racial injustice by simply invoking an idealized American creed.[138] Nonetheless, Hartz clearly missed the opportunity to expose how liberal blindness about race has perpetuated ongoing racial injustices.

This shortcoming underscores Hartz's biggest failure from the perspective of oligarchic theory. Hartz was not an institutionally sensitive "democratic theorist" attuned to the concrete power dynamics that uphold socioeconomic stratification under conditions of formal equality. Building on Hartz's insights, while moving beyond them, I now turn to C. Wright Mills, a thinker who provides the most path-breaking analysis of oligarchic power in postwar America.

6

Born to a middle-class family in Waco, Texas, far from the "power elite" his scholarship meticulously documented, Mills ascended to the pinnacle of American academia at Columbia University. Yet he maintained an iconoclastic persona, famously commuting to work on a BMW motorcycle. His 1959 work *The Sociological Imagination* criticized the academic formalism of sociologists like Talcott Parsons.[139] While never entirely disavowing academic conventions, Mills envisioned the sociologist as a public intellectual whose imaginative insights could help

---

aristocratic ethos, while in the American liberal fragment, racial hierarchy had to be justified on liberal terms, which led to the dehumanization of slaves as a form of property. See Hartz, *Founding*, 50–60. Hartz's critics insist that this analysis remains "wholly inadequate." See Smith, "Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz," 554.

[138] Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*: *The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962 [1944]).

[139] C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970 [1959]). For background on the book's engagement with and reception by Mills' social scientific contemporaries see Daniel Geary, *Radical Ambition*: *C. Wright Mills, the Left, and American Social Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 168-178.

relate individual lives to the broader structural forces that shaped them.[140] Mills' work was thus read widely by New Left activists, with Tom Hayden ranking Mills third in influence, behind only Albert Camus and Bob Dylan.[141] In providing a "fresh ideological beginning" for New Left activists demoralized by previous political failures, Mills' influence was largely therapeutic and his ideas offered activists like Hayden a concrete template for political practice.[142] In his influential "Letter to the New Left," Mills railed against those "prematurely middle-aged" intellectuals who, encased in the postwar "affluent age," had succumbed to a "fetishism of empiricism."[143] Critics like Talcott Parsons dismissed Mills' style as overly "impressionistic,"[144] while Hayden lionized Mills as a "radical nomad," a "dramatist of the times."[145]

Notwithstanding this iconoclasm, Mills' scholarship was strongly influenced by prevailing trends in American pragmatism and German historicism. Like Hartz, Mills was deeply interested in the Weimar sociologist Karl Mannheim, and with his collaborator Hans Gerth (also a follower of Mannheim), Mills edited the well-known Weber translation, *From Max Weber.*[146]

---

[140] Ibid, 11-15, 175.

[141] See Tom Hayden, *Radical Nomad*: *C. Wright Mills and His Times* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2006), 56.

[142] Ibid, 55-63 at 56.

[143] C. Wright Mills, "Letter to the New Left," *The New Left Review* no. 5 (Sept-Oct. 1960), 18-23 at 19-20.

[144] As noted in Geary, *Radical Ambition*, 137. Parsons' comment was apparently reported to Mills, who repeated it in a private letter. Mills recollection of Parsons' comment: "Well, the man can write some, but it is all impressionistic stuff." See "Letter to Bill and Bucky," undated, probably late November 1951. In *C. Wright Mills*: *Letters and Autobiographical Writings* ed. Kathryn Mills with Pamela Mills (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 158. See also discussion in Geary, *Radical Ambition*, 137.

[145] Hayden, *Radical Nomad*, 115.

[146] H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills trans. and eds., *From Max Weber*: *Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946).

Anticipating his later work, Mills' doctoral dissertation was a study of American pragmatism which criticized pragmatists like John Dewey for not fully appreciating how corporate power had come to threaten democratic life.[147]

Mills first achieved scholarly success with *The New Men of Power,* a study of American labor leaders, and *White Collar,* a study of the American middle class: middle managers, clerks, salarymen, salesman, bureaucrats.[148] Mills argued that though its members were quintessentially American, the white collar class was increasingly alienated and unmoored and subjected to "epochal changes on the farm and in the city."[149] Thrown back upon a "mass society that has shaped him and seeks to manipulate him to its alien ends,"[150] the white collar man's problems "border on the psychiatric," and could only be fully grasped through a social scientific analysis sensitive to life's inner burdens.[151]

White Collar was Mills' contribution to a growing literature that included Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman,* Sloan Wilson's *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd,* and William Whyte's *The Organization Man*.[152] Each of these authors focused on the plight of the "organization man" in a postwar period often referred to as the apex of Fordist

---

[147] On this point see Geary, *Radical Ambition,* 46-47.

[148] C. Wright Mills, *The New Men of Power*: *America's Labor Leaders* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1948); Mills, *White Collar*: *The American Middle Classes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002 [1951]).

[149] Mills, *White Collar,* 3.

[150] Ibid, xvi.

[151] Ibid, xx.

[152] Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*: *Certain Private Conversations in Two Parts and a Requiem* (New York: Penguin, 1998 [1949]); Sloan Wilson, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955); David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd*: *A Study of the Changing American Character* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967 [1950]); William Whyte, *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956).

capitalism, a constellation which Antonio Gramsci famously described as "the biggest collective effort to date to create, with unprecedented speed, and with a consciousness of purpose unmatched in history a new type of worker and of man."[153] Only in the postwar "affluent society" did Fordism reach its mature form, with rising national incomes and the demand oriented policies of the Keynesian welfare state coinciding with an ebullient consumer class propelled by suburban car culture. In her book *The Consumers Republic,* Lizabeth Cohen shows how a nexus of government incentives, corporate investment, and Madison Avenue advertising incubated this mass consumer culture. From 1947 and 1953, housing developments such as Levittown, which benefitted from favorable tax and regulatory policies, including those encouraging marriage and childrearing, fueled a substantial rise in the suburban population. Far from the family-run shops of their parents' immigrant enclaves, these new suburbanites congregated at distant shopping centers, of which 940 had been built by 1957. Massive government-funded highway construction programs facilitated consumer mobility.[154]

In his influential work *The Managerial Revolution*, James Burnham, a disillusioned ex-Trotskyite, theorized that new forms of social organization, which he dubbed "managerialism," had triumphed in diverse contexts: the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, the New Deal United States.[155] Burnham considered the rise of managerialism to be a revolutionary development analogous to the transition from feudalism to capitalism.[156] Propelling this shift was the "drive

---

[153] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1976), 302.

[154] Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic*: *The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2003), 258.

[155] James Burnham, *The Managerial Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1960 [1941]).

[156] Ibid, 1-8, 71. Burnham wrote of a transition from "bourgeois" capitalism to managerialism at 71.

for social dominance" among a stratum of managers who, through control over the instruments of production and the state apparatus, were ascending to a "ruling class" position.[157] The shift was driven, in other words, by exogenous changes in economic life which produced organizational structures vulnerable to being captured by managers.

Mills had no doubt read Burnham. However, Mills saw less an army of technocratic managers crowding out traditional power centers, than a resourceful old-guard elite deploying managerial techniques to its own advantage, a phenomenon he referred to as the "managerial reorganization" of the propertied classes.[158] In *The Power Elite*—a book Mills initially titled *The High and the Mighty*— he depicted an elite stratum capable of making history through decisive decisions.[159] It was an elite unconstrained by necessity, able to "transcend the ordinary environments of ordinary men," shaping life rather than adapting to it.[160] Mills understood, however, that power elites were constrained by "technique," the technical and organizational mechanisms available to them.[161] Mills' sociology thus traced this dynamic interplay between structure and agency by focusing on the centralization of power in the "command posts" of modern society: a triangle of economic, military, and political institutions.[162] Elites were largely dependent on their institutional position, or as Mills remarked, "power is not of a man."[163] However, Mills recognized that individual wealthy families often utilized corporate structures to advance their personal social positions. The result was a social network in which impersonal

[157] Ibid, 72-72.
[158] Mills, *Power Elite*, 147.
[159] Ibid, 22, 25.
[160] Ibid, 3-6 at 3.
[161] Ibid, 23.
[162] Ibid, 3-29.
[163] Ibid, 11.

decision-making structures intersected with a more intimate set of mores and shared experiences.[164] Mills recognized that both wealth and status exerted a cumulative effect in which a reputation obtained in one organizational sphere could be parlayed for power and influence in other spheres. Though its demographics had evolved from the days when the New York *Social Register* and the Newport circuit determined membership in American high society, the elite remained overwhelmingly white, Protestant, Ivy League educated, male, native-born, and Eastern.[165] Nonetheless, educational pedigree was increasingly overtaking family lineage as the dominant status marker, with private schools operating as a "force for the nationalization of the upper classes," including the new moneyed.[166] The American system thus accommodated a degree of social mobility. Mills noted, however, that inherited wealth had actually become *more* salient in the composition of the postwar elite: whereas nearly 40% of the Gilded Age rich originally hailed from lower-class families, that number had dropped to 10% in the postwar years.[167] This trend held despite the fact that "the very rich in America are not dominantly an idle rich and never have been.[168]

Echoing Hartz, Mills noted that America's commercial elite had ascended free of feudal constraints, as a "virtually unopposed bourgeoisie." Nonetheless, the power elite was no longer *of* the middle-class, in any appreciable sense; it was, in Mills' view, a genuine American upper class, an oligarchy (even if he rarely used that exact term).[169] Entrance into its rarified strata

---

[164] Ibid, 15-19.
[165] Ibid, 278-279. On the proliferation of Social Registers in the nineteenth century see p. 55.
[166] Ibid, 64-65.
[167] Ibid, 104-105.
[168] Ibid, 108-110 at 108.
[169] Ibid, 12; my italics. Mills is clear, though, that the power elite is not an "aristocracy" in the sense of a "political ruling group based upon a nobility of hereditary origin" at 278.

required strategic advantages, an opportunity to command massive resources, a large fortune that could be parlayed into an even larger one. The rich man persisted in the "accumulation of advantages."[170] Entrepreneurial risk-taking was seldom required, for once attained, the rich man's advantages could be safely secured. One typical path was for the scion of a wealthy family to take the reins of an existing family enterprise, perhaps transitioning it into a more elaborate corporate structure.[171] The ordinary corporate manager lacked these built-in advantages, and so was incapable of becoming super-rich through mere savings, through a "slow bureaucratic crawl up the corporate hierarchies." [172] When managers did achieve significant wealth it usually came through crafty financial speculations. As "economic politicians," such organization men were adept at leveraging their membership in important cliques for personal benefit.[173]

Mills understood, then, that the functional distinctions between different command-posts were never too rigid, with elites often circulating between hierarchies.[174] Wealthy elites, however, shared a confluence of interest, where their common stakes in maintaining the privileges of their hierarchical position met.[175] These included the quintessential oligarchic privileges: tax and regulatory favors, multigenerational wealth transfer through elaborate trusts, philanthropic foundations to facilitate tax-free bequests, and so on.[176] Anticipating the contemporary politics of oligarchic wealth defense, Mills noticed that legal and financial

[170] Ibid, 110-111 at 111.
[171] Ibid, 112-115.
[172] Ibid, 110-112 at 112.
[173] Ibid, 112-113.
[174] Ibid, 288.
[175] Ibid, 266-267, 276.
[176] Ibid, 150-155.

professionals often served as "go-betweens," mediating between different power hierarchies.[177] Elites derived their wealth more from dividends, capital gains, and real estate than from salaried income and so tax records often failed to adequately document the extent of their wealth.[178] Mills ridiculed the idea that existing inheritance taxes were sufficient to make intergenerational wealth transfer difficult.[179] Moreover, since the wealthy often succeeded in evading transparency, the full extent of their resources was impossible to document with exact certainty.[180]

The perks of corporate life—expense accounts, lavish retreats—produced comradery among the executive class, a horizon of shared experiences.[181] It was, of course, a highly masculine world of cigars and wood-paneled rooms; as Mills recognized, the history of American wealth was "in the main, a patriarchal history." [182] Nonetheless, Mills resisted a purely "biographical" theory of the higher circles; actual decisions about resource allocation, the "objective structure of opportunities," took precedence over personal idiosyncrasies.[183] Better to understand the structure of taxation than to probe into the "boundless energy of Henry Ford."[184] Mills acknowledged that impersonal corporate forms had rendered the postwar rich less publically visible than their Robber Baron predecessors. He saw great certain irony in the triumph of corporate power amidst "the most individualistic people in the world," as Americans

[177] Ibid, 124, 131, 289-290.
[178] Ibid, 151.
[179] Ibid, 107.
[180] This point created some methodological dilemmas for Mills; as Hayden acknowledged, much of Mills' analysis relied upon "latent data" given the difficulties of fully accounting for the elite's resources. See Hayden, *Radical Nomad*, 143.
[181] Mills, *Power Elite,* 157-161.
[182] Ibid, 110.
[183] Ibid, 97-98 at 97; see also 280.
[184] Ibid, 98.

