CONTESTATION AND DISCURSIVE PRACTICE:
ISSUES FOR PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

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ABSTRACT

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The dissertation discusses two different views of democratic politics from the standpoint of the problem of increasing democratic participation in a context of conflict, inequality, and domination. The two philosophers Jürgen Habermas and Ernesto Laclau draw on different conceptions of language. Their concern with language includes the recognition that power is always mediated through language. We focus on deliberative democracy developed by Jürgen Habermas and hegemonic democracy developed by Ernesto Laclau. We contrast these perspectives and assess them primarily in how they serve the political contestation essential to democratic politics in specific. The four terms of analysis are power, participation, performativity (symmetry/asymmetry) and grounds for criticism (conception of the good society and democratic norms).

Both philosophers respond to the historical context of unresolved theoretical questions within Marxism and in terms of historical conditions which Marx did not anticipate. The second chapter deals with the historical milieu of Marx's engagement with democracy and the issues that arise in its application. It is in response to this context that they bring in language to account for how democratic movements can coalesce and people can be involved in the democratic process. Habermas addresses this with communicative action and Laclau does so through hegemony.

The third and fourth chapters deal with each philosopher. The deliberative democracy of Habermas builds on the simple recognition that the goal of language, seen in the agreements we

reach daily, is to reach an understanding. This offers the true possibility of participatory democracy.   People bring a variety of interests into a dialogue from which emerge interests that are generalized and help shape the process of democratic will-formation. The hegemonic democracy of Laclau builds on poststructural language theory organized around difference that does not privilege reason. For Laclau, the democratic power struggle follows the linguistic pattern of forming 'empty signifiers' out of social demands and appropriating 'floating signifiers' in contestation between hegemonic projects. This is an unstable process that seeks to dislocate power. Laclau's hegemonic democracy offers a challenge to Habermas' deliberative democracy which attempts to privilege reason in order to contain the mix of forces such that the best argument prevails in an unforced agreement. In the end, hegemonic democracy does not offer sufficient direction toward participatory democracy.

The contestation in the deliberative democracy of Habermas through the reciprocity of offering validity claims to one another is the reciprocity that makes democracy possible. It promotes space for the democratic contestation among diverse visions of the good society, such that it affirms contextual location of specific viewpoints along with the context-transcending possibility of agreement to democratic norms on the way to a good society for all. This is the ongoing conversation of democratic contestation.

This Dissertation is dedicated to
Richard Peterson for believing in me and encouraging me,
my sister Carol, my mother Lillian and my daughters Grace and Laura
for consistent love and support.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Politics has always been marked by contestation. Throughout most of history the will of the people has not played a leading role in this contestation. Democracy offers the promise of the will of the people playing the leading role. By most standards democracy has fallen short on this and elites continue to dominate political contestation. The form political contestation takes is a major concern in the deliberative democracy of Jürgen Habermas and in the hegemonic democracy of Ernesto Laclau. Habermas seeks conditions for the best argument to prevail over the interference of power and money. Laclau believes the struggle must be entered with awareness of how hegemony is formed. Laclau offers a powerful description of the way political identities are formed in the mix of forces and discursive possibilities that do not privilege reason. This offers a worthy challenge to Habermas, who attempts to privilege reason in order to contain the mix of forces such that the best argument prevails. My concern is to draw on these two approaches in order to support increased non-elite participation in political contestation.

The dissertation will present Laclau's theory as a constructive application of post-structuralist theory to politics and then show that in the end its lack of what Maeve Cooke calls, "normative grounds for his own preferred option of radical democracy" (Cooke, 2006, 92) leaves it conceptually deficient for improving non-elite involvement in the decision-making of modern democratic states. Habermas' theory will be presented as a better vehicle for improving non-elite involvement in the decision-making of modern democratic states. Criticism of Habermas' theory will be offered by drawing on Laclau's insights on the need for dislocating the prevailing order in order to challenge discourse ethics to more effectively speak to the conflictual aspects of political realities.

Ernesto Laclau approaches politics with a language theory that is based on the relations of differences. Difference marks all relations and therefore opposes all settled identities and dislocates totalities such that they cannot be complete, therefore the ensuing political theory cannot close off contestation and cannot rule out coercion. Laclau accepts the deconstructionist position that violence is involved in the origins of any discourse and that violence remains embedded in discourse, such that it cannot be excised. This also claims the key place of difference which in this case inhabits the origins of discourse and political power. Difference as the key to his language theory dislocates all authority and with it any normative perspective that could disallow coercion or violence. Later we will explore how this plays out in social existence on the ontological and ontic levels. For Laclau, the democratic power struggle follows the linguistic pattern of forming empty signifiers out of social demands and appropriating floating signifiers in contestation between hegemonic projects.

Jürgen Habermas approaches politics with a language theory that relies on reaching an understanding. His theory of language presents communication as part of a learning process that enables everyday problem solving and discursive will-formation in groups. He uses the ideal speech situation to criticize the distorting influences of power and violence that interfere with the force of the unforced agreement guiding democratic decision-making. Habermas is seeking to move the unfinished project of modernity forward. The Enlightenment challenged prevailing authority and sought to lift up reason as the only authority. Various problems have emerged with the Enlightenment project including its own foundationalism. In response to this, Habermas has sought to avoid foundationalism while maintaining a key place for reason in order to include some form of normativity, which would be a normative rationality. He also responded to the dead end of reason that Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno ran into and that can be said to

fuel much of the postmodern/ poststructuralist mistrust of reason. The key moment for Habermas' development was the realization that is was instrumental reason that hit the dead end and that communicative reason had been ignored. Through communicative reason human beings can decide together on their own normative standards.

Laclau's theory of language helps him articulate the mix of coercion and consent that make democracy a hegemonic struggle in Western democracies. This is a descriptive presentation of democracy. It is a description that emerges from adjustments in Marxist theory. Antonio Gramsci sought to analyze the political situation in Italy with the advances in capitalism and separation between workers in the North and peasants in the South in order to further the cause of Marxism to enhance the proletarian revolution. Gramsci's view of hegemony stressed the need for the working class to make alliances with other sectors. Struggle identifies this contest for Laclau, not reasoning together. No one expects the ruling class to give up power. It does not appear possible to Laclau to separate the two aspects (coercion and consent) of hegemony. This decision means that he is not able to articulate a direction for democracy that favors working for a process that increases the role of the participation of a greater number of the citizens over the influence (coercion and manipulation of consent) of the ruling elites. This entails an acceptance of the prevailing functioning of western democracy, in which elites (dominant classes) have political power that far exceeds their numbers in the population. The general approach of contemporary political science follows a similar pattern by analyzing how the elites rule, without concern for the participation of citizens. Laclau's approach does not offer direction for inclusion of non-elites (those with less power) in democratic decision-making. Habermas' theory of language allows for the articulation of a process that makes the case for a wider inclusion of non-elites in democratic decision-making. Habermas can be seen as seeking

to move the democratic struggle away from coercion beyond consent to self-legislation. Since Laclau will not make this move away from coercion – consent spectrum, he does not provide a way for the participation of the ordinary citizens to increase.

The dissertation will present each philosophers' language theory as the framework by which they approach politics. Each framework enables as well as limits the analysis and proposals possible for the contestation involved in democracy. There is one surprising connection between the quite different approaches. Both project a type of unity emerging from diverse viewpoints. For Laclau it is the emergence of an empty signifier to unite a series of demands in such a way that it forms a 'people' that are a political movement. For Habermas people bring a variety of interests into a dialogue out of which emerge generalizable interests that then shape the will-formation of a group. This similarity is not enough to unite the two approaches, but helps frame that both share a similarity in their approaches to democracy which merits further analysis. Contestation is structured differently for each theorist. For Laclau the emphasis on difference and lack of closure means no rules can organize contestation. The form of democracy that the difference of language allows is hegemony in which social demands are temporarily unified around an empty signifier in a never ending contest of power that cannot privilege fair processes or rational agreement. Habermas seeks to make contestation less a contest of power. He seeks to structure a process of reason-giving that is more rational and productive. His emphasis on reaching an understanding invites participants to bring their viewpoints and interests into a contest of argumentation that is open to the possibility of arriving at an understanding for the good of all involved in the discussion. The reasons brought into the discussion may not all be "reasonable," but the process involves the exchange of reasons and possibility of changing one's mind. Thus we see very different approaches to contestation.

Habermas seeks to level the playing field for all contestants by removing the advantages held by the dominant players. Laclau does not believe a process for leveling the playing field can be established and therefore the hegemonic struggle itself is the only way to challenge domination. In a democratic socialist society power needs to be guided by reason that serves the common good of all and not just the elite.

Chapter Two

***Engaging Marx and Language to Develop a Critical Social Theory
for Democratic Contestation***

<u>Marx and Democracy</u>

The challenge for this chapter is to develop terms with which to analyze the contributions to a democratic theory of contestation by two very different theories of language. The effort to find a common ground from which to develop terms for analysis will begin with Karl Marx, because Laclau and Habermas have developed their theories from roots in the Marxist tradition. Emerging from this tradition they seek to fulfill its democratic potential. Marx's association of free producers presents a picture of democracy in its fullest sense beyond the confines of liberalism so that it is unhindered by economic division and domination. This can be seen as a radicalization of democracy to be more inclusive of politically and socially relevant factors that are currently blocked by the free market of capitalist relations. Marx's view of contestation is centered on the class struggle for control of the means of production. We will first examine Marx and the place of democracy in his theory. Then we will examine how each of our theorists: a) assesses Marx in his own terms; b) points to historical changes that need to be accommodated and c) brings a linguistic understanding to these issues. This examination will lead to the changes their perspectives bring to the key elements in democracy and democratic change. Out of this encounter, we will be prepared for their emphasis on contestation.

To understand Marx's perspective on democracy we have to overcome the lack of democracy in the prominent nations that have claimed to be Marxist which has resulted in a common on-the-street misperception that Marx is opposed to democracy The history of the Communist Parties uses of Marxism cannot be ignored, but it is not an appropriate starting point from which to explore Marx's perspective on democracy. Alongside of this history is the history

of those inspired by Marx to seek greater democracy. We can see this in soviets, the original building blocks of the Russian Revolution. It is also evident in the movement of unions in Great Britain aligned with the Labour party which have worked for industrial democracy (Ginsborg, 2008, 15).

Marx on Democratic Efforts during his Lifetime

Marx lived and wrote during the emergence of modern democracy in Europe. Democracy as analyzed by Alexander de Tocqueville in his study of democracy in the United States was egalitarian and anti-aristocratic (Levin, 1989, 9-11). Socialism then can be seen as one part of this general movement toward greater equality (Levin, 1). In the foreword to <u>Marx, Engels and Liberal Democracy</u> David McLellan states that Marx and Engels saw themselves as heirs of the Enlightenment (Levin, 1989, xiii). Their understanding that democratic political equality is an illusion without social and economic equality fits well with my understanding of the potential for participatory democracy (Levin, 1989, xiv). Marx is described as "no theorist of the leading or ruling party, or even authoritative political leadership as such. Marx insisted that economic issues belong in the definition of democracy and on the agenda of democratic regimes" (Carver, 20).

My examination of Marx and democracy will begin with his comments and analysis on the contemporary events of his day. These events include the revolutionary events of 1848, the Paris Commune and the engagement of socialists in the democratic political process. Included will be the problems Marx saw in bourgeois or liberal democracy. We will also follow Hal Draper to examine what the term dictatorship meant at the time of Marx's writing. Through Marx's analysis we will see not merely his analysis of the political events of his time, but we will also gain a sense of his understanding of the institutional issues that are salient for democracy as

a political system. Once we have traced this analysis we will turn to Marx's analysis of the

capitalist mode of production, in order to see the limits, it places on democracy through

alienation and fetishism and the potential for democracy once the capitalist mode of production

is overcome. We will follow the thread between alienation in the Early Marx and the fetishism of

commodities in the Later Marx and the relation this has to democracy. This will reinforce Marx's

understanding that liberal democracy is limited by the class rule of the bourgeoisie which resists

the role that the proletarian majority could play. Marx's class analysis leads to the understanding

that true democracy can only happen as the working class takes the lead in establishing

democracy that will also entail overthrowing the capitalist mode of production.

      As editor of the *Rheinische Zeitung* and later as editor of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*,

Marx was supportive of the emerging movement for democracy. This movement was made up

of a variety of forces from the rising petty-bourgeoisie to the proletariat. He supported the

challenge to the autocratic rule of monarchies and the move toward representative institutions,

but saw problems within this movement that limited the role of the working classes (Levin, 1989,

30). As he looked at these events Marx held that the proletariat must become the decisive factor

to turn the revolution of a minority into a revolution of the majority (Marx, 1935, 15). In The

Class Struggles in France and The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, Marx explained and

analyzed the events of this time period. He dealt with the historical contingencies as the

structures of society were shaken and the various social forces entered the arena that has been

opened up by the turmoil of democratic aspirations. He consistently criticized the present and

pressed toward a new future. He states, "The social revolution of the nineteenth century cannot

draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future" (Tucker, 1972, 439).

      The Paris Commune of 1871 serves as the clearest pointer to what Marx means by

democracy. Democracy was carried out beyond some of the economic constraints imposed by capitalism. Limited by the historical contingencies that brought it about within the context of the defeat of France by Prussia and the upheaval of the nation, nevertheless the Commune accomplished much. Marx affirms the struggle without "ready-made utopias" that led to this achievement. "They [the working class] know that in order to work out their own emancipation, and along with it that higher form to which present society is irresistibly tending by its own economical agencies, they will have to pass through long struggles, through a series of historic processes transforming circumstances and men. They have no ideals to realize, but to set free the elements of the new society with which old collapsing bourgeois society itself is pregnant" (Tucker, 1972, 558). Whatever prescriptions Marx may offer for the future society, we see here a celebration of the democratic accomplishments of the Commune. It took "the management of the revolution in its own hands; when plain working men for the first time dared to infringe on the Governmental privilege of their 'natural superiors,' and, under circumstances of unexampled difficulty, performed their work modestly, conscientiously, and efficiently, …" (Tucker, 1972, 558).

Proclaiming it the antithesis of the empire and the positive form of the Republic, Marx praises the many "democratic elements" of the Commune (Tucker, 1972, 554). The standing army had been replaced by the armed people as the National Guard. The Commune was formed by municipal councilors, who were chosen by universal suffrage from the wards of the city of Paris.

The councilors and all other officials of the government including the police held only revocable short terms. The Commune operated openly for the public to see and published "its doings and sayings" (Tucker, 1972, 562). Churches were disestablished such that the power of the priests

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was taken out of public life. "Education was made accessible to all" (Tucker, 1972, 554). Marx called it "self-government of the producers" (Tucker, 1972, 555) with "really democratic institutions" (Tucker, 1972, 557). Marx continues in his praise the Commune was "a thoroughly expansive political form, while all previous governments had been emphatically repressive. Its true secret was this. It was essentially a working-class state, the produce of the struggle of the producing against the appropriating class, the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economic emancipation of labour" (Tucker, 1972, 557). Marx saw the potential for this type of democracy, as it showed democracy's potential beyond the confines of capitalist production. "The political rule of the producer cannot coexist with the perpetuation of his social slavery. The Commune was to serve as a lever for uprooting the economical foundations upon which rests the existence of classes and therefore of class-rule, which constrains and compromises full democracy. "With labour emancipated, every man becomes a working man, and productive labour ceases to be a class attribute" (Tucker, 1972, 557). Marx goes on to celebrate the Commune's abolition of private property, "Yes, … the Commune intended to abolish that class-property which makes the labour of the many the wealth of the few … It wanted to make individual property a truth by transforming the means of production, land and capital, now chiefly the means of enslaving and exploiting labour, into mere instruments of free and associated labour" (Tucker, 1972, 557). Beyond this, Marx saw the Commune as a model for the whole nation of France (Tucker, 1972, 555). Levin gives this analysis. "The Paris Commune was a more radical version of representative democracy than a liberal democracy aspires to. The dictatorship of the proletariat can be viewed as democratic according to ancient Greek definitions. Communism and its transcendence of politics may be seen as democratic in the terms widely popularized by Tocqueville that is democracy as the process of social leveling

(Levin, 1989, 138). The Paris Commune gives us a glimpse of radical democracy and Marx's own affirmative analysis demonstrates his democratic proclivities. This one case does not make the whole case for Marx's perspective on democracy, but it does illustrate his holistic democratic commitment. After examining Marx's assessment of socialist participation in the parliamentary process we will explore the democratic possibilities within the term "dictatorship of the proletariat."