"like to think of themselves;"[185] a development which had rendered obsolescent the old Jeffersonian ideal of yeoman proprietors.[186] Corporate elites were "cynically accepted," even "secretly admired" by the mass public (in stark contrast to the muckraking zeal directed against the Robber Barons).[187] The breakdown between merit and reward, knowledge and power, economic authority and cultural accomplishment, all fostered disillusionment among a mass public which sensed the general "immorality of accomplishment. "[188] The hollowing out of previous moral codes extended to the public itself, with the rise of pecuniary standards of value in a mass consumer society.[189] As both consumers and as foot-soldiers in the vast "white collar" corporate army, ordinary Americans were inexorably bound up with prevailing power structures.

7

"Ideas of this sort are not widely shared in the United States," Tom Hayden observed in his tribute to Mills.[190] Like Hartz, Mills challenged dominant trends in postwar social science, and so attracted sharp criticism from mainstream scholars like the pluralist political scientist Robert Dahl. To be sure, Dahl shared many of Mills' critical concerns. Dahl's classic work *Who Governs* sought to ascertain how a democratic system could function in an environment where formal equality coexisted alongside substantial substantive inequality.[191] Dahl famously used New Haven, Connecticut as a microcosm of "democracy and power in an American city."[192] It

[185] Ibid, 120.
[186] Ibid, 260.
[187] Ibid, 341.
[188] Ibid, 340-351 at 349.
[189] Ibid, 346.
[190] Hayden, *Radical Nomad*, 104.
[191] Robert A. Dahl, *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1961), 1.
[192] Dahl, *Who Governs*; from the title.

was a city marked by significant levels of concentrated wealth, with the fifty largest property-holders, both corporations and private individuals, retaining one-third of all assessed property.[193] Nonetheless, Dahl found less a centralized "power elite" than a dispersed set of notables, many of whom had withdrawn from politics. Among 150 "Social Notables," as measured by invitations to debutante events, few held formal elective offices or other public posts.[194] Moreover, the composition of the Social Notables failed to overlap significantly with a group of several hundred Economic Notables, as measured by assessed property and occupational status: those at the top of New Haven's major corporations, banks, and public utilities.[195] Political participation by the Economic Notables centered on domains like urban development and taxation which bore directly on commercial matters. However, even in these commercial domains, economic elites competed for influence with small-propertied holders whose greater numbers often rendered them more successful at agitating for their interests on issues like tax assessment levels. Moreover, local corruption scandals generally centered around politically connected, but not necessarily socioeconomically privileged figures.[196] Such findings caused Dahl to argue against the "ruling elite" hypothesis, however "dramatic and satisfying" it may seem.[197] The story of New Haven politics was a shift "from oligarchy to pluralism:"[198] from an early history of patrician government to a period where city offices were largely controlled by upwardly mobile ethnic groups, the so-called "ex-plebes."[199] In the new world of pluralist

[193] Ibid, 4.
[194] Ibid, 64-65. Urban redevelopment was the sphere in which the Social Notables obtained the most formal posts, but even here their share of offices in 1957 and 1958 reached only 6%.
[195] Ibid, 67-68.
[196] Ibid, 77-80.
[197] Ibid, 72.
[198] As Dahl titles Book One of *Who Governs.*
[199] Ibid, 32-51.

politics, the Notables sometimes won and sometimes lost, but the "fatal defect" of all forms of patrician influence remained "lack of sheer numbers," a defect "inherent in the structure of a modern socioeconomic system." [200]

From Mills' perspective, however, such conclusions were wildly premature. While no longer resembling the early American patrician elite so eloquently scrutinized by John Adams (whose work Mills invoked approvingly), the postwar elite nonetheless constituted a clear ruling class, with tight links between economic and government command posts. Among the fifty highest executive branch appointments, Mills observed, around three-quarters were political outsiders, with the majority emanating from the corporate and financial world: Rockefellers, top executives at General Motors, bank directors.[201] Many congressman hailed from the ranks of the independently wealthy.[202] These were not the hardened party insiders of urban enclaves like New Haven.

Moreover, Mills went far beyond rival social scientists in highlighting the increasing militarization of the ruling class. The wide tentacles connecting corporate and governmental institutions to military complexes augured the structural shift to a "permanent war economy" governed by the "military metaphysics,"[203] an environment, Mills argued, in which "virtually all political and economic actions are now judged in terms of military definitions of reality."[204] Mills was alarmed by the almost unchallenged ability of military experts to present authoritative

[200] Ibid, 76. In urban areas like New Haven the problem had been compounded, Dahl acknowledged, by the tendency of more affluent people to move to the suburbs.
[201] Mills, *Power Elite,* 166-170, 232-233.
[202] Ibid, 248-250.
[203] Ibid, 205.
[204] Ibid, 275.

viewpoints without critical opposition from an increasingly shallow mass public.[205] For the military was truly unique among power-centers in the magnitude of its insulation from countervailing pluralist pressures.[206] Such insights proved exhilarating to later New Left activists as they contended with the carnage of Vietnam.

Later in life, Mills increasingly focused his attention on the postcolonial world, commenting sympathetically on the Cuban Revolution. He understood that a militarized Cold War power elite was exerting its tentacles abroad, often with deleterious effects.[207] Nonetheless, Mills was criticized by New Left activists for failing to extend his critical apparatus to Civil Rights struggles. As Hayden contends, Mills failed to fully grasp, not simply how the power elite was complicit in ongoing racial injustices, but also how the emerging domestic struggles over race and poverty might threaten that elite's prerogatives.[208]

Despite these blind spots, Mills clearly had his pulse on the perilous state of American democracy in a period when concentrated wealth, corporate consolidation, and military expansion was threatening democratic responsiveness.[209] As Mills argued, "the power of this elite is now the only realistic and serious way to raise again the problem of responsible government." Hartz's critique lingered in the background, as Mills decried postwar liberalism's celebratory tendencies, tendencies which sustained the nation's "conservative mood." [210]

---

[205] Ibid, 221-222.
[206] Ibid, 221.
[207] On Mills' internationalism see Geary, *Radical Ambition*, 179-219.
[208] Hayden, *Radical Nomad*, 146-150.
[209] Mills, *Power Elite,* 25.
[210] Ibid, 332-336 at 336.

Echoing Hartz, Mills argued that the power elite need not endorse an "explicitly conservative ideology" so long as it could cloak itself behind the prevailing liberal absolutism.[211]

Conclusion

Ultimately, neither Louis Hartz nor C. Wright Mills fully anticipated the evolution of American oligarchy in the twenty-first century: the extent to which information technology and a "post-Fordist" knowledge economy would produce even greater levels of inequality than those experienced at midcentury, the rise of Super-PACs and movement-building oligarchs like the Koch brothers, or the outsized significance of cultural cleavages and values voting. Which is to say: neither author fully anticipated the political developments that would prompt the question, "what's the matter with Kansas?" Nor did they adequately grasp the complex interplay between race and class in America, the ways in which racial divisions have often impeded efforts to reign in socioeconomic elites. Nonetheless, both thinkers called attention to enduring threats to the health of American democracy. For Mills, those threats centered on the complex organizational command posts which enable elites to carve out special privileges and insulate their activities from ordinary democratic constraints. For Hartz, those threats centered on the deep perspectival limitations which inhibit Americans from confronting issues like social class without reproducing an insular provincialism. Both thinkers were highly critical of mainstream social scientists who believed that such challenges could be resolved within a standard pluralist framework. Both thinkers cultivated an internationalist perspective sensitive to the rise of the military industrial complex at home and to the follies of interventionist tendencies abroad. Ultimately, both had their academic careers cut tragically short. Mills died young, of a heart

[211] Ibid, 336.

attack, in 1962. Hartz left Harvard in 1974, after suffering a mental breakdown. Moving abroad, he was eventually found dead, in Turkey, with a suitcase full of travelers' checks, in 1986.[212] By then, both Mills and Hartz had seen their legacies eclipsed by the rise of Rawlsian ideal theory. Yet their insights live on among recent critics of American politics, who see disturbing patterns of "civic war" and "inverted totalitarianism" at home; [213] an "American nightmare" forged at the intersection of neo-conservativism and neo-liberalism;[214] and a war on terror merely continuing Cold War-era patterns of nativism and xenophobia.[215] American democracy still has clear imprints of the early Cold War period, and so the thinkers discussed in this chapter, whatever their flaws, deserve a more prominent place in scholarly conversations.

[212] Many colleagues and former students continued to revere Hartz even after his death. See Kloppenberg, "Requiescat in Pacem," 90–91.
[213] Peter A. Meyers, *Civic War and the Corruption of the Citizen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Sheldon Wolin, *Democracy Incorporated*: *Managed Democracy and the Specter of Inverted Totalitarianism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008).
[214] Wendy Brown, "American Nightmare," *Political Theory* 34 (2006): 690–714.
[215] On the war on terror as a continuation of the Cold War see Meyers, *Civic War*.

Chapter Five

The New Mixed Regime: A Framework for Plebeian Democracy

In recent years, millions of citizens from diverse nationalities have gravitated toward the French economist Thomas Piketty and his work *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Piketty's picture of a world where the "Marxist apocalypse" has been averted but the "deep structures of inequality and capital" persist has sobering implications for democratic theory, even though Piketty's own engagement with democratic theory literature remains rather thin.[1] Alongside the merits or demerits of Piketty's economic analysis rests an unsettling political question: how should ordinary, "plebeian" citizens come to terms with the vast disparities in wealth and political power that accompany the New Gilded Age?

Thinkers since Aristotle have argued that democratic and oligarchic forces can coexist stably within the same political system. Bernard Manin provides the most sophisticated contemporary argument for representative democracy as a "mixed regime," in the broadly Aristotelian sense, or what Manin refers to as "democratic aristocracy."[2] The aristocratic dimension arises from the "intrinsically" inegalitarian biases of elections (as Manin notes, "election" and "elite" share a similar etymology).[3] Elections facilitate "distinction" through choice, rewarding candidates who possess traits that are positively valued by the electorate.

---

[1] Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 1. For a valuable attempt to situate Piketty within current normative debates see Martin O'Neil, "Survey Article: Philosophy and Public Policy After Piketty," *Journal of Political Philosophy* (first published online August 2, 2017).

[2] Manin, *Principles of Representative Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 132-160 especially.

[3] Ibid, 134, 140.