Marx clearly had criticisms and reservations about the functioning of electoral politics (i.e. representative democracy) of his day. Marx understood the importance and also the limitation of the bourgeois revolution. Levin states, "Time and time again Marx and Engels bemoaned the use made of working-class power by other interests which, having once securely established themselves, then deny the workers any of the fruits of victory" (Levin, 1989, 88). Marx discusses this in The Eighteenth Brumaire; he refers to the second period as the reduction of the Revolution to a bourgeois scale (Tucker, 1972, 442). The bourgeoisie led the other classes against the isolated proletariat, thus excluding them from the benefits of the political progress (Tucker, 1972, 443). This type of criticism reflects the severe limitation that the bourgeois control over the means of production puts on democracy. Once this class had achieved its goals, it did not want the revolution to continue on to serve the interests of all the people, including the working class. Let us move on to the positive movement that Marx saw in the democracy of his day.

Marx's positive views on Chartism and the German Social Democratic Party contained "criticisms of certain theoretical and tactical failures, but not of parliamentary orientation as such," which leads Levin to claim that for Marx, the "parliamentary and revolutionary paths are not mutually exclusive," (Levin, 1989, 96) Marx looked to nations like Switzerland and the

United States as possibilities for democracy and peaceful change (Tucker, 1972, 395). It was a challenge for the current political landscape to support workers' political interests. Socialist elected officials August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht faced political repression and arrest for expressing their radical views (Levin, 1989, 103). Nevertheless, Marx could praise the success of elections in 1874 (Levin, 1989, 104). Marx looked to a time when the sovereignty of the people could be expressed in a democratic republic (i.e. representative democracy) (Tucker, 1972, 395).

Dictatorship of the Proletariat

Hal Draper dedicates volume three of his five volume work Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution to the "Dictatorship of the Proletariat." Of key importance for my work, Draper helps to break down the assumption I share with many that the term dictatorship always refers to something in direct opposition to democracy. This is not simply a clear cut once and for all clarification, but it does open the way to see a greater openness to democracy on Marx's part. Draper's main thesis is that "For Marx and Engels, from the beginning to the end of their careers and without any exception, dictatorship of the proletariat meant nothing more and nothing less than "the rule of the proletariat," the "conquest of political power" by the working class, the establishment of a workers' state in the first postrevolutionary period" (Draper, 1986, 213). He clarifies what "nothing more and nothing less" means, by stating that the term "does not refer to any particular characteristics, methods or institutions of proletarian rule" (Draper, 1986, 213). The concept is open for greater specificity. In his Introduction to Marx's The Civil War in France written in 1891, Engels equates dictatorship of the proletariat with the democracy of the Paris Commune (Tucker, 1972, 537). This seems to be an oversimplification, but nevertheless supports further exploration.

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In a footnote, Draper includes a surprising modern reference to the use of dictatorship within the operation of modern democracy in the United States. In 1974, Vice-President Gerald Ford referred to the possibility of a veto-proof Congress as "legislative dictatorship" (Draper, 1986, 29). Ford was concerned that control by the Democratic Party of more than two-thirds of each chamber of Congress, would severely weaken the power of the Presidency. This may be a valid political concern for a Republican Party member in the United States, but it would hardly have been a violation of the meaning and functioning of democracy.[1] This type of definition of dictatorship would fit as a "dictatorship of a popular body," (Draper. 1986, 28-29) that would be part of democracy and not in opposition to it.

Dictatorship also had the same negative associations we generally connect with it for people in 1848, but it also as associated with 'the dictatorship of the Democracy.' This discussion appeared in Marx's journal *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*. Democracy is connected to popular sovereignty (Draper, 1986, 61). Draper claims that the entire left of 1848 saw the goal as "the victory of the Democracy, the ascendancy of the Democracy, the dominance of the Democracy, or – To use another expression representative of the time, the *dictatorship* of the Democracy" (Draper, 1986, 60). For Marx, "the Democracy" meant the alliance of the three working classes (proletariat, petty-bourgeoisie, and small peasantry) lined up against the economically dominant class of the bourgeoisie that was connected to the state power of the Crown and its traditional supporters. In 1848, the goal of the revolution was democracy (Draper, 1986, 60). Germany's Liberal Prime Minister, Gottfried Camphausen resisted calls for change

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[1] President Ford mentions 'legislative dictatorship' in speeches on October 19, 1974 in Greensboro, North Carolina (http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=4492) and in Louisville, Kentucky (http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=4493). He discussed it again on October 29 when he spoke in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He said, "Well, I respect those who want to vote for a legislative dictatorship…," but he saw it as a threat to the system of checks and balances.(http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=4531)

of "the system of indirect voting to direct voting." He used the term "dictatorship" to refer to defying the Crown with the practice of popular sovereignty. In this case, dictatorship referred to democracy (Draper, 1986, 61).

Marx saw the three working class alliance for democracy as led by the proletariat, so his view of democracy did not rest there. He looked to the conquest of political or state power in what he called "the political rule of the proletariat" (Draper, 1986, 112). In the Communist Manifesto, "the winning of democracy" is referred to "as the elevation of proletariat to the ruling class" (Draper, 1986, 113; Tucker, 1972, 352). In 1842, an English liberal parliamentarian Thomas Babington Macaulay expressed opposition to universal suffrage as proposed by the Chartists, because if the majority of people ruled they would act as a dictatorship to threaten and overthrow the establishment view of capital and property (Draper, 1986, 114). Democracy as the rule of the majority is perceived as a threat to the *status quo*. In Marx's eyes, the goal of democracy was precisely to overthrow the *status quo*.

The challenge to the *status quo* will never be taken lightly by those in power. In the Communist Manifesto we read that when proletariat takes the role of the ruling class, it "sweeps away by force the old conditions of production, then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class" (Tucker, 1972, 353). Then democracy will flourish in "an association, in which the free development of each is the condition of the free development of all" (Tucker, 1972, 353). The term 'force,' requires some discussion in relation to 'dictatorship.' Marx sets the hypothetical dictatorship of the elected representative body against the counterrevolution of the temporarily defeated absolutist state power (Draper, 1986, 64). Engels with input from Marx saw that an assembly elected by the people at that time would

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have needed to act to take over the functions of government and secure itself against opposition by those holding on to power with "an organized and armed force" (Draper, 1986, 66, reference to <u>Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany</u>).[2] This would be the coercive use of state power commonly associated with government.

Draper refers to the meaning of dictatorship in this time period as the "emergency assumption of power" as something temporary more like martial law (Draper, 1986, 11). This has roots in the ancient understanding of *dictatura* within the Roman Republic. Dictatorship of one person was "constitutional and legal," "temporary" and "limited." It worked for three centuries and then broke down (Draper, 1986, 11). This also fits with the state-of-siege provision put into the French Constitution (Draper, 1986, 53). It seems similar to the "state of exception" John Locke thought was necessary for liberal democracy.[3] In recent history we witnessed the lack of commitment to democracy in Chile in 1973 after a long history of civilian democratic government. The fairly elected government of Salvador Allende was overthrown with backing from the United States.   A commitment to the market and U.S. interests took precedence over democracy, thus stretching the meaning of conditions appropriate for exception. This example points out the irony in relation to the common perception. In Chile, Marxists operated democratically and liberals acted against democracy. The Marxist FMLN in El Salvador fought a war against dictatorship and signed peace accords and now is an electoral participant in the democratic process.

The Pinochet regime continued for over sixteen years. Temporary is essential for

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[2] Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany was first published as a series of articles in The New York Tribune in 1851-1852 and as a book in 1896 http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/germany/index.htm)

[3] In the Second Treatise on Civil Government (Buffalo, N.Y: Prometheus Books, 1986, p. 89, Locke states, in Chapter XIV "Of Prerogative," that "This power to act according to discretion for the public good, without the prescription of the law and sometimes against it"

dictatorship not to eliminate democracy. Who decides when the temporary time is over? This is not simply an issue for Marx, but demonstrates that liberal democracy faces the challenge of accepting dictatorship and cannot only attribute this problem to Marx. In the early 1850s Marx argued against Blanquist and Jacobin-communist tendencies that favored "the revolutionary dictatorship of the party or communist band" and the "dictatorship *of* the proletariat" was Marx's alternative to "dictatorship *over* the proletariat" (Draper, 1986, 264). We can argue that Marx would have opposed the dictatorship of the proletariat, in the Soviet Union because it was a "dictatorship of a vanguard party" rather than a true "dictatorship of the proletariat."

The term dictatorship does not have an absolutely clear relationship with democracy, but the democratic possibilities for Marx's conception of the dictatorship of the proletariat still stand. The proletariat could not take power without the support of the other working classes and there could be no revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat without support from the majority of the people (Draper, 1986, 180).

It is important to note the way Marx counter posed "dictatorship of the proletariat" to "dictatorship of the bourgeoisie" (Draper, 1986, 296). The point is to challenge the label of democracy for a system that excluded the majority from participation. The economic power of the bourgeoisie extended their control into the political sphere. "Proletarian class rule" would operate "to <u>maximize</u> rule from below," as opposed to bourgeois democracy which sought to <u>limit</u> control from below (emphasis added, Draper, 1986, 115). For Marx, liberal democracy was distorted by its commitment to private property and was a "servant of private property" (Levin, 1989, 35). The understanding of liberty coincided with narrow class interests such that liberty could not lead to equality and fraternity the other two terms that along with liberty made up the motto of the French Revolution (Levin, 1989, 64).

**The Fetishism of Commodities at the Heart of Marx's
Approach to Democracy**

It has been important to discuss and analyze Marx's specific dealings with democracy in the events he experienced within the contingencies of history. This has given us concrete information on his practical approach to democracy. Now we shift to place this in the context of the basic conceptuality of his approach. The crux of Marx's critique of political economy is his analysis of the social structure of the modern world in relation to the capitalist mode of production. The role of the struggle for democracy is in the political arena (superstructure), which is dependent on the capitalist mode of production (base). At the heart of Marx's conceptual approach in the critique of the capitalist mode of production is the fetishism of commodities which has essential implications for his view of democracy and the economic power of the bourgeoisie as discussed above. When the capitalist mode of production is overcome democracy can function in relation to the communist mode of production.

Georg Lukacs expresses the extensive reach of commodification, "It is no accident that Marx should have begun with an analysis of commodities when, in the two great works of his mature period, he set out to portray capitalist society in its totality and to lay bare its fundamental nature. For at this stage in the history of mankind there is no problem that does not ultimately lead back to that question and there is no solution that could not be found in the solution to the riddle of commodity-*structure* ... That is to say, the problem of commodities must not be considered in isolation or even regarded as the central problem in economics, but as the central, structural problem of capitalist society in all its aspects" (Lukacs, 1923, 83).

A line can be drawn from the young Marx's analysis of alienation to the later Marx's analysis of the fetishism of commodities. Marx expresses alienation in four steps. First, workers use their own labor to make a product, which is not theirs, but belongs to the owner of the

business. The owner takes the product from the worker and sells it on the market. Workers are separated and thus alienated from the work of their hands. The product of labor becomes an alien object dominating the person.

Second, is alienation from one's own activity, because one's labor is not an end in itself. That is, work is no longer meaningful in itself; it is only important because workers receive wages. For Marx work is an essential part of what it means to be human. Third, out of these two steps arises alienation from one's consciousness as a human being or species being. Marx describes this as objectifying species-life. When the object of labor is taken from humans they lose their essence, which is what separates them from the other species that do not have this consciousness. Humans lose their consciousness as universal beings. The final step in alienation is humans from one another. Instead of claiming the unity of human beings as workers, workers see each other as competitors. Their relationship is through the exchange of commodities rather that as between persons (Easton and Guddat 1967, 287-297).[4] For Marx, "the work sinks to the level of a commodity" and all distinctions disappear until "the whole society must divide into the two classes of proprietors and propertyless workers" (Easton and Guddat 1967, 287). This lack of social relations then undercuts the ground from which democracy grows.

Marx links the whole process of alienation to the money system (Easton and Guddat 1967, 288). Later in Capital, we will see this in the analysis of the fetishism of commodities, which in capitalist society distorts the social relations of the whole society and hides the need for democratic legitimation, especially as this process appears to be "natural." In Chapter One of Capital, Marx explains how this comes about, and then offers an answer that supports the democratic rationality of people before profits.

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[4]. The four steps are found in the section entitled "Alienated Labor."

First, an object is produced by human labor because it satisfies a human need (or want). This object is useful. It is a use-value. It is transferred to another who desires its use-value. It becomes important to the seller and buyer for its exchange-value. This exchange turns the humanly produced product into a commodity. A product of labor may be useful, but the reason sufficient to produce it is not its use-value. Rather it is the exchange-value, its nature as a commodity that determines its production. The value of exchange then becomes a quantity in relation to other commodities, which ultimately becomes most clearly measured in terms of money, "the universal equivalent" (Marx, 1967, 69). Commodity fetishism creates "material relations between persons and social relations between things" (Marx, 1967, 73). People don't relate to one another directly, but indirectly through their products. The organizing power of the market in the economy is not seen as a human creation, but due to the inversion of fetishism, it seems like a natural phenomenon. It also makes the power relations seem natural and therefore without the need for change. The power that accrues to the bourgeoisie is not seen as their control of the situation, but as a natural reward for their investments. The wealth they gain is seen as a natural result of economics and a necessary component for the economy to produce for the good of all. Since the market is "natural," people also do not see the necessity for political legitimation. In contemporary times it is often portrayed as a merely a realm for the technical control of experts, beyond the reach of democratic contestation.

Marx shows the fetishism of commodities in its central distorting role that replaces human activity to rationally organize society with the exchange of commodities. The fetish has impeded open and rational decisions about the direction of society. We especially see this in the wide division between rich and poor under the capitalist system. A minority made up of the wealthy has controlled the means of production; which are thus been removed from fundamental

democratic control or the need for legitimation. From this insight, we can begin to move toward a rationality that supports the production of the economy to benefit all and not only a few. Involving all of the members of a society in democratic decision making, will give legitimation to societal actions.

For democracy to function power relations need to be made transparent and then legitimated. We can see democracy functioning in Marx's Association of Free People, "Freedom in this field can only consist in socialized man, the associated producers, rationally regulating their interchange with Nature, bringing it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by the blind forces of Nature; and achieving this with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most favourable to, and worthy of their human nature" (Tucker, 1972, 320). When it is seen that the market depends on the relations between the activities and decisions of the owners, managers, and the workers "and are not disguised under the shape of social relations between the products of labour," (Marx 1967, 77) then human beings can begin to move away from the idolatry of the market and take responsibility for the structures of society and move toward democracy in relation to the communist mode of production.

Marx's look at relationships not fetishized by commodification leads to his understanding of democracy. He looks at it in three ways. The first way is philosopher's favorite myth of Robinson Crusoe alone on an island. He does not exchange with anyone as the different necessary tasks he carries out are just different forms of his own labor and he does not suffer from alienation. The second way looks at feudalism in the Middle Ages, where the power relations that determined personal relationships were clear in the social hierarchy and not hidden behind economic relationships. This is life before products became alienable from their particular place as pointed out in the work of E.P. Thompson (Thompson 2006, 121). With the

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third way, we see the clearest step toward the association of free people. Marx offers the example of a self-sufficient peasant family. They work to produce for the family's needs and they still have direct social relations because no commodity exchange steps between them. They see their own labor as part of the social labor of the whole family (Marx 1967, 78). Marx describes the community of free individuals as a social Robinson Crusoe. In the family we see another positive example. The individual's labor as a portion of the social labor of the whole family becomes in the association of free people - the whole labor power of society. Their use of tools and technology, again like the solitary Robinson Crusoe, do not lead to the alienation of the fetishism of commodities.

We have seen Marx directly discuss democracy and affirm its spread to include those excluded by class division. His vision of democracy finds its most concrete expression in the Paris Commune of 1871. We have learned that the term dictatorship as used by Marx does not function in opposition to democracy but as part of it. At the heart of Marx's theory, we have seen how the fetishism of commodities reveals capitalism's inherent resistance to democratic control. At a minimum, this section on Marx demonstrates that he had commitment to democracy. More than this it also demonstrates Marx's commitment to full sense of social, economic and political democracy as a goal of his work. The role this plays in this dissertation is to lay ground from which Habermas and Laclau can and will build their theories of democracy. They will both differentiate themselves from a variety of Marx's positions and expectations. We turn next to how they build their theories of democracy from their beginnings within the Marxist framework.

Engagement with Marx

Habermas's roots are in the Frankfurt School's approach to Marxism. Laclau was a

socialist activist in his native Argentina before moving into academia. The emphasis on language is fundamental in the work of Habermas and Laclau and thus effected their reception and ongoing application of Marx. Habermas builds on the approach to language that emerges from the work of Johann Georg Hamann, Wilhelm von Humboldt, and Johann Gottfried von Herder through the hermeneutic philosophy of Hans Georg Gadamer. Laclau builds on the approach to language that emerges from the poststructuralist interpretation of the language theory of Ferdinand de Saussure through the deconstruction of Jacques Derrida. Marx had stressed the economic base for social relations and had given the revolutionary role to the proletariat. The emphasis on language has led Habermas and Laclau to take Marxism in a more explicitly discursive and democratic direction that is less dependent on the economic base. A major concern in our investigation is whether the theorists continue Marx's project of the struggle for liberation in their theories of democracy.