Elections do not, of course, reward objective virtue (in the Aristotelian sense), but rather the populace's "culturally relative perception of what constitutes a good ruler."[4] The democratic and egalitarian aspect arises from the fact that each citizen is empowered to make a formally equal contribution to the decision about which traits to reward. Manin considers democratic aristocracy to be a stable arrangement, a kind of institutional and "argumentative" equilibrium.[5] Electoral procedures adjudicate between rival elites by empowering non-elites to freely discriminate between differing authority claims. Elites have reason to support popular election since the alternative could be a system which disproportionately advantages their rivals. Conversely, non-elites have no obvious rhetorical objection to a procedure whose inegalitarian outcomes are produced through egalitarian means. As Manin notes, electoral choice is a "simple operation that cannot be split into its component parts."[6] Hence, neither side, the democrats nor the aristocrats, can retain what they favor about the procedure while discarding what they disfavor. The two sides are, in a sense, joined at the hip.

Manin's argument is compelling and quite elegant. Still, it encounters some problems. Manin concedes that the wealthy are better positioned to achieve electoral success *over and above* any tendency for wealth to be valued as a positive trait. The wealthy have outsized opportunities to disseminate information and convey their qualifications for office to the electorate (through campaign commercials and so forth). But are the wealthy then elected because of their competences or simply because they have achieved public notoriety by outspending everyone else? The line between aristocrats and oligarchs is blurred in Manin's framework as it was in Aristotle's.

[4] Ibid, 146.
[5] Ibid, 154.
[6] Ibid, 155.

Another problem arises from the insufficiencies of electoral accountability. Manin's argument for 'equilibrium' assumes, it would seem, that the electorate can adjudicate between elites, not simply by selecting elites but also by working to constrain them while in office. But existing scholarship (including scholarship to which Manin himself is a contributor) suggests that corrupt practices like rent-seeking often weaken electoral mechanisms. For example, if the threat of electoral punishment is too high, office-holders may have *more* reason to rent-seek and "shirk" from their public commitments (i.e. because they have a high probability of removal irrespective of their commitment to ethical behavior). Conversely, if the threat of electoral punishment is too low, officeholders might rent-seek on the assumption that reelection is likely regardless of their decision to behave unethically.[7] Moreover, office-holders differ in the degree to which they value the non-material benefits of office-holding, such as prestige. If voters had perfect information they could tailor accountability mechanisms to the incentive structures of specific office-holders. They might strategically reveal, in advance, their standards for reelection.[8] But voters have incomplete information and often do not credibly commit to keeping their voting standards consistent over time.[9] On balance, then, elections are a "blunt instrument," insufficient to ensure that rulers will govern in accordance with the public interest.[10]

---

[7] See Bernard Manin, Adam Przeworski, and Susan C. Stokes, "Elections and Representation," in *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation* eds. Przeworksi, Stokes, and Manin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 29-54 at 41-44.
[8] Ibid, 44.
[9] Ibid, 41. See also discussion in James D. Fearon, "Electoral Accountability and the Control of Politicians," in *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*, eds. Adam Przeworski, Susan C. Stokes and Bernard Manin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 55-97 at 78-79.
[10] Manin, Przeworski, and Stokes, "Elections and Representation," 41-50.

Moreover, even where electoral accountability *is* efficacious, it has no formal jurisdiction over private wealthy citizens.[11] From an Aristotelian perspective, democratic stability ultimately rests on demographic conditions like a large middle class. But although Aristotle's ideal of a "demographic mean" may be ethically appealing, I question whether a strong middle is sufficient to avert oligarchic threats. As scholars like Piketty underscore, concentrated wealth persists even in societies with a large middle class. Moreover, middle income and "mass affluent" citizens are often most vulnerable to having tax and regulatory burdens shifted onto them by the super-rich.[12]

In what follows, then, I want to advance an alternative model, one more suitable to the contemporary climate. Contra Aristotle's mixed regime, I refer to this model as the New Mixed Regime.[13] I side with Aristotle and Manin on the benefits of institutional mixing, but I resist the premise that "democratic aristocracy" is the best outcome citizens can aspire to today. As I argued in Chapter Two, Aristotle wants to sever the ethical and institutional connection between democracy and the poor, thus resisting Athenian institutions which empowered poorer citizens to rule. I argue, however, that the connection between the "many," "free," and "poor" must be restored. Democratic institutions must counteract oligarchic threats by mixing together three different forms of authority: the legal authority of the free; the epistemic authority of the many; and the *socioeconomic* authority of the non-wealthy. Whereas Aristotle seeks to moderate democracy through elite counter-balances, the New Mixed Regime I propose seeks to tame oligarchs by balancing among three different conceptions of the people.

---

[11] A point stressed in McCormick, "Contain the Wealthy and Patrol the Magistrates: Restoring Elite Accountability to Popular Government." *American Political Science Review* 100, no. 2 (2006): 147-163.
[12] Winters, *Oligarchy,* 244-249.
[13] These ideas are first developed in Arlen, "Aristotle and the Problem of Oligarchic Harm," *European Journal of Political Theory* (advance online publication, Aug. 25, 2016).

Table 1: The New Mixed Regime

Aspect of the Demos	Normative Authority	Institutional Expression	Mode of Composition
Free	legal	aggregative voting	entire citizenry
Many	epistemic	deliberative assemblies	descriptively representative random sample
Non-Affluent (plebeian) citizens[14]	socioeconomic	plebeian assemblies	class-specific random sample

In this model, each variation of the demos corresponds to a specific institutional form: aggregative institutions, such as free and fair elections, that preserve the formal equality of "free" citizens, descriptively representative deliberative assemblies that operationalize the cognitive diversity of the "many,"[15] and plebeian assemblies composed exclusively of non-wealthy citizens. I envision, then, an integrated deliberative system with multiple institutional tracks—consistent with existing work in deliberative institutional design.[16] I go further, however, in stressing the importance of a separate plebeian track.

[14] Here the "non-affluent" are synonymous with "plebeians" as I define them in this chapter; citizens in the bottom 75% of household wealth.

[15] From one perspective, democratic decisions need only meet the modest epistemic threshold of being "better than random;" David M. Estlund, *Democratic Authority* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008). However, Hélène Landemore, *Democratic Reason*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), mounts a "strong" epistemic defense of the "many," stressing the qualitative advantages of cognitive diversity. See also Hélène Landemore and Jon Elster, eds. *Collective Wisdom: Principles and Mechanisms.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). For an "epistemic" defense inspired by Athens see Josiah Ober, *Democracy and Knowledge*: *Innovation and Learning in Classical Athens* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

[16] On deliberative institutional design See James S. Fishkin, *When the People Speak* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); John S. Dryzek, "Rhetoric in Democracy: A Systemic

The model thus contributes to the recent "plebeian" revival in contemporary democratic theory. Jeffrey Green theorizes plebeianism as a form of democratic realism that acknowledges the realities of second-class citizenship and that responds to those realities with "principled vulgarity."[17] From Green's perspective, plebeianism captures the aspirational tendencies of a liberal-democratic project committed to reflexivity and critique, and so Green sees plebeianism as an elaboration of liberal democracy rather than an alternative to it.[18] Of course, the plebeian revival also draws upon non-liberal premodern thinkers like Machiavelli. As John McCormick notes, Machiavelli reformulated the Roman plebeian/patrician distinction—initially a formal, hereditary distinction—into a much broader, more fluid distinction between the many and the few.[19] McCormick highlights Machiavelli's deeply rhetorical aims, as the Florentine outlined the terms upon which young *grandi* might be compelled to constrain their oppressive appetites at home in exchange for the opportunity to command citizen-soldiers in imperial ventures abroad or even more heroically, to receive immortal fame by acting as republican "founders" at home.[20]

Appreciation," *Political Theory* 38 (2010), 319-339; Robert E. Goodin, *Innovating Democracy*: *Democratic Theory and Practice after the Deliberative Turn* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Archon Fung, "Minipublics: deliberative designs and their consequences," *Deliberation, Participation, and Democracy* ed. Shawn W. Rosenberg (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 159-183.

[17] Green, *The Shadow of Unfairness*, 101-129. See also Martin Breaugh, *The Plebeian Experience*: *A Discontinuous History of Political Freedom* trans. Lazer Lederhendler (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013 [2007]).

[18] Ibid, 12-14. Green argues, for example, that a plebeian model of liberal democracy is compatible with Rawlsian ideals, even if Rawls himself did not fully grasp this point; at 68-100.

[19] McCormick, *Machiavellian Democracy*, 31-32. As McCormick notes, this fluidity is reflective of the fact that many wealthy Roman plebeians eventually intermarried into patrician families.

[20] Ibid, 36-56.

Drawing on Roman legacies, Machiavelli argued that plebeian citizens, when mediated by Tribunes, often made disciplined, informed choices, even supporting well-qualified patrician candidates in consular elections.[21] Nonetheless, Machiavelli understood that the wealthy would never voluntarily acknowledge the dangerous effects of their uncontrolled appetites.[22] Thus, in both Machiavelli's time and in the contemporary "Machiavellian Democracy" which McCormick seeks to revive today, constant plebeian vigilance is required. As McCormick argues, institutional designers must adjust to the *popolo's* more "elongated learning curve," their tendency to achieve gradual epistemic gains; constructing popular institutions that will "survive the *grandi's* victories over the *popolo* in specific battles so that the people, and therefore the republic, can win the domestic war."[23]

So, who counts as "plebeian" in a contemporary democracy like the United States? I envision a broad cohort that includes at least some citizens who earn above median income, ensuring that plebeians remain a super-majority. I assume, however, that all plebeians are *non-affluent.* While standards of affluence remain intersubjective, I shall set the demarcation around the top quartile (25%) of American household wealth.

Plebeians thus encompass the bottom three quartiles, with household wealth of roughly $250,000 or less, including home equity.[24] This is a wide cohort which includes some below the

[21] Ibid, 70. On the Roman Tribunes as vehicles of plebeian power see also Fergus Millar, *The Crowd in Rome in the Late Republic* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998); Andrew Lintott, *The Constitution of the Roman Republic.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
[22] Ibid, 51.
[23] Ibid, 90; my italics.
[24] Table 4, Percent Distribution of Household Net Worth (2011), obtained from United States Census Bureau, "Detailed Tables on Wealth and Asset Ownership," available at http://www.census.gov/people/wealth/data/dtables.html

poverty line and others well above the median household income of $54,000.[25] Moreover, contemporary plebeians are far more racially and ethnically diverse than their Roman predecessors. I would not minimize the significance of these differences in conditioning general life chances. I want to stress, however, that whatever else divides them, all plebeian citizens are vulnerable to oligarchic harm, and they confront this vulnerability without the resources of affluence. Indeed, most ordinary Americans hold wealth in the highly illiquid form of home equity, magnifying their material disadvantages.[26] I thus maintain that plebeian citizens constitute a distinct vulnerability class, one entitled to *class-specific* institutional protections analogous to those afforded by the Roman Tribunes.

McCormick illustrates how class-specific protections of this sort can coexist within modern representative democracies. He proposes a People's Tribunate, composed of 51 non-wealthy Americans selected by lottery for one-year terms. The Tribunate would enjoy deep but carefully limited powers: for example, vetoing one Supreme Court decision or impeaching one lawmaker.[27]

Plebeian institutions like McCormick's are the formal domain of a specific socioeconomic grouping. Some might worry that this formalization of class differences undermines hard-won norms of procedural equality.[28] This worry is an important one. It can be

[25] 2014 data obtained from the US Department of Numbers at http://www.deptofnumbers.com/income/us/#family.
[26] Winters and Page, "Oligarchy in the United States?" 736.
[27] McCormick, *Machiavellian Democracy*, 178-188.
[28] For a version of this anxiety see Maria Paula Saffon and Nadia Urbinati, "Procedural Democracy, the Bulwark of Equal Liberty," *Political Theory* 41 (2013): 441-481. For broader democratic critique of populism see Nadia Urbinati, *Democracy Disfigured* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); see also Jan Werner Müller, *What is Populism?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016). For a critique of Urbinati and other republican critics of populism see John P. McCormick, "The New Ochlophobia? Populism, Majority Rule and

minimized, however, if plebeian institutions are carefully regulated, and augmented by non-plebeian institutions, both aggregative and deliberative. Through this three-track structure, the demos can exert scrutiny over super-rich individuals, assessing their behavior patterns while also assessing the wider institutional or structural conditions that enable their influence.

2

I now consider some of the concrete regulatory challenges confronting plebeian citizens in the contemporary United States. I focus specifically on billionaire donors like the Koch brothers who, operating in a post-*Citizens United* legal context, have come to skillfully pursue political activism within the structure of nonprofit giving. The topic of elite philanthropy occasions a range of normative considerations. On the one hand, philosophers like Peter Singer mount a utilitarian defense of the ethics of billionaire philanthropy, arguing that it provides considerable relief to global suffering. Billionaires have a duty to give, Singer argues, and this duty extends down to ordinary people.[29] On the other hand, democratic theorists worry that elite philanthropy accelerates the privatization of public services, and allows the wealthy to enforce their policy preferences for decades, often with little oversight and accountability.[30] In principle, nonprofit giving is not a wealth generating activity. However, since donors often receive

---

Prospects for Democratic Republicanism," eds. *Republican Democracy*, eds. Yiftah Elazar and Geneviève Rousselière (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2018).

[29] Peter Singer, "What Should a Billionaire Give—and What Should You," in Patricia Illingworth, Thomas Pogge, and Leif Wenar eds., *Giving Well* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

[30] Rob Reich, "Toward a Political Theory of Philanthropy," in Illingworth, Pogge, and Wenar eds., *Giving Well*, 177-194; Rob Reich, "On the Role of Foundations in Democracies," in *Philanthropy in Democratic Societies* eds. Rob Reich, Chiara Cordelli, and Lucy Bernholz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 64-81.

deductions and other favorable tax benefits, nonprofit giving can align with the broader tax avoidance strategies of the "income defense industry."[31]

Importantly, such concerns about the "plutocratic" dimension of elite nonprofits have force *even* when donors are presumed to act on behalf of the public good.[32] But what about activists whose political ambitions seem to extend well beyond public-interest altruism? Since the 1970s, Charles and David Koch have emerged as the preeminent wealthy political activists of their generation. While some Koch-funded nonprofits promote important educational and cultural goods, many are mere fronts for electioneering and lobbying efforts which proceed in close synergy with the Koch's business interests in the fossil fuels industry. Koch-linked groups have funneled millions towards anti-climate change science and anti-union campaigns, while working to secure tax loopholes and thwart campaign finance reform. Empirical research indicates that the Koch's vast "soft money" network has successfully shifted the Republican Party rightward on the tax and regulatory issues most valued by Koch donors.[33]

The seeds of the "Koch network" were planted decades ago, when family patriarch Fred Koch established a "charitable lead trust," which minimized estate taxes by requiring his children, as beneficiaries, to pursue high-dollar philanthropy.[34] This tax avoidance technique, a

---

[31] Indeed, the normative justification for charitable tax deductions has come under increasing scrutiny. See Reich, "On the Role of Foundations in Democracy."

[32] This point is made forcefully in Emma Saunders-Hastings, "Plutocratic Philanthropy," *Journal of Politics* (forthcoming).

[33] Theda Skocpol and Alexander Hertel-Fernandez, "The Koch Network and Republican Party Extremism," *Perspectives on Politics* 14 (Sept. 2016): 681-699.

[34] See Jane Mayer, *Dark Money* (New York: Doubleday, 2016), 42.

favorite of other wealthy families like the Mellon-Scaife's, helped spawn movement organizations like the Scaife-funded Heritage Foundation and Koch-funded Cato Institute.[35]

Since 2003, the Koch network has convened at biannual "donor summits." Held at luxury resorts, under strict secrecy, these summits join ideological immersion with high-powered networking, assembling wealthy donors who share the Koch's policy agenda. Clustering around the "extractive" industries, many participants control privately-held companies shielded from public scrutiny.[36] One recent summit assembled eighteen billionaires worth a combined $214 billion.[37] Donors make seven-figure pledges to Koch-approved causes, with money pooled through the Freedom Partners Chamber of Commerce, a Koch-controlled 501(c)(6) nonprofit "business league." This technique allows donations to count as "membership dues" deductible as business expenses (305). Funds likewise flow to various 501(c)(3) "public charities" and 501c4 "social welfare" organizations, such as the Koch's flagship advocacy group, Americans for Prosperity (AFP).

AFP underscores the increasingly blurry line between philanthropy and political advocacy post-*Citizens United*. Like all 501(c)(4)'s, AFP can engage in lobbying and electioneering on behalf of specific candidates, so long as these activities are not its "primary" function.[38] By skillfully navigating these rules, the Koch's have built a potent vehicle which resembles a "shadow" political party.[39] State-level paid directors operate in a federated structure

---

[35] Ibid, 76-80, 87-88.
[36] Ibid, 200-202.
[37] Ibid, 9-10.
[38] 501(c)(4)'s are tax exempt organizations, though unlike donations to 501(c)(3) "public charities," 501(c)(4)'s offer no personal tax deduction.
[39] On AFP's place within the Koch network, see Skocpol and Hertel-Fernandez, "The Koch Network and Republican Party Extremism," 681-699.

centrally managed by the Koch's and their allies. Personnel circulate between AFP and other Koch-run organizations (including Koch Industries).[40] Former AFP directors have assumed important positions within the Republican Party.[41] AFP thus adroitly preserves operational independence while embedding itself within the Republican establishment.[42]

Consider, for example, the Koch network's aggressive mobilization against the Affordable Care Act. In 2009, wealthy Arizonans Ken and Randy Kendrick established the Center to Protect Patient Rights (CPPR), a 501(c)(4) focused on coordinating an anti-Obamacare strategy.[43] Soon the group had amassed millions from anonymous donors, including over $100 million from the Koch's 501(c)(6) "business league," Freedom Partners Chamber of Commerce. CPPR then dispersed funds to other 501(c)(4) groups, including Americans for Prosperity and the Koch-linked American Future Fund.[44] Through this layering of interconnected non-profits, the Koch network expended millions helping Republicans retake Congress on an anti-Obamacare platform. Meanwhile, AFP lobbied hard to pressure state governments from pursuing Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act.[45]

Propelled by energy sector donors, the Koch network has moved equally aggressively to shape climate policy. From 2005-2008, as scientific debate raged, the Koch's personally funneled millions to organizations fighting climate change consensus, expending nearly three

[40] Ibid, 688.
[41] Ibid, 691.
[42] Ibid, 692-696.
[43] Mayer, *Dark Money,* 188-197.
[44] Ibid, 250.
[45] Skocpol and Hertel-Fernandez, "The Koch Network," 695.

times more than ExxonMobil.[46] AFP likewise pressured Republicans to adopt a "No Climate Tax" pledge, and by 2011, a majority of congressional Republicans surveyed expressed some version of climate change denialism.[47] More broadly, a web of conservative foundations spent more than $500 million funding a multi-year climate change "countermovement."[48] Money was filtered through the Donors Trust, a so-called "donor-advised fund."[49] Operating as a clearinghouse for donors seeking anonymity, Donors Trust scattered funds to a range of Koch-linked groups, including AFP.[50] In a practice befitting the corrupt "law partnership" of Bentham's day, hundreds of federal judges have obtained "immersion training" on environmental policy at lavish judicial seminars underwritten by conservative donors.[51] Following one court decision overturning anti-smog regulations, the deciding judges were revealed to have attended a Koch-funded judicial seminar.[52]

Throughout this period, Koch Industries remained one of America's largest producers of toxic waste and a significant emitter of greenhouse gas, according to EPA records.[53] Koch

---

[46] See the Greenpeace paper "Koch Industries, Secretly Funding the Climate Denial Machine," March 3, 2010, obtained at http://www.greenpeace.org/usa/wp-content/uploads/legacy/Global/usa/report/2010/3/koch-industries-secretly-fund.pdf?9e7084 on Feb. 13, 2017.

[47] Mayer, *Dark Money, 278.*

[48] Richard J. Brulle, "Institutionalizing Delay: Foundation Funding and the Creation of U.S. Climate Change Counter-movement Organizations," Climate Change 122, no. 4 (Feb. 2004): 681-94.

[49] On the proliferation of donor-advised funds, see Ray D. Madoff, "When is Philanthropy? How the Tax Code's Answer to This Question Has Given Rise to the Growth of Donor-Advised Funds and Why It's a Problem," in Reich, Cordelli, and Bernholz eds., *Philanthropy in Democratic Societies*, 158-177.

[50] Mayer, *Dark Money,* 206-207.

[51] Ibid, 109-110.

[52] Ibid, 153-154. The decision in question was unanimously overturned by the US Supreme Court, see p. 154.

[53] Ibid, 275.

Industries has accumulated a lengthy record of corporate violations, including a ninety-seven-count indictment for covering up toxic waste discharge; a separate, record-breaking fine for violations of the Clean Water Act; negligence in a wrongful death suit; and conviction for defrauding and making false claims to the government.[54] Other members of the Koch donor network and their businesses have been investigated for insider trading, tax evasion, unsafe workplace conditions, and environmental violations.[55]

The Koch's regarded the 2012 electoral campaign as the "mother of all wars."[56] While failing to unseat President Obama, they achieved significant victories in states like North Carolina and Wisconsin, where AFP retains an active presence. These state-level efforts leveraged Koch-linked mega-donors like Art Pope in North Carolina and the Bradley Foundation in Wisconsin. Pope, himself an AFP director, spent millions through his family foundations lobbying the North Carolina legislature on tax and environmental issues before being appointed the state's budget director.[57] The Bradley Foundation, where Pope is also a director, has intimate ties to Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker. The Foundation's former president served as Walker's campaign chairman, while other Koch-linked donors, like Wisconsin billionaire Diana Hendricks, serve on its board. Walker's anti-union efforts made him a Koch favorite, and AFP mobilized aggressively to support his recall election.

3

[54] Ibid, 123-138. The latter came via a whistleblower suit brought by David and Charles Koch's estranged sibling Bill Koch.
[55] Ibid, 14-17.
[56] Ibid, 300
[57] Ibid, 338-339.

Let us consider a hypothetical sequence by which ordinary Americans, acting through the framework of the New Mixed Regime, come to regulate the discretionary influence of Super-PAC donors like the Koch brothers. First, a descriptively representative citizen panel, composed through lottery, is constituted to study campaign finance issues.[58] This body encompasses, in miniature, the overall cognitive diversity of the demos.[59] Through a deliberative process, it crafts the language of a non-binding national referendum, advisory to Congress, recommending a constitutional amendment to overturn *Citizens United*. The broader electorate now takes up the referendum, operating as an aggregative authority. The advisory referendum passes, but Congress fails to achieve the two-thirds threshold necessary to amend the Constitution under Article 5, with lawmakers subjected to an aggressive lobbying campaign from wealthy donors. In response, the plebeian assembly takes action. After careful deliberation, members vote to utilize their once per term oversight power and repeal the *Citizens United* decision directly.[60] Simultaneously, the assembly launches civil judicial proceedings against Super-PAC donors who lobbied hardest against campaign finance reform. These proceedings culminate in a judgment of "oligarchic harm" against five donors. As a formal legal designation, the judgment carries specified civil penalties, including enhanced

[58] On the advantages of using lottery to compose "Single Issue Legislators," (SILS) see Alexander A. Guerrero, "Against Elections: The Lottocratic Alternative," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 42 (2014), 154-178 at 155-172.