Habermas: Building on Marx

In this section, we will explore Habermas's view of Marx's theory in its own conceptual terms and in relation to the historical developments in contemporary society that effect democracy. We will begin with a brief discussion of Habermas's relationship to the Frankfurt School's interpretation of Marxism. Habermas criticizes and supplements Marx's theory in a variety of ways, primarily around the importance of communicative reason. This goes to the heart of Marx's theory in the fetishism of commodities. We will first follow Habermas's account of communicative reason as the companion of instrumental reason in the evolution of humanity. These forms of reason correspond to the forms of action, interaction and labor. The evolution of the species moves from biological to social in Habermas's conception of social evolution, which he develops in his reconstruction of historical materialism. His conception of the communicative

and social aspect of humanity contributes to the central place of democracy in Habermas's work. Secondly, we will examine how Habermas maintains his connection to Marx that despite the problems he finds in Marx's theory, Habermas is still concerned with the kind of issues posed by the fetishism of commodities. We will see this in his mature theory of communicative action. Intertwined with the basic market and labor aspects in the fetishism of commodities Habermas articulates a communicative aspect. The distortion of communication that disrupts democracy in the modern world results from the fetishism of commodities. Habermas seeks to overcome the distortion caused by the fetishism of commodities with communicative action and discourse ethics. In the development of his theory of democracy Habermas is consistently building on the work of Marx.

Habermas brings Marx into dialogue with modern thinkers like Weber and Parsons in the fashion of the interdisciplinary work of the Frankfurt School. Horkheimer and Adorno not only ran into a dead end with reason, they also reached a crisis in terms of Marxism. They associated reason with instrumental reason that had incapacitated modern reason in 20th Century. This set Habermas on course to seek a solution. This led him to see that reason is not just about the most efficient means of instrumental use, but that persons also use reason in communicative interaction to coordinate action. Horkheimer and Adorno no longer saw the proletariat as the revolutionary subject who would bring about the socialist revolution. When a significant portion of the working class nationalistically sided with their own nations in World War I and subsequently supported Fascism it produced a crisis for these Marxists. Herbert Marcuse can be seen as one who reworked his Marxism to make adjustments to the political reality. Habermas similarly seeks to create a relevant version of Marxism and this leads him to supplement Marx's labor paradigm with a greater focus on language and communicative reason. We will need to

investigate the nature of this development. Does it move Habermas into the post-Marxist camp?

Does it help adjust Marx's project of the struggle for liberation to changing circumstances? This

will also involve the importance that Habermas gives to democratic discussion in the public

sphere and the role democracy must now play in the struggle for liberation. Can democracy

retain the revolutionary impulse and bring in those who have been left out of the democratic

discussion thus far? Does language contain the seeds for liberation?

Supplementing Labor with Language

Epistemology: Cognitive Interests

While affirming much of Marxist theory, Habermas finds that it is limited by lack of

attention to communication that would enable fuller involvement of human beings to organize

their own lives together. He shapes his understanding of Marx around his distinction of

communicative reason from instrumental reason. We will see this first in terms of epistemology

and then in Habermas's reconstruction of historical materialism as social evolution. Let us begin

with epistemology. Habermas claims that Marx limits the self-reflection of the human species to

interaction through labor and does not move to symbolic interaction or language. Marx sees the

social characteristics of the commodity form in terms of communicative reason, but does not

separate it from labor in his analysis. Habermas clarifies that the social relation of human beings

occurs within the realm of language. "The commodity form of labor is ideology, because it

simultaneously conceals and expresses the repression of an unconstrained dialogue relation"

(Habermas, 1971, 59). Habermas claims that because Marx does not distinguish between

instrumental and communicative action, he not only does not present the full picture of the

fetishism of commodities; he also equates critique with natural science and is hampered by this

positivistic misdirection (Habermas, 1971, 62-63).

To counter this epistemic lack, Habermas moves toward the three cognitive interests: the technical cognitive interest of empirical-analytical sciences, the practical cognitive interest of historical-hermeneutic sciences and the emancipatory cognitive interest of critically oriented sciences (Habermas, 1971, 308). He emphasizes the need for both instrumental reason (theoretical technical) and communicative reason (theoretical practical) (Habermas, 1971, 53). Marx does not distinguish the difference between instrumental and communicative reason, therefore he equates critique with the approach of natural science, instead of human science (Habermas, 1971, 75). Making room for humanistic social science has been a major quest for Habermas to move beyond misapplying the methods of natural science to human interaction in order to properly understand human interaction and organization. This has important implications for seeking liberation from the fetishism of commodities. Overcoming the fetishism of commodities is not just a matter of production; human beings must come together intentionally and politically to overcome it.

Habermas makes a case against Marx in terms of self-reflection, because Marx does not approach reason in a sufficiently full manner. Self-reflection is a necessary component to grasp what is going on in the organization of human life. Habermas later states, "It is in accomplishing self-reflection that reason grasps itself as interested" (Habermas, 1971, 212). The three cognitive interests are linked to reason in the history of the human species, which is its self-formative process (Habermas, 1971, 197). Humans have used reason to promote the species' interest in survival and advancement. Language is necessary to the human self-formative process. Marx's materialist concept of synthesis was not conceived broadly enough, because he focused only on labor and not on symbolic interaction and the role of cultural tradition in human development (Habermas, 1971, 42).

The Reconstruction of Historical Materialism as Social Evolution

Habermas traces historical materialism as social evolution. Here again, he brings in language as an addition to Marx's focus on labor. His study of social evolution is a reconstruction of historical materialism. He accomplishes this by using the reconstructive method that is a staple of his analytical repertoire, which "signifies taking a theory apart and putting it back together again in a new form in order to attain more fully the goal it has set for itself" (Habermas, 1979, 95). He considers himself to be operating within the trajectory of Marxism. His adherence to Marxism continues because he still sees "potential for stimulation" (Habermas, 1979, 95). Rick Roderick sees Habermas continuing "a fundamentally Hegelian-Marxist attempt to defend critical reason and emancipation" or "trying to save the potential for liberation remaining in Marxist tradition" (Roderick, 1986, 21). David Ingram claims that the inspiration for Habermas is the aim of Marx's social theory, which "is to enlighten people about their true interests, so that they can play their historical destinies in a rational manner" (Ingram, 1987, 5).

Habermas opposes the influence of positivism. Marxism moves toward it when it moves away from the human role in history and toward a more determinist or economistic position. Capitalism generally operates positivistically as it draws support from supposed value-free social science to claim the market as naturalistic, which Habermas associates with cynical "bourgeois consciousness" (Habermas, 1979, 97). Habermas lifts up philosophical ethics in order to point to the role of human interaction in developing norms and values to guide their social interaction and "reconstruct general presuppositions of communication and procedures for justifying norms and values" (Habermas, 1979, 97).

In his reconstruction of historical materialism Habermas sees the social evolution of

human beings as a natural process that eventually includes the decision-making of culture

(Habermas, 1979, 130). He finds support for what he is doing in The German Ideology. The

production of life involves the natural relationship of procreation and the social relationship of

labor as a productive force (Habermas, 1979, 132). Social evolution or the human form of

reproducing life begins initially "through structures of labor and language" (Habermas, 1979,

137). Habermas continues to affirm the importance of labor, but all human action also includes

language. Progress comes in the form of both empirical knowledge in productive force and

moral-practical insight in forms of social intercourse (Habermas, 1979, 142). "Hence the

Bildung of humanity is a dual struggle for emancipation: from the material constraints imposed

by economic scarcity and the communicative constraints imposed by domination" (Ingram,

1987, 7). Roderick sees progress in social evolution as freedom from material want and distorted

communication (Roderick, 1986, 102). The emphasis on language for social intercourse points

ahead to Habermas's democratic theory.

The importance of communicative reason and democracy for Habermas's interpretation

of Marx can be seen in his discussion of base and superstructure. Habermas quotes Marx from A

Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy. "The mode of production of material life

conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness

of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their

consciousness" (Habermas, 1979, 143). Habermas retains the sense of the superstructure

emerging from the base, when he states "The impulses toward a differentiation of the social

system emanate from the domain of material production" (Habermas, 1987a, 168). He prefers a

weaker version that sees that "lower subsystems place structural limits on developments in

systems higher than themselves" (Habermas, 1979, 143). He makes one further claim that limits

the dependency of superstructure on the base to a critical phase of passing to a new developmental level (Habermas, 1979, 143). Whereas Marx traces historical development in terms of modes of production, Habermas does not consider that "abstract enough to capture the universals of societal development" (Habermas, 1979, 152). Along with productive forces, persons develop "by growing into the symbolic structures of their lifeworlds (Habermas, 1979, 154).

Habermas sees the survival of the human species move from simply biological to biological survival enhanced by humanly sociality. We can link this to the goal of emancipation, which Habermas shares with Marx. The emancipatory interest is concerned for autonomy and responsibility (Habermas, 1971, 197-198). In the reconstruction of social evolution, we can see the human interest in self-preservation. This begins in managing nature for survival and then reaches for human emancipation. Freud's goal can be seen as, "providing a rational basis for the precepts of civilization" (Habermas, 1971, 284). Habermas claims the goal of "an organization of social relations according to the principle that the validity of every norm of political consequence be made dependent on a consensus arrived at in communication free from domination" (Habermas, 1971, 284). Organizing social relations through consensus is a description of democracy. We see here the fulfillment of the emancipatory cognitive interest. Habermas also points ahead to his move beyond the three cognitive interests to his theory of communicative action with his fifth thesis. "…the unity of knowledge and interest proves itself in a dialectic that takes the historical traces of suppressed dialogue and reconstructs what has been suppressed" (Habermas, 1971, 315). The emancipatory cognitive interest will remain in the sense of "communication free from domination" as Habermas moves in the direction of universal pragmatics and communicative action in his *magnum opus* The Theory of Communicative

Action.

<center>*The Fetishism of Commodities and the Theory of Communicative Action*</center>

We focused on Habermas' first program of cognitive interests presented in <u>Knowledge and Human Interests</u>. This approach did not satisfy Habermas, because he could not defend a standpoint from which to carry out ideology critique (Ingram, 1987, xi). Determining the standard of 'undistorted communication' free of domination by which to criticize 'false consciousness' proved to be problematic (Ingram, 2010, 27). The linguistic turn took him beyond the philosophy of the subject and knowledge-constitutive interests into the more basic relationship of intersubjectivity that underlies all communication (Ingram, 2010, 67 and 71). Mutual understanding itself can be justified as the goal underlying every act of communication. This grounding can be justified, whereas specific cognitive interest could not.

As Habermas continued his engagement with Marx, he started to explore communicative reason as expressed in universal pragmatics and his mature theory in <u>The Theory of Communicative Action</u> (TCA). The issue for this section is what roles that Marx and Marxist theory play in the theory that will guide Habermas's critical theory that in subsequent writings will rarely state its Marxist orientation. The fetishism of commodities serves as a basic building block for Marx in <u>Capital</u>. It can be seen as bridge between the capitalist mode of production and politics needed to overcome it. The fetishism of commodities links production and communication for Habermas. It is linked to both instrumental and communicative reason. It demonstrates the domination that takes the form of the market in the mode of production and the form of distortion of communication in language. This domination interferes with the communicative reason necessary for democracy, thus overcoming the fetishism of commodities is necessary for democracy to function well. Habermas maintains his Marxist roots in two ways

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both in relation to commodity fetishism in the development of his mature theory in TCA.

Commodity fetishism is part of rationalization in the development of modernity in terms of

reification. Commodity fetishism also provides a way through systems theory to see the

colonization of the lifeworld by the system.

Reification and Rationalization

Habermas maintains the Frankfurt School contribution of bringing Marxist theory

together with Weber's theory of modernization. Adorno's 'administered world' parallels

Weber's 'iron cage' of reason (Habermas, 1984, 351). Habermas examines this by interacting

with Lukacs who combined Marx and Weber in terms of the linkage between Marx's theory of

reification and Weber's theory of modern rationalization (Habermas, 1984, 340). Weber's

separation of spheres includes the separation of action from value rational judgments, such that

in the bureaucratization of economic and administrative actions only purposive rationality as

determined by the organization guides action (Habermas, 1984, 352). "As the process of

rationalization advances, the subsystems of purposive-rational action become increasingly

independent of the ethically grounded motives of their members …" (Habermas, 1984, 353).

Weber equated "the capitalist pattern of modernization with social rationalization generally"

(1987a, 303). Due to capitalism's commodity fetish that arises from commodity exchange,

Lukacs and Habermas equate this modernization with capitalism and problems caused by the

class structure. Lukacs therefore sees reification and rationalization as part of same process of

capitalist modernization and not as "a timeless type" (Habermas, 1984, 356). Habermas agrees

with Lukacs that though Weber is correct that the unity of reason has been divided, Weber is

incorrect to believe that it cannot be restored. Identifying reification is the first step toward

overcoming it. In general terms, the restoration comes through communicative action that

includes both instrumental and communicative reason (Habermas, 1984, 363). In other words, the restoration involves people's rational direction of their own society (democracy).

Marx's analysis of the commodity form gives his theory superiority over an approach such as Weber's. Habermas expresses this in terms of what he calls "the double character of the commodity." Marx is able "both to describe the process of the development of capitalist society from the economic perspective of an observer as a crisis-ridden process of the self-realization of capital and, at the same time, to represent it from the historical perspective of those involved (or a virtual participant) as a conflict ridden interaction between social classes" (Habermas, 1987a, 334). The conflict is concealed by the fetish. The welfare-state compromise and other developments in modern capitalism have shifted the class struggle from the lifeworld to the system, which seeks to contain and conceal it (Habermas, 1987a, 348). This leads to a move that distinguishes Habermas from Marx, because this "new type of reification effect arises in class-unspecific ways" that serves to distort communication in the whole society (Habermas, 1987a, 349). Horkheimer and others in the Frankfurt school recognized this issue and replaced class consciousness with mass culture. Habermas explains that "in face of a class antagonism pacified by means of welfare-state measures, however and in the growing face of the anonymity of class structures, the theory of class consciousness loses its empirical reference. It no longer has application to a society in which we are increasingly unable to identify strictly class-specific lifeworld." (Habermas, 1987a, 352). The system with its purposive rationality emerges to diminish people's rational direction of their own society (democracy). In a nation like the United States class conflict is muffled in the operation of democracy through the perception that this is not a class divided society. For Habermas this leads into further discussion about the decoupling of the system and lifeworld. Lukacs helps Habermas on this front as well. "Lukacs' specific

achievement consists in bringing Marx and Weber together in such a way that he can view the decoupling of the sphere of social labor from lifeworld contexts simultaneously under two aspects: as reification and rationalization" (Habermas, 1984, 359).

Steering Media and the Colonization of the Lifeworld

Habermas's encounter with sociology, systems theory and especially Talcott Parsons has influenced his terminology. He still draws on Marx to shape his use of this terminology. Marx recognized that "the accumulation process erodes the lifeworld of those producers who can offer as their only commodity their own labor power." The resulting social rationalization "exercises a decisive and disintegrative influence on the conditions of the life of the classes involved in these transactions" (Habermas, 1984, 343). The commodity fetish described in terms of reification and rationalization can also be seen in terms of steering media and lifeworld. The "steering media replace language as the mechanism for coordinating action" (Habermas, 1984, 342). Habermas refers to two steering media: money and power (often administrative power). 'Steering media' is a term he borrows from Parsons' systems theory. After the modern differentiation of systems, social integration is no longer attached to kinship systems and other ways are necessary for social integration. In Parsons's theory, the steering media are the system mechanism for coordinating action, which he calls "symbolically generated media of communication" (Habermas, 1987a, 164-165).

Habermas looks beyond Marx to systems theory due to the increasing complexity of modernity. The steering media have a role to play, but the problem is that they overstep that role. This brings greater complexity to Habermas's use of commodity fetishism and gives clarification of his differentiation and his connection with Marx. "Marx conceives of capitalist society so strongly as a totality that he fails to recognize the *intrinsic* evolutionary *value* that

media-steered subsystems possess. He does not see that the differentiation of the state apparatus and the economy also represents a higher level of system differentiation, which simultaneously opens up new steering possibilities and forces a reorganization of the old, feudal, class relationships. The significance of this level of integration goes beyond the institutionalization of a new class relationship" (Habermas, 1987a, 339). Habermas sees the necessary role that the steering media play and following Marx, he also sees the problems. The analysis of reification as rationalization points to the paradox that: "systemic relief mechanisms made possible by the rationalization of the lifeworld turn around and overburden the communicative infrastructure of the lifeworld" (Habermas, 1987a, 378). For Habermas the steering media are necessary for systems that are too complex for communicative interaction to direct all action, but they continue to be problematical when they go beyond the economy and government administration and lead to deformation of the lifeworld.