[59] As Landemore stresses, descriptive representation achieved through random lotteries can preserve the epistemic benefits of "cognitive diversity." *Democratic Reason,* at p. 109. On the possibility of a "virtual national assembly" see Kevin O'Leary, *Saving Democracy*: *A Plan for Real Representation in America* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 86-112.

[60] A power of this sort thus represents a democratic modification of existing norms of judicial review. For a spirited democratic critique of judicial review see Jeremy Waldron, *Law and Disagreement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

requirements for asset transparency and special taxes and fines. Such action can feed on those forms of indignation and "reasonable envy" central to the contemporary plebeian experience.[61] However, the number of indictments per term is capped to avoid abuse.

I want to be clear: this is a very broad sketch. Much more must be specified, procedurally, concerning the mode of composition and decision-rules of citizen assemblies, the structure of deliberation, and the legal constraints under which assemblies operate. My point is mainly normative: democratic institutions *should* seek to instantiate the demos' tripartite status as "many," "poor," and "free." Each source of institutional authority has an independent normative basis. The formal equality of free citizens does not pivot on their epistemic capacities. Nor does the epistemic authority of a cognitively diverse "many" pivot on a plebeian class-identity. However, through institutional "mixing" the properties of each strand are brought to bear against oligarchic threats.[62]

The history of plebeian politics certainly offers reasons for caution. As McCormick acknowledges, the Roman plebs never succeeded in winning the wider war against economic inequality.[63] Imperial expansion, as an outlet for unconstrained *grandi* oppression, often rebounded to the detriment of vulnerable plebeians because the tribunes retained no formal political jurisdiction outside of Rome. These destabilizing conditions contributed to the rise of

---

[61] Green, *The Shadow of Unfairness,* 67-129.

[62] There may still be a need to integrate "domain-based" expertise into these deliberative processes, and I sympathize with scholarship which engages Aristotle on questions of deliberative "integration." See Wilson, "Rule of Reason;" see also Josiah Ober, "Democracy's Wisdom: An Aristotelian Middle Way for Collective Judgment," *American Political Science Review* 107 (2013): 104-122. Moreover, while I am treating the demos as a collective agent, the tripartite structure may also be a reference-point for individual citizens engaged in imaginative acts of "deliberation from within." See Robert E. Goodin, *Reflective Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 171-185.

[63] McCormick, *Machiavellian Democracy,* 90.

Caesarism.[64] In the contemporary context, plebeian institutions must be circumscribed and carefully regulated, lest they disrupt the careful architecture of the New Mixed Regime. Plebeian democracy remains an exercise in democratic realism, one which recognizes the inescapability of wealth stratification in complex modern societies.[65]

The justification for institutional experimentation is, however, quite strong. If the existing institutional baseline proves inadequate (and I think this is a very reasonable assumption in contemporary representative contexts), then the important question is whether deviations from that baseline pose unacceptable risks to ordinary citizens. Should plebeian institutions *exacerbate* oligarchic power by providing new opportunities for elite-capture in the form of corruption and patronage, then their suitability might be questioned. But such defects may arise from the particularities of specific political contexts (i.e. those where patronage and corruption traditions are especially high), rather than from any inherent defect in the plebeian ideal as such. Moreover, such defects can only be fully demonstrated, empirically, through the operation of actual plebeian institutions. Thus, they provide no obvious justification for foregoing institutional experimentation in the first place. Whether plebeian institutions ultimately prove too powerful (behaving oppressively toward vulnerable minorities) or too weak (being captured by elites) is a context-dependent question.[66] But the normative justification for experimentation remains robust, given the wide swath of evidence that current arrangements are not optimal.

---

[64] Ibid, 96-97.

[65] Thus there are affinities between the plebeian perspective and the "realist" revival in democratic theory. For a good overview see Enzo Rossi and Matt Sleat, "Realism in Normative Political Theory," *Philosophy Compass* 9, no. 10 (2014): 689-701.

[66] Though, to be sure, plebeian institutions cannot substitute for group-representation of vulnerable racial or ethnic minorities, which may still occur within the broader structure of the New Mixed Regime. On the need for such representation see Melissa S. Williams, *Voice, Trust, and Memory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

From one perspective, however, oligarchy is fundamentally a distributional problem, and so any institutional response must be assessed according to its distributional outcomes. On this view, the New Mixed Regime has no independent value other than as a vehicle to promote wealth dispersion. Such arguments have intuitive force because oligarchic power is indeed magnified under present distributional conditions. Nonetheless, as noted at the beginning of this dissertation, concentrated wealth remains a necessary but insufficient condition for oligarchic power, which ultimately requires that wealth be translated into discretionary influence in the public domain. In principle, the question of ownership can be separated from that of influence: owners may voluntarily abstain from any public influence, or their wealth may be structured in such a way as to impose limits on its discretionary use (as in blind trusts). For this reason, a plebeian democracy might target the mechanisms by which wealth is translated into public influence, without necessarily targeting the wealth itself. There may be good strategic reasons to adopt this tactic insofar as the wealthy can be compelled to accept constraints on their political influence in *exchange* for keeping their wealth. A 'grand bargain' of this sort was central to maintaining stability in democratic Athens.[67] Even as Machiavelli encouraged the *popolo* to vigorously respond to any attacks on their liberty, he understood why some degree of plebeian deference was necessary in order to convince elites that institutions like the Tribunes would not imperil the wealthy's core material interests.[68]

Critics might worry this is only a second-best solution because the bargain can break down, and private wealth can always be reasserted for public influence. I don't see any clear solution to this dilemma, so long as a plebeian democracy has good reason to support *some*

[67] See Ober, *Mass and Elite.*
[68] McCormick, *Machiavellian Democracy,* 30.

degree of private wealth accumulation: to preserve a robust civil society, as a lever of social mobility, to produce the economic growth necessary for robust welfare systems, and so on.

Ultimately, oligarchy is not the only threat facing democracy today. Entrenched forms of structural injustice, systemic racism, and environmental degradation cannot simply be reduced to the personal influence of the super-rich. The concerns animating a Rawlsian theory of justice—securing basic liberties, fair equality of opportunity, and a proper distribution of primary goods—remain urgent.[69] However, the problem of oligarchic harm is worthy of distinct normative attention. Even societies that have moved closer to a just "basic structure," in the Rawlsian sense, may retain oligarchic threats. The task of identifying oligarchic harm falls upon the democratic citizenry, operating through a mixture of aggregative, deliberative, and plebeian institutions.

Representative democracies are nonetheless in the delicate position of allowing for private wealth accumulation while denying those who accumulate wealth any *formal* constitutional privileges. Classical oligarchs saw their *pleonexia* reflected in constitutions that affirmed wealth as a legal entitlement to rule. Modern-day oligarchs, lacking these legal entitlements, are apt to exert *pleonexia* in especially brash strivings for electoral influence. The

[69] Though there are important affinities between Rawlsian perspectives (especially those informed by the late Rawls) and plebeian democratic theory. See especially Rawls' critique of "concentrated" wealth in *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2001), 44. On the possibility of regulating the "most advantaged" within a Rawlsian framework see Jeffrey Green, "Rawls and the Forgotten Figure of the Most Advantaged: In Defense of Reasonable Envy toward the Superrich," *American Political Science Review* 107 (2015): 123-137. On the extent to which Rawls' concept of "property-owning democracy" can inform contemporary democratic theory, see the edited volume, Martin O'Neil and Thad Williamson eds., *Property-Owning Democracy*: *Rawls and Beyond* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2012); see also Alan Thomas, *Republic of Equals*: *Predistribution and Property-Owning Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

case of Donald Trump underscores the lengths to which a pleonectic grasping for wealth and power can be self-valorized; "that's what I've done my whole life," candidate Trump remarked, "I grab and grab and grab….Now we're going to get greedy for the United States…"[70] Amid the longstanding American tendency to understand success in business to serve as a proxy for political virtue, Trump only reinforces Bernard Manin's seminal insight that wealth affords an apparent mark of distinction in electoral competition.[71] I stress this point to acknowledge the difficulty of containing all forms of oligarchic influence in representative democracies, especially in contexts, like the United States and Western Europe, where socioeconomic issues are filtered through social and cultural divisions and infused with racial and ethnic tensions, which allows charismatic oligarchs like Trump and Berlusconi to galvanize populist sentiment. Against this backdrop, basic liberties must be safeguarded and protections for vulnerable minorities are essential. However, I wager that democratic citizens, when organized according to the parameters of the New Mixed Regime, can at least regulate some of the influence great wealth inevitably entails; they can exercise reasonable, well-informed scrutiny of, and exhibit spirited vigilance toward, the destructive effects of proliferating *pleonexia.* This may be an overly optimistic wager, but it is a wager worth taking.

[70] Donald Trump, as quoted in the Tampa Bay Tribune online, Wed. Feb. 24. Retrieved at http://www.tampabay.com/opinion/columns/transcript-trumps-winning-winning-winning-speech/2266681

[71] Manin, *Principles of Representative Government*, 132-160.

Bibliography

Abbott, Philip. "Still Louis Hartz after All These Years: A Defense of the Liberal Society Thesis." *Perspectives on Politics* 3, no. 1 (2005): 93–109.

Acemoglu, Daron and James A. Robinson. *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Allen, Danielle. *Our Declaration: A Reading of the Declaration of Independence in Defense of Equality.* New York: Liveright Publishing, 2014.

Aristotle. *Politics*. Translated by C.D.C. Reeve. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998.

———. "Nicomachean Ethics." Translated by W.D. Ross. In *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, edited by Richard McKeon, 928-1112. New York: Random House, 2001.

———. "Rhetoric." Translated by W. Rhys Roberts. In *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, edited by Richard McKeon, 1318-1451. New York: Random House, 2001.

———. "Constitution of Athens." Translated by J.M. Moore. In *The Politics and the Constitution of Athens*, edited by Stephen Everson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

———. "On Good Birth." In *Select Fragments Volume XII of the Works of Aristotle*, edited by David Ross, fragment 4. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952.

Arlen, Gordon. "Aristotle and the Problem of Oligarchic Harm." *European Journal of Political Theory*. Advance online publication Aug. 25, 2016. Doi: 10.1177/1474885116663837.

———. "Cold War Prophecy and the Burdens of Comparative Thought: A Case for Revisiting Louis Hartz." *Polity* 49, no. 4 (2017): 548-574.

Ashcraft, Richard. "Liberal Political Theory and Working-Class Radicalism in Nineteenth-Century England." *Political Theory* 21, no. 2 (May 1993): 249-272.

———. "John Stuart Mill and the Theoretical Foundations of Democratic Socialism." In *Mill and the Moral Character of Liberalism*, edited by Eldon J. Eisenach. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998.

Bailyn, Bernard. *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967.

Balot, Ryan K. *Greed and Injustice in Classical Athens.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Barber, Benjamin R. "Louis Hartz." *Political Theory* 14, no. 3 (1986): 355–358.

Bartels, Larry. *Unequal Democracy*: *The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.

Baum, Bruce. *Rereading Power and Freedom in J.S. Mill*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000.

———. "J.S. Mill and Liberal Socialism." In *J.S. Mill's Political Thought*: *A Bicentennial Reassessment,* edited by Nadia Urbinati and Alex Zakaras, 98-123. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Bell, Duncan. "What is Liberalism." *Political Theory* 42, no. 6 (2014): 682–715.

Bellah, Robert N. "Civil Religion in America," *Daedalus* 96, no. 1 (1967): 1–21.

Bellamy, Richard. *Political Constitutionalism: A Republican Defence of the Constitutionality of Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Bentham, Jeremy. *Scotch Reform*. London: Richard Taylor and Company, 1808.