Habermas translates Lukacs into his own terminology by stating that he "attempted to clarify the connection between the differentiation of a capitalist economy steered through exchange value, on the one hand and the deformation of the lifeworld on the other, by drawing on the model of commodity fetishism" (Habermas, 1984, 354-55). Habermas also places Marx's discussion of the money relationship into his own terminology as the medium of exchange leads to an objectivating attitude toward one other and one's self (from the *Grundrisse*) into his own terminology. "Marx characterizes the effect of assimilating the normative and the subjective to the status of perceptible and manipulable things as objectivation [*Objektivierung*] and "objectification" [Versachlichung]. To the degree that the wage laborer becomes dependent on the market for his entire existence, anonymous valorization processes encroach upon his lifeworld and destroy the ethical order [Sittlichkeit] of communicatively established

intersubjectivity by turning social relations into purely instrumental relations" (Habermas, 1984, 358). This is the transformation of commodity fetishism into the distortion of communication that interferes with communicative reason guiding human interaction and places it within the sphere of instrumental reason. This is also a major blockage for democracy to operate as an expression people's rational direction of their own society

The term distortion of communication does not adequately convey the depth of this problem. Habermas uses a stronger term "structural violence" to name such "system restrictions on communication" (Habermas, 1987a, 187). Stated in Parsonian language, social integration is reduced to mechanisms of systems integration (Habermas, 1987, 256). Habermas maintains the separation of spheres between instrumental and communicative reason in opposition to Parsons. He states that material reproduction can be differentiated out of the lifeworld by means of the steering media, but the steering media should not dominate the lifeworld because its symbolic structures can only be reproduced by means of communicative action (Habermas, 1987a, 261). Habermas is combining Marxist theory with modern systems theory in order to maintain its dynamism in face of the greater complexity of modernity. "Viewed *methodologically*, the theory of value had for Marx a status similar to that which the action-theoretical introduction of steering media had for Parsons. From a *substantive* perspective, however, Marx's connecting of systems theory and action theory had from the start a critical sense that is absent in Parsons: he wanted to *denounce* the self-maintenance of the economic subsystem as a dynamics of exploitation made unrecognizable under the veil of objectication" (Habermas, 1987a, 337-338). The importance of the emancipatory element is crucial here. Habermas has also developed Marxist theory to articulate the separation of system and lifeworld. He sees these two levels in Marx, "but their separation is not really presupposed in his basic concepts…" (Habermas, 1987a, 338). Marx's

false consciousness becomes fragmented consciousness, which carries out the same function, which Habermas describes as blocking "enlightenment by the mechanism of reification. It is only with this that the conditions for a *colonization of the lifeworld* are met" (Habermas, 1987a, 355). Thomas McCarthy claims that Habermas's critical theory incorporates an emancipatory interest (McCarthy, 1978 76). The goal is "a form of life free from unnecessary domination in all its forms … anticipated in every act of communication" (McCarthy, 1978, 273). John B. Thompson supports this point of view that emancipatory interest has been established in a theory of language (Thompson and Held, 117). The emancipatory interest is no longer explicitly articulated, but it continues to function within Habermas's concept of democracy in movement toward the freedom of the ideal speech situation.

Before summing up this section about Habermas's relation to Marx, let us look at some criticisms made by scholars of Habermas's appropriation of Marx. Agnes Heller makes the claim that class struggle cannot be replaced by rational argumentation (Thomson and Held, 1982, 27). Rick Roderick claims that Habermas replaces the production paradigm with the communicative paradigm rather than supplementing production with communication (Roderick, 1986, 138). In an article entitled, "The Limits of Praxis in Critical Theory," Wolf Heydebrand and Beverly Burris claim that Marx does include moral-practical rationality in his concept of praxis and that Habermas has made an unnecessary dichotomy (Marcus and Tar, 1984, 415). Generally, I disagree with these criticisms and contend that Habermas has treated communication as supplementation of Marx's focus on labor and production, rather than a replacement, thus does not break with Marx, but revises Marx. A dichotomy is stated once in terms of replacing the production paradigm with the communicative paradigm, which will be discussed in the next paragraph. Generally, Habermas presents a consistent combination of labor

and language, instrumental and communicative reason as supplementary. In regards to Heller's criticism, perhaps Habermas would argue that in late capitalism the class struggle is embedded within the complexity such that rational argumentation is necessary to detect the class struggle within the many factors that surround it. Often, Habermas claims to articulate something present in Marx but left unarticulated by Marx.

Conclusion

The key for understanding Habermas's interpretation of Marx centers on the importance of drawing attention to the essential role of communicative reason. Reason is not uniquely instrumental and communicative reason is the type of reason to help democracy function. Habermas applies this to the development of the human species in his reconstruction of historical materialism. Interest in survival requires communicative interaction along with labor and lines up with emancipatory cognitive interest. Though Habermas drops the cognitive interest approach, emancipation is a goal of undistorted communicative action.   We also saw that Marx's fetishism of commodities plays a central role in the development of Habermas's mature theory of communicative action in both his emphasis on distorted communication and in the colonization of the lifeworld by the system. He built on Lukacs' integration of Weber and Marx to demonstrate that modern rationalization has included reification. The continuing goal of communicative action is to overcome reification. Habermas also translates this into the terms of systems theory to more adequately analyze modernity and to demonstrate the resulting problematic colonization of the lifeworld under late capitalism. Habermas's brief comments on Marx in The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity crystallize his comments around replacing

the production paradigm with the communication paradigm.[5] Marx remained within the

philosophy of the subject with his focus on the producing subject rather than the knowing subject

(Habermas, 1987b, 63). The producing subject operates within purposive or instrumental

rationality (Habermas, 1987b, 65). Habermas states the need to replace the production paradigm

with the communication paradigm: "the emancipatory perspective proceeds precisely not from

the production paradigm, but from the paradigm of action oriented toward mutual understanding.

It is the form of the interaction process that must be altered if one wants to discover practically

what the members of society in any given situation might want and what they should do in their

common interest" (Habermas, 1987b, 82). Here Habermas refers to emancipation as a

perspective. It is no longer present as a cognitive interest, but remains as a goal for social theory.

Habermas uses the term 'paradigm' to refer to Marx's orientation and his own orientation. This

seems to follow the pattern of Habermas supplementing Marx's emphasis on labor within

instrumental reason, with the addition of language within communicative reason. Here it sounds

more like replacement than supplementation, but generally he respects the necessity of both

paradigms. The communicative dimension is necessary in order to fully think of labor in social

terms. Communicative reason is essential for democracy, so that people can give rational

direction to their own society.

Habermas's communicative framework is better able to articulate support for democracy

than Marx's framework. Habermas's attention to distorted communication is an extension of the

fetishism of commodities beyond the economic sphere to the cultural and political spheres.

Marx saw that the commodity had this double character as the engine of the exchange process

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[5] These comments come from section III, "The Continuation of the Hegelian Project in the Philosophy of Praxis" of
Lecture III (pages 60-69) and "Excursus on the Obsolescence of the Production Paradigm" (pages 75-82) in The
Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, a 385-page book.

and hiding the class conflict that uses the labor power of the working class. Habermas articulates that this represses the unconstrained dialogue necessary for democracy to operate at its best. For Marx, democracy would emerge with the proletariat through the stages of capitalist economic development. Habermas does not see this as sufficient, because human direction of society must also include political and cultural elements. Society has become increasingly complex since Marx's day. In terms of reason, instrumental reason pertains to the functioning of the market economy and the steering media, but they function blindly without the participation of people to guide their own lives and society. In order to function properly the political and cultural spheres need to be able to resist the economic sphere overstepping its boundaries, which is same point that Marx's makes about the mystification of the market. The economic sphere also functions deceptively due to the distorting effect of the fetishism of commodities. Communicative reason functions in the political sphere and the cultural sphere of the lifeworld. Communicative interaction is nurtured and developed in the cultural tradition in order to equip persons for the communicative processes of democracy in the political sphere. Habermas's theory of communicative action is organized by applying the fetishism of commodities to the cultural and political spheres as well as the economic sphere.

Laclau: Post-Marxism

The basic trajectory of Laclau's thought is laid out in <u>Hegemony and Socialist Strategy</u>. In this book he and Chantal Mouffe place their thought in relation to the history of Marxism by engaging the various strategies of European political parties in the Marxist orbit and the theories of the intellectuals promoting these strategies. Their theoretical project starts with the historical changes since the time of Marx and this then leads Laclau to deconstruct Marx's own conceptual theory as well.

The approach of <u>Hegemony and Socialist Strategy</u> is described as "a turn to poststructuralist theory within Marxism, one that took the problem of language to be essential to the formulation of an anti-totalitarian, radical democratic project" (Butler, et al, 2000, 1). Laclau and Mouffe largely trace the history of the crisis between theory and practice for these political parties (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, 14). Thus Marxist orthodoxy was challenged in such a way that Laclau and Mouffe consider that the old foundation centered on the working class and the Revolution is no longer solid. They see emerging from the crisis for the Left various Marxist discourses that open the way to various emancipatory directions (Laclau and Mouffe, 3) seen in: "the rise of the new feminism, the protest movements of ethnic, national and sexual minorities, the anti-institutional ecology struggles waged by marginalized layers of the population, the anti-nuclear movement, the atypical forms of social struggles in countries on the capitalist periphery – all these imply an extension of social conflictuality to a wide range of areas, which creates the potential, but no more than the potential, for an advance toward more free and democratic and egalitarian societies" (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, 1). This milieu of fragmentation produces the "indeterminacy of the articulations between different struggles and subject positions," (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, 13) from which their theory of hegemony emerges. We will pursue Laclau's engagement with the Marxist tradition and especially Gramsci when we discuss Laclau's language theory in Chapter 4. At this point, we will examine his engagement more directly with Marx. We will follow Laclau's deconstruction of specific Marxist terms that leads into post-Marxism and provides a foundation for Laclau's theory of democracy.

Engaging and going beyond Marx: Deconstruction

Laclau describes his deconstructive approach as similar to Heidegger's approach to the history of philosophy which "he called a 'de-struction of the history of ontology.'" This is not

purely negative, but involves a radical questioning to recover the originary meaning of the

categories of a tradition (Laclau 1990, 93). He states "effecting a 'de-struction' of the history of

Marxism implies going beyond the deceptive evidence of concepts such as 'class' 'capital' and

so on, and recreating the meaning of the originary synthesis that such concepts aspire to

establish, the total system of theoretical alternatives in regard to which they represented only

limited options, and the ambiguities inherent in their constitution itself …" (Laclau, 1990, 93-

94).

Class Struggle

contradiction / antagonism

Laclau uses the terms contradiction and antagonism to articulate a gap in Marx's theory.

He sees Marx explaining history on the one hand as a contradiction between productive forces

and relations of production and on the other hand explaining it as the antagonism of class

struggle. The key issue here for Laclau is that the first is contradiction without antagonism and

the second is an antagonism without contradiction. The first is a contradiction logically, "the

expansion of productive forces beyond a certain point within a particular system of relations of

production is *logically* impossible" (Laclau, 1990, 6). He sees no antagonism between groups as

necessary for the resulting collapse of the system. Class struggle is antagonistic but not logically

contradictory, because it only becomes antagonistic when the worker resists the capitalist's

extraction of surplus value from the exchange of labor power (Laclau, 1990, 9). Laclau sees the

worker's identity that in this case leads to resistance as outside the relations of production such

that the conflict then is not internal to the relations of production (Laclau, 1990, 9). The two

sides do not cohere to explain history because one is a contradiction and the other is an

antagonism. Laclau sees the contradiction as inherent to history and the antagonistic class

struggle as contingent in history since it does not involve a logical contradiction. Laclau

deconstructs Marx's theory because he claims it needs both sides but cannot have them, which

leaves it open to contingent possibilities.

<center>particular / universal</center>

Laclau also deconstructs the concept of class struggle in terms of particularity and

universality. For Marx the proletariat became the universal actor beyond the contradictions

between particularity and universality. It was the agent of emancipation (Laclau, 1996, 11). The

tension of the undecidability between particularity and universality will play a central role in

Laclau's understanding of hegemony. It rules out a universal class that can abandon its

particularity (Laclau, 1996, 13).

Laclau states that Slavoj Žižek correctly distinguishes the incompatibility of Laclau's

own position with the classical Marxist position on class struggle. "Class struggle presupposes a

particular social group (the working class) as a privileged political agent; this privilege is not

itself the outcome of hegemonic struggle, but grounded in the 'objective social position' of this

group—the ideologico-political struggle is thus ultimately reduced to an epiphenomenon of

'objective' social processes, powers, and their conflicts. For Laclau, on the contrary, the fact that

some particular struggle is elevated into the 'universal equivalent' of all struggles is not a

predetermined fact but itself the result of the contingent political struggle for hegemony. In some

constellation, this struggle can be the workers' struggle, in another constellation, the patriotic

anticolonialist struggle, in yet another constellation, the antiracist struggle for cultural tolerance.

There is nothing in the inherent positive qualities of some particular struggle that predestines it

for such a hegemonic role as the 'general equivalent' of all struggles" (Laclau, 2006, 647; Žižek,

2006, 554). Laclau in this manner brings indeterminacy into the heart of Marx's theory in order

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to transform it.

<div align="center">*Indeterminacy*</div>

We just discussed a specific instance in Laclau's analysis of Marx of indeterminacy. This term will play a major role in Laclau's overall approach to hegemony that moves beyond Marx. This has major implications for Laclau's view of the task of the political Left today. "But this is exactly where the new formulation of a new politics of the left must begin: with the deconstruction of the exclusive alternative between the market and social regulation as its point of departure" (Laclau, 1990, xiii). Antagonism has a central place within indeterminacy, which will be explored in greater detail later. For now, it is important to understand Laclau's view of "the intrinsic negativity of all antagonism, which prevents us from fixing it a priori in any positive theorizations about the 'objectivity' of social agent" (Laclau, 1990, 4). This is another way he questions Marx's formulation of the class struggle.

<div align="center">*Dislocation*</div>

Our discussion of deconstruction and indeterminacy prepares the way to understand how Laclau derives dislocation from Marx's work on confrontation and breaking with the *status quo*. He begins with Marx and goes through Leon Trotsky to explain what he calls a basic thesis, "that the *possibility* of a radical democracy is directly linked to the level and extension of structural dislocations operating in contemporary capitalism" (Laclau, 1990, 45). Laclau separates two terms that coexist in Marx: "permanent revolution" and "economistic stagism" in order to depart from determinism. History for Laclau is not determined by structural laws such as 'economistic stagism,' but rather "it is the *dislocation* of structural laws which creates the *possibility* of a revolutionary politics" (Laclau, 1990, 46). This argument arises from the unevenness of capitalist development in Russia in relation to the possibilities for revolution. Laclau rejects that

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the process is controlled by necessary infrastructural laws and instead sees the process as "contingent articulations that have been made possible by junctures depending on the uneven development of world capitalism" (Laclau, 1990, 46). He differentiates his approach from the Hegelian-Marxist sense of contradiction as necessary and internal to a structure. For Laclau "dislocation is not a necessary moment in the self-transformation of the structure but is its failure to achieve constitution and is mere temporality in this sense" (Laclau, 1990, 47). It opens up possibilities. He follows this through Trotsky's theorizing, to show that Trotsky cannot give up on holding unevenness and combination together to preserve the necessary social agency of the proletariat for the revolution (Laclau, 1990, 49). For Laclau unevenness persists but combination does not in this case. "In one sense, our analysis keeps within the field of Marxism and attempts to reinforce what has been one of its virtues: the full acceptance of the transformations entailed by capitalism and the construction of an alternative project that is *based on* the ground created by those transformations, not in opposition to them. Commodification, bureaucratization, and increasing dominance of scientific and technological planning over the division of labour should not necessarily be resisted. Rather one should work within these processes so as to develop the prospects they create for a non-capitalist alternative" (Laclau, 1990, 55-56). The dislocation of capitalism for Laclau does not just come from internal contradictions. Laclau's vision of radical democracy emerges in relation to dislocation. The way Laclau sees it, the more capitalism is dislocated the greater the range of possibilities for democracy (Laclau, 1990, 56).

In an article entitled "Post-Marxism without Apologies" that Laclau wrote with Mouffe (Laclau, 1990, 97-132), three fundamental points are presented that go beyond Marxism. These have been seen in the discussion of Laclau. The three points are: 1) radical historicity and social construction, 2) greater dislocation and 3) extending the field of social conflict