———. *The Elements of the Art of Packing, as applied to Special Juries, particularly in cases of libel law*. London: Effingham Wilson, 1825.

———. "Observations on Peel's Speech." In *Official Aptitude Maximized; Expense Minimized,* edited by Philip Schofield. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.

———. "Appendix C," in *Official Aptitude Maximized; Expense Minimized,* ed. Philip Schofield. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.

———. "Indications Respecting Lord Eldon." In *Official Aptitude Maximized; Expense Minimized,* edited by Philip Schofield. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.

———. *First Principles Preparatory to Constitutional Code*, edited by Philip Schofield. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.

———. "Defense of Economy Against Rose." In *Official Aptitude Maximized; Expense Minimized,* edited by Philip Schofield. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.

———. "Defense of Economy Against Burke." In *Official Aptitude Maximized; Expense Minimized,* edited by Philip Schofield. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.

Beramendi, Pablo and Christopher J. Anderson, eds. *Democracy, Inequality, and Representation*: *A Comparative Perspective*. New York: Russell Sage, 2008.

Boix, Carles. *Democracy and Redistribution*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Boorstin, Daniel J. *The Genius of American Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953.

Breaugh, Martin. *The Plebeian Experience*: *A Discontinuous History of Political Freedom.* Translated by Lazer Lederhendler. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013 [2007].

Breuilly, John, Gottfried Niedhart and Antony Taylor eds. *The Era of the Reform League*: *English Labour and Radical Politics 1857-1872*. Mannheim: Palatium Verlag, 1995.

Brown, Wendy. "American Nightmare." *Political Theory* 34, no. 6 (2006): 690–714.

Brulle, Richard J. "Institutionalizing Delay: Foundation Funding and the Creation of U.S. Climate Change Counter-Movement Organizations." *Climate Change* 122, no. 4 (2004): 681-94.

Bruni, Leonardo. *The History of the Florentine People*, vol. II. Edited and translated by James Hankins. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004 [1442].

Bruno, Jonathan. "Vigilance and Confidence: Jeremy Bentham, Publicity, and the Dialectic of Political Trust and Distrust." *American Political Science Review* 111, no. 2 (2017): 295-307.

Burnham, James. *The Managerial Revolution.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1960 [1941].

Cammack, Daniela. “Aristotle on the Virtue of the Multitude.” *Political Theory* 41, no. 2 (2013): 175-202.

Carlisle, Janice. “Mr. J. Stuart Mill, M.P., and the Character of the Working Classes.” In *Mill and the Moral Character of Liberalism*, edited by Eldon J. Eisenach, 143-168. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998, 143-168.

———. *John Stuart Mill and the Writing of Character*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1991.

Charette, Danielle. “Catilinarian Cadences in Machiavelli’s *Florentine Histories*: Ciceronian Humanism, Corrupting Consensus and the Demise of Contentious Liberty.” *History of Political Thought* (forthcoming 2018).

Cherry, Kevin M. “Aristotle’s ‘Certain Kind of Multitude.” *Political Theory* 43, no. 2 (2015): 185-207.

Cicero, Marcus T. *On the Commonwealth and the Laws*. Edited by James Zetzel. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Ciepley, David. *Liberalism in the Shadow of Totalitarianism.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006.

Cohen, Lizabeth. *A Consumers’ Republic.* New York: Knopf, 2003.

Collier, Ruth B. *Paths Toward Democracy*: *The Working Class and Elites in Western Europe and South America.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Connolly, William E. *The Ethos of Pluralization.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995.

Cuordileone, K.A. *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War.* New York: Routledge, 2005.

Dahl, Robert A. *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1961.

Derrida, Jacques. *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason.* Translated by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004.

Dienstag, Joshua Foa. “Serving God and Mammon: The Lockean Sympathy in Early American Political Thought.” *American Political Science Review* 90, no. 3 (1996): 497–511.

Dietz, Mary G. “Between Polis and Empire: Aristotle’s Politics.” *American Political Science Review* 106, no. 2 (2012): 275-293.

Diggins, John P. *The Lost Soul of American Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Donner, Wendy. *The Liberal Self: John Stuart Mill’s Moral and Political Philosophy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991.

Dryzek, John. “Rhetoric in Democracy: A Systemic Appreciation.” *Political Theory* 38, no. 3 (2010): 319-339.

Dumm, Thomas. *United States*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994.

Dworkin, Ronald. *Sovereign Virtue*: *The Theory and Practice of Equality.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002.

Estlund, David M. *Democratic Authority*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.

Euripides. “Electra.” Translated by Emily Townsend Vermeule. In *The Complete Greek Tragedies*: *Euripides V*, edited by David Grene and Richmond Lattimore. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991 [1959].

Fearon, James D. “Electoral Accountability and the Control of Politicians: Selecting Good Types versus Sanctioning Poor Performance.” In *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*, edited by Adam Przeworski, Susan C. Stokes and Bernard Manin, 55-97. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Fishkin, James S. *When the People Speak.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Foner, Eric. “Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?” *History Workshop* 17 (1984): 57-80.

Fong, Edmond. “Reconstructing the ‘Problem’ of Race.” *Political Research Quarterly* 61, no. 4 (2008): 660–670.

Forde, Steven. *The Ambition to Rule*: *Alcibiades and the Politics of Imperialism in Thucydides.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.

Forrester, Katrina. "Hope and Memory in the Thought of Judith Shklar." *Modern Intellectual History* 8, no. 3 (2011): 591–620.

Frank, Jill. *A Democracy of Distinction*: *Aristotle and the Work of Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

———. "Citizens, Slaves, and Foreigners: Aristotle on Human Nature." *American Political Science Review* 98, no. 1 (2004): 91-104.

Frank, Thomas. *What's the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*. New York: Holt, 2005.

Friedrich, Carl J. and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski. *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, 2nd ed. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965 [1956].

Fung, Archon. "Minipublics: deliberative designs and their consequences." In *Deliberation, Participation, and Democracy*, edited by Shawn W. Rosenberg, 159-183. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Garsten, Brian. "Deliberating and Acting Together." In *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Politics,* edited by Marguerite Deslauriers and Pierre Destrée, 324-349. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Geary, Daniel. *Radical Ambition*: *C. Wright Mills, the Left, and American Social Thought*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.

Gerth, H.H. and C. Wright Mills trans. and eds. *From Max Weber*: *Essays in Sociology.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1946.

Gilens, Martin. *Affluence and Influence*. New York and Princeton: Russell Sage Foundation and Princeton University Press, 2012.

Gilman, Nils. *Mandarins of the Future*: *Modernization Theory in Cold War America.* Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.

Goodin, Robert E. *Utilitarianism as a Public Philosophy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

———. *Reflective Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

———. *Innovating Democracy*: *Democratic Theory and Practice after the Deliberative Turn.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks.* New York: International Publishers, 1976.

Green, Jeffrey E. *The Shadow of Unfairness*: *A Plebeian Theory of Liberal Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

———. "Rawls and the Forgotten Figure of the Most Advantaged: In Defense of Reasonable Envy toward the Superrich." *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 1 (2015): 123-137.

Greenstone, David J. *The Lincoln Persuasion*: *Remaking American Liberalism.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993.

———. *Labor in American Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977.

Guerrero, Alexander A. "Against Elections: The Lottocratic Alternative." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 42, no. 2 (2014):154-178.

Guicciardini, Francesco. *"Discorso di Logrogno": On Bringing Order to Popular Government*. Translated by Athanasios Moulakis. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998 [1512].

Guizot, François. *History of Civilization in Europe*. Translated by William Hazlitt. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund Reprint, 2013 [1828].

Gunnell, John. *The Descent of Political Theory*: *The Genealogy of an American Vocation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

———. "Louis Hartz and the Liberal Metaphor: A Half-Century Later." *Studies in American Political Development* 19, no. 2 (2005): 196–205.

Halévy, Elie. *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1955 [1928].

Hamburger, Joseph. *John Stuart Mill on Liberty and Control*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.

———. "Introduction." In *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume VI—Essays on England, Ireland, and the Empire,* edited by J.M. Robson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963.

Hansen, Mogens H. *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes*. Translated by J.A. Crook. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999.

Hartz, Louis. *The Liberal Tradition in America*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1955.

———. *The Founding of New Societies*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1964.

———. *Economic Policy and Democratic Thought: Pennsylvania 1776-1860*. Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968 [1948].

———. *The Necessity of Choice*. Edited by Paul Roazen. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1990.

———. Seth Luther: The Story of a Working-Class Rebel." *New England Quarterly* 13, no. 3 (1940): 401–18.

———. *A Synthesis of World History.* Zurich: Humanity, 1984.

Hayden, Tom. *Radical Nomad*: *C. Wright Mills and His Times.* Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2006.

———. *The Port Huron Statement*: *The Visionary Call of the 1960s Revolution.* New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2005 [1962].

Himmelfarb, Gertrude. *On Liberty and Liberalism*: *The Case of John Stuart Mill.* New York: Knopf, 1974.

———. "Politics and Ideology: The Reform Act of 1867." In *Victorian Minds,* edited by Gertrude Himmelfarb (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968).

Holland, Catherine A. “Hartz and Minds: The *Liberal Tradition* after the Cold War.” *Studies in American Political Development* 19, no. 2 (2005): 227–33.

Hulliung, Mark. “What’s Living, What’s Dead, in the Work of Louis Hartz.” In *The American Liberal Tradition Reconsidered*: *The Contested Legacy of Louis Hartz*, edited by Mark Hulliung, 267-273. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2010.

———. “Louis Hartz, His Day and Ours.” In *The American Liberal Tradition Reconsidered*, edited by Mark Hulliung, 11-52. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2010.

Isaac, Joel and Duncan Bell. “Introduction.” In *Uncertain Empire: American History and the Idea of the Cold War*, edited by Joel Isaac and Duncan Bell, 3-16. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Jacobs, Lawrence and Theda Skocpol, eds. *Inequality and American Democracy*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2005.

Jones, Gareth S. “Rethinking Chartism.” In *Languages of Class*: *Studies in English Working-Class History 1832-1982*, edited by Gareth Stedman Jones. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Jurdjevic, Mark. “Civic Humanism and the Rise of the Medici.” *Renaissance Quarterly* 52, no. 4 (1999): 994-1020.

Kahan, Alan S. *Aristocratic Liberalism*: *The Social and Political Thought of Jacob Burckhardt, John Stuart Mill, and Alexis de Tocqueville*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Katznelson, Ira. *City Trenches*: *Urban Politics and the Patterning of Class in the United States.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

———. *Desolation and Enlightenment: Political Knowledge after Total War, Totalitarianism, and the Holocaust.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.

———. *When Affirmative Action Was White*: *An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America.* New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005.

Keloharju, Matti and Antti Lehtinen. “Shareownership in Finland 2015.” *Nordic Journal of Business* 64, no. 3 (2015): 182-206.

Keenan, Alan. *Democracy in Question; Democratic Openness in a Time of Political Closure* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.

King, Desmond and Marc Stears. "Capitalism, Democracy, and the Missing State in Louis Hartz's America." In *The American Liberal Tradition Reconsidered*, edited by Mark Hulliung, 125-183. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2010.

Kinzer, Bruce. Ann P. Robson and John M. Robson. *A Moralist in and Out of Parliament*: *John Stuart Mill at Westminister 1865-1868*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992.

Klein, Steven. "Fictitious Freedom: A Polanyian Critique of the Republican Revival." *American Journal of Political Science*. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1111/ajps.12317.

Kloppenberg, James T. *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought, 1870-1920*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

———. "In Retrospect: Louis Hartz's *The Liberal Tradition in America*," *Reviews in American History* 29, no. 3 (2001): 460–78.

———. "*Requiescat in Pacem*: The Liberal Tradition of Louis Hartz." In *The American Liberal Tradition Reconsidered*, edited by Mark Hulliung, 90–124. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2010.

Kymlicka, Will. *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction*, second edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Laclau, Ernesto and Chantal Mouffe. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. London: Verso, 1985.

Landemore, Hélène. *Democratic Reason*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012.

Landemore, Hélène and Jon Elster eds. *Collective Wisdom: Principles and Mechanisms.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Lane, Melissa. "Claims to rule: the case of the multitude." In *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Politics,* edited by Marguerite Deslauriers and Pierre Destrée, 247-274. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Latham, Michael E. *The Right Kind of Revolution*: *Modernization, Development, and U.S. Foreign Policy from the Cold War to the Present.* Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2011.

Lindsay, Thomas K. "Liberty, Equality, Power: Aristotle's Critique of the Democratic 'Presupposition." *American Journal of Political Science*, 36, no. 3 (1992): 743-761.

Lindsey, Hal. *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1970.

Lintott, Andrew. *The Constitution of the Roman Republic.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Lipset, Seymour M. and Gary Wolf Marks. *It Didn't Happen Here*: *Why Socialism Failed in the United States*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2000.

Machiavelli, Niccolò. *Machiavelli's Discourses on Livy*. Edited and translated by Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.

Macpherson, C.B. *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2011 [1962].

Madison, James, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay (as Publius). *The Federalist Papers*. New York: Mentor, 1998 [1788].

Madoff, Ray D. "When is Philanthropy? How the Tax Code's Answer to This Question Has Given Rise to the Growth of Donor-Advised Funds and Why It's a Problem." In *Philanthropy in Democratic Societies*, edited by Rob Reich, Chiara Cordelli, and Lucy Bernholz, 158-177. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016.

Manin, Bernard. *Principles of Representative Government.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Manin, Bernard, Adam Przeworski, and Susan C. Stokes. "Elections and Representation." In *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*, edited by Adam Przeworksi, Susan C. Stokes, and Bernard Manin, 29-54. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Mannheim, Karl. *Ideology and Utopia*: *An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge.* New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1936.

Marcuse, Herbert. *One-Dimensional Man*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1991 [1964].

Markell, Patchen. "The Insufficiency of Non-Domination." *Political Theory* 36, no. 1 (2008): 9-36.

———. "The Rule of the People: Arendt, *Archê*, and Democracy." *American Political Science Review* 100, no. 1 (2006): 1–14.

Martin, Isaac William. *Rich People's Movements: Grassroots Campaigns to Untax the One Percent*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Mayer, Jane. *Dark Money.* New York: Doubleday, 2016.

Mayville, Luke. *John Adams and the Fear of American Oligarchy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016.

McClelland, Keith. "England's Greatness, the Working Man." In *Defining the Victorian Nation*: *Class, Race, Gender and The British Reform Act of 1867*, edited by Catherine Hall, Keith McClelland, and Jane Rendall, 71-118. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

McCormick, John P. *Machiavellian Democracy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

———. "Contain the Wealthy and Patrol the Magistrates: Restoring Elite Accountability to Popular Government." *American Political Science Review* 100, no. 2 (2006): 147-163.

———. "The New Ochlophobia? Populism, Majority Rule and Prospects for Democratic Republicanism." In *Republican Democracy*, edited by Yiftah Elazar and Geneviève Rousselière. Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2018.

McQueen, Alison. "Salutary Fear: Hans Morgenthau and the Politics of Existential Crises." *American Political Thought* 6, no. 1 (2017): 78–105.

Medearis, John. "Labor, Democracy, Utility, and Mill's Critique of Private Property." *American Journal of Political Science* 49, no. 1 (2005): 135-49.

Meyers, Peter A. *Civic War and the Corruption of the Citizen*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

Michels, Robert. *Political Parties*: *A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*. Translated by Eden and Cedar Paul. Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1949 [1911].

Mill, James. *Essay on Government*. Edited by Currin V. Shields. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1955.

Mill, John Stuart. "On Liberty." In *On Liberty and Other Essays*, edited by John Gray, 5-128. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

———. "Considerations on Representative Government." In *On Liberty and Other Essays*, edited by John Gray, 205-467. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

———. "Utilitarianism." In *On Liberty and Other Essays*, edited by John Gray, 131-201. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

———. "The Subjection of Women." In *On Liberty and Other Essays*, edited by John Gray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 471-582.

———. "Prospects of France, I." In *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill Volume XXII—Newspaper Writings Dec. 1822-July 1831*, edited by Ann P. Robson and John M. Robson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988.

———. "French News [9]." In *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill Volume XXII—Newspaper Writings Dec. 1822-July 1831*, edited by Ann P. Robson and John M. Robson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988.

———. "French Elections." In *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill Volume XXII—Newspaper Writings Dec. 1822-July 1831*, edited by Ann P. Robson and John M. Robson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988.

———. "Corruption at Elections." In *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill Volume XXVIII—Public and Parliamentary Speeches*, edited by J.M. Robson and Bruce L. Kinzer. Toronto: University of Toronto Press; Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1988.

———. "Westminster Election of 1865 [2]." In *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill Volume XXVIII—Public and Parliamentary Speeches*, edited by J.M. Robson and Bruce L. Kinzer. Toronto: University of Toronto Press; Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1988.

———. “Westminster Election of 1865 [4].” In *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill Volume XXVIII—Public and Parliamentary Speeches*, edited by J.M. Robson and Bruce L. Kinzer. Toronto: University of Toronto Press; Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1988.

———. “The Westminster Election of 1868 [1].” In *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill Volume XXVIII—Public and Parliamentary Speeches*, edited by J.M. Robson and Bruce L. Kinzer. Toronto: University of Toronto Press; Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1988.

———. “Westminster Election of 1868 [3].” In *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill Volume XXVIII—Public and Parliamentary Speeches*, edited by J.M. Robson and Bruce L. Kinzer. Toronto: University of Toronto Press; Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1988.

———. “Representation of the People [1].” In *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill Volume XXVIII—Public and Parliamentary Speeches*, edited by J.M. Robson and Bruce L. Kinzer. Toronto: University of Toronto Press; Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1988.

———. “Reform Meeting in Hyde Park [4].” In *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill Volume XXVIII—Public and Parliamentary Speeches*, edited by J.M. Robson and Bruce L. Kinzer. Toronto: University of Toronto Press; Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1988.

———. “Vindication of the French Revolution of February 1848.” In *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill Volume XX—Essays on French History and Historians*, edited by J.M. Robson Toronto: University of Toronto Press; Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986.

———. “Remarks on Bentham’s Philosophy.” In *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume X—Essay on Ethics, Religion and Society*, edited by J.M. Robson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, London; Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985.

———. “Bentham.” In *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume X—Essay on Ethics, Religion and Society*, edited by J.M. Robson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, London; Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985.

———. “Inaugural Address Delivered to the University of St. Andrews.” In *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill Volume XXI—Essays on Equality, Law, and Education*, edited by J.M. Robson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984.

———. “The Slave Power.” In *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill Volume XXI—Essays on Equality, Law, and Education*, edited by J.M. Robson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984.

———. “The Negro Question.” In *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill Volume XXI—Essays on Equality, Law, and Education,* edited by J.M. Robson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984.

———. “Grote’s History of Greece [I].” In *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume XI—Essays on Philosophy and the Classics,* edited by J.M. Robson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978.

———. “Grote’s Plato.” In *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume XI—Essays on Philosophy and the Classics,* edited by J.M. Robson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978.

———. “Civilization.” In *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill Volume XVIII—Essays on Politics and Society,* edited by J.M. Robson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977.

———. “De Tocqueville on Democracy in America, (II).” In *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill Volume XVIII—Essays on Politics and Society,* edited by J.M. Robson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977.

———. *On Socialism.* Edited by Lewis S. Feur. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1976.

———. “Grote’s History of Greece [II].” In *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume XI—Essays on Philosophy and the Classics,* edited by J.M. Robson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978.

———. “A System of Logic.” In *The Collected Works of J.S. Mill, Volume VIII—A System of Logic Ratiocinative and Inductive, Being a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence and the Methods of Scientific Investigation (Books IV-VI and appendices),* edited by John M. Robson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974.

———. “Letter to William Randal Cremer, March 1, 1867.” In *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume XVI, The Later Letters of John Stuart Mill Part III, 1849-1873,* edited by Francis E. Meneka and Dwight N. Lindley. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972.

———. “Letter to David Urquhart, Oct 26, 1866.” In *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume XVI, The Later Letters of John Stuart Mill Part III, 1849-1873,* edited by Francis

E. Meneka and Dwight N. Lindley. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972.

———. “The Claims of Labour.” In the *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill Volume IV—Essays on Economics and Society,* edited by J.M. Robson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967.

———. “Principles of Political Economy.” In *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill Volume II—Principles of Political Economy, with Some of Their Applications to Social Philosophy, Books I-II,* edited by J.M. Robson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965.

———. “Principles of Political Economy.” In *The Collected Works of J.S. Mill Volume III—Principles of Political Economy, with Some of Their Applications to Social Philosophy, Books III-IV and Appendices,* ed. J.M. Robson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965.

———. “Reorganization of the Reform Party.” In *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume VI—Essays on England, Ireland, and the Empire,* edited by J.M. Robson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963.

———. “Parties and the Ministry.” In *The Collected Works of J.S. Mill, Volume VI—Essays on England, Ireland, and the Empire,* edited by J.M. Robson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963.

———. “Notes on the Newspapers.” In *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume VI—Essays on England, Ireland, and the Empire,* edited by J.M. Robson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963.

———. “Postscript: The Close of the Session.” In *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume VI—Essays on England, Ireland, and the Empire,* edited by J.M. Robson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963.

———. “Letter to William Tait.” In *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume XIII—Earlier Letters, 1812-1848,* edited by Francis E. Mineka. Toronto: University of Toronto Press; Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963.

———. *The Spirit of the Age.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942.

———. *Autobiography of John Stuart Mill.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1924.

Millar, Fergus. *The Crowd in Rome in the Late Republic*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998.

Miller, Arthur. *Death of a Salesman*: *Certain Private Conversations in Two Parts and a Requiem.* New York: Penguin, 1998 [1949].

Mills, C. Wright. *The Power Elite.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1956.

———. *The Sociological Imagination*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970 [1959].

———. *The New Men of Power*: *America's Labor Leaders.* New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1948.

———. *White Collar*: *The American Middle Classes.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002 [1951].

———. "Letter to the New Left." *The New Left Review* no. 5 (1960): 18-23.

———. "Letter to Bill and Bucky." In *C. Wright Mills*: *Letters and Autobiographical Writings*, edited by Kathryn Mills with Pamela Mills. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

Monoson, Sara. *Plato's Democratic Entanglements: Athenian Politics and the Practice of Philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

———."Navigating Race, Class, *Polis*, and Empire: The Place of Empirical Analysis in Aristotle's Theory of Natural Slavery." In *Reading Ancient Slavery*, edited by Richard Alston, Edith Hall and Laura Proffitt, 133-151. London: Bristol Classical Press, 2011.

Mulgan, Richard G. "Aristotle on Oligarchy and Democracy." In *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Politics*, edited by David Keyt and Fred D. Miller, Jr., 307-322. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991.

Myrdal, Gunnar. *An American Dilemma*: *The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy.* New York: Harper and Row, 1962 [1944].

Nackenoff, Carol. “Locke, Alger, and Atomistic Individualism Fifty Years Later: Revisiting Louis Hartz’s *Liberal Tradition in America*.” *Studies in American Political Development* 19, no. 2 (2005): 206–15.

Nelson, Eric. *The Greek Tradition in Republican Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Nichols, Mary. *Citizens and Statesmen: A Study of Aristotle’s Politics*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998.

Nussbaum, Martha C. “Aristotelian Social Democracy.” In *Liberalism and the Good*, edited by R. Bruce Douglass, Gerald M. Mara, and Henry S. Richardson, 203-252. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Ober, Josiah. *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.

———. *Democracy and Knowledge*: *Innovation and Learning in Classical Athens*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.

———. “Democracy’s Wisdom: An Aristotelian Middle Way for Collective Judgment.” *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 1 (2013): 104-122.

O’Leary, Kevin. *Saving Democracy*: *A Plan for Real Representation in America*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016.

O’Neil, Martin and Thad Williamson eds., *Property-Owning Democracy*: *Rawls and Beyond*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2012.

O’Neil, Martin. “Survey Article: Philosophy and Public Policy After Piketty.” *Journal of Political Philosophy.* Advance online publication, August 2, 2017.

Page, Benjamin I., Larry M. Bartels, and Jason Seawright. “Democracy and the Policy Preferences of Wealthy Americans.” *Perspectives on Politics* 11, no. 1 (2013): 51-73.

Pangle, Thomas L. *Aristotle’s Teaching in the Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

Pettit, Philip. *On the People’s Terms*: *A Republican Theory and Model of Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

———. “Republican Freedom and Contestatory Democratization.” In *Democracy’s Value*, edited by Ian Shapiro and Casiano Hacker-Cordon, 163-190. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Piketty, Thomas. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014.

Pitts, Jennifer. *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* Princeton: Princeton University Press 2005.

Pocock, J.G.A. “Between Gog and Magog: The Republican Thesis and the Ideologia Americana.” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 48, no. 2 (1987): 325–46.
The Machiavellian Moment. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975.

Preston, Andrew. “The Spirit of Democracy: Religious Liberty and American Anti-Communism During the Cold War.” In *Uncertain Empire: American History and the Idea of the Cold War*, edited by Joel Isaac and Duncan Bell, 141-163. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Przeworski, Adam. *Democracy and the Limits of Self-Government*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

———. “Minimalist Conception of Democracy: A Defense.” In *Democracy’s Value,* edited by Ian Shapiro and Casino Hacker-Cordon, 23-55. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Przeworski, Adam, Susan C. Stokes, and Bernard Manin, eds. *Democracy, Accountability and Representation.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Rancière, Jacques. *Disagreement*: *Politics and Philosophy*. Translated by Julie Rose. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.

———. *The Philosopher and His Poor*. Translated by John Drury, Andrew Parker, and Corinne Oster. Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2004.

Rawls, John. *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement.* Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2001.

Reich, Rob. “Toward a Political Theory of Philanthropy.” In *Giving Well*, edited by Patricia Illingworth, Thomas Pogge, and Leif Wenar, 177-94. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

———. “On the Role of Foundations in Democracies.” In *Philanthropy in Democratic Societies*, edited by Rob Reich, Chiara Cordelli, and Lucy Bernholz, 64-81. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016.

Riesman, David. *The Lonely Crowd*: *A Study of the Changing American Character.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967 [1950].

Riley, Patrick. “Louis Hartz: The Final Years, the Unknown Work.” *Political Theory* 16, no. 3 (1988): 377–99.

Riley, Jonathan. “Utilitarian Ethics and Democratic Government,” *Ethics* 100, no. 2 (1990): 335-348 at 337.

Roemer, John. “Why the Poor Do Not Expropriate the Rich: An Old Argument in New Garb.” *Journal of Public Economics* 70, no. 3 (1998): 399-424.

Rogin, Michael P. *Ronald Reagan, the Movie*: *and Other Episodes in Political Demonology*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.

Rosen, Frederick. *Jeremy Bentham and Representative Democracy.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983.

Rosenblum, Nancy. *Bentham’s Theory of the Modern State*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978.

Rossi, Enzo and Matt Sleat. “Realism in Normative Political Theory.” *Philosophy Compass* 9/10 (2014: 689-701.

Roazen, Paul. “Introduction.” In *The Necessity of Choice*, edited by Paul Roazen. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1990.

Rueschemeyer, Dietrich, Evelyne H. Stephens, and John D. Stephens. *Capitalist Development and Democracy.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Saffon, Maria Paula and Nadia Urbinati. “Procedural Democracy, the Bulwark of Equal Liberty.” *Political Theory* 41, no. 3 (2013): 441-481.

Salkever, Stephen G. *Finding the Mean: Theory and Practice in Aristotelian Political Philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.

Saunders-Hastings, Emma. "Plutocratic Philanthropy." *Journal of Politics* (forthcoming).

———. "No Better to Give than to Receive: Charity and Women's Subjection in J.S. Mill." *Polity* 46, no. 2 (2014): 233-254.

Schumpeter, Joseph. *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. New York: Harper and Row, 1950 [1942].

Schlesinger, Arthur M. Jr., *The Vital Center*: *The Politics of Freedom*, New Brunswick, NJ.: Transaction Publishers: 1998 [1949].

———. *The Age of Jackson*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1945.

———. *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965.

Schlozman, Kay Lehman, Sidney Verby, and Henry E. Brady. *The Unheavenly Chorus: Unequal Political Voice and the Broken Promise of American Democracy.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012.

Schofield, Philip. *Utility and Democracy: The Political Thought of Jeremy Bentham*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Schumpeter, Joseph. *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy.* New York: Harper and Bros, 1947 [1942].

Schwartzberg, Melissa. "Athenian Democracy and Legal Change." *American Political Science Review* 98 (2004): 311-325.

———. "Aristotle and the Judgment of the Many: Equality, Not Collective Quality." *Journal of Politics* 74, no. 3 (2016): 733-745.

Scott, James C. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.

Selinger, William. “Fighting Electoral Corruption in the Victorian Age: An Overlooked Dimension of John Stuart Mill’s Political Thought.” *European Journal of Political Theory* Published online Sept. 7, 2016.

Shapiro, Ian and Michael J. Graetz. *Death by a Thousand Cuts*: *The Fight over Taxing Inherited Wealth*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.

Shklar, Judith. “The Liberalism of Fear.” In *Liberalism and the Moral Life*, edited by Nancy L. Rosenblum, 21-37. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989.

Shulman, George. *American Prophecy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.

Singer, Peter. “What Should a Billionaire Give—and What Should You.” In *Giving Well*, edited by Patricia Illingworth, Thomas Pogge, and Leif Wenar, 13-25. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Skinner, Quentin. *Visions of Politics*, vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Skocpol, Theda and Alexander Hertel-Fernandez, “The Koch Network and Republican Party Extremism.” *Perspectives on Politics* 14, no. 3 (2016): 681-699.

Skultety, Steven C. “The Threat of Misguided Elites.” In *On Oligarchy: Ancient Lessons for Global Politics*, edited by David E. Tabachnick and Toivo Koivukoski, 90-109. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011.

Smith, F.B. *The Making of the Second Reform Bill.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966.

Smith, Rogers M. “Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions in America.” *The American Political Science Review* 87, no. 3 (1993): 549–566.

Stears, Marc. *Demanding Democracy*: *American Radicals in Search of a New Politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010.

———. “Change We Already Believe In? The Liberal Tradition and the American Left.” In *The American Liberal Tradition Reconsidered*, edited by Mark Hulliung, 90–124. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2010.

Stephanson, Anders. “Cold War Degree Zero.” In *Uncertain Empire: American History and the Idea of the Cold War*, edited by Joel Isaac and Duncan Bell, 19-49. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Strauss, Leo. *The City and Man*. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1964.

———. *Natural Right and History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953.

St. Croix, G.E.M. de. *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World*: *From the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquests*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981.

Stone, I.F. *The Trial of Socrates.* Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1988.

Scheiber, Noam and Patricia Cohen. “For the Wealthiest, a Private Tax System That Saves Them Billions.” *New York Times*, Dec. 30, 2015. Proquest.

Ten, C.L. “Democracy, Socialism, and the Working Classes.” In *The Cambridge Companion to Mill*, edited by John Skorupski, 372-395. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Thachil, Tariq. “Elite Parties and Poor Voters: Theory and Evidence from India.” *American Political Science Review* 108, no. 2 (2014): 454-477.

Thomas, Alan. *Republic of Equals*: *Predistribution and Property-Owning Democracy.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Thompson, Dennis. *John Stuart Mill and Representative Government*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.

Tilly, Charles. *Popular Contention in Great Britain: 1758-1834*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995.

Thompson, E.P. *The Making of the English Working Class.* New York: Vintage Books, 1966 [1963].

Tocqueville, Alexis de. *Democracy in America*. Translated by Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Truman, David B. *The Governmental Process.* New York: Knopf, 1965 [1951].

Turner, Frederick Jackson. *The Frontier in American History*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920.

Urbinati, Nadia. *Mill on Democracy*: *From the Athenian Polis to Representative Government*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.

———. *Democracy Disfigured*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014.

Vogler, Candace A. *John Stuart Mill's Deliberative Landscape*: *An Essay in Moral Psychology*. Routledge, 2001.

Waldron, Jeremy. "The Wisdom of the Multitude: Some Reflections on Book 3, Chapter 11 of Aristotle's Politics." *Political Theory* 23 (1995): 563-584.

———. "Mill on Liberty and on the Contagious Diseases Acts." In *J.S. Mill's Political Thought*: *A Bicentennial Reassessment*, edited by Nadia Urbinati and Alex Zakaras, 11-42. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

———. *Law and Disagreement.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Walsh, Katherine. "Putting Inequality in Its Place: Rural Consciousness and the Power of Perspective." *American Political Science Review* 106, no. 3 (2012): 517-32.

Walzer, Michael. *Interpretation and Social Criticism.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987.

Werner-Müller, Jan. "Fear and Freedom: On 'Cold War Liberalism,' " *European Journal of Political Theory* 7, no. 1 (2008): 45–64.

———. *What is Populism?* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.

White, Stephen K. *The Ethos of a Late Modern Citizen*. Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2009.

———. *Sustaining Affirmation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Whyte, William. *The Organization Man.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956.

Wilentz, Sean. *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln*. New York: Norton, 2005.

Williams, Melissa S. *Voice, Trust, and Memory.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998.

Wilson, James L. “Deliberation, Democracy, and the Rule of Reason in Aristotle’s *Politics*.” *American Political Science Review* 105 (2011): 259-274.

Wilson, Sloan. *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955.

Winter, Yves. “Plebeian Politics: Machiavelli and the Ciompi Uprising.” *Political Theory* 40, no. 6 (2012): 736-766.

Winters, Jeffrey A. *Oligarchy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Winters, Jeffrey A. and Benjamin I. Page, “Oligarchy in the United States?” *Perspectives on Politics* 7, no. 4 (2009): 731-751.

Wood, Gordon S. *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776–1787*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998 [1969].

Wolin, Sheldon S. “Norm and Form: The Constitutionalizing of Democracy.” In *Athenian Political Thought and the Reconstruction of American Democracy*, edited by Peter Euben, John Wallach, and Josiah Ober, 29-58. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.

———. "Fugitive Democracy." In *Democracy and Difference*, edited by Seyla Benhabib. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

———. *Democracy Incorporated*: *Managed Democracy and the Specter of Inverted Totalitarianism*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008.

Wood, Ellen Meiksins and Neil Wood. *Class Ideology and Ancient Political Theory*: *Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle in Social Context.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978.

Woodward, C. Vann ed. *The Comparative Approach to American History.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1997 [1968].

Yack, Bernard. *The Problems of a Political Animal: Community, Justice, and Conflict in Aristotle’s Political Thought.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Zerilli, Linda. *Signifying Woman: Culture and Chaos in Machiavelli, Burke, and Mill.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.

Zumbrunnen, John. *Silence and Democracy: Athenian Politics and Thucydides' History*. University Park PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008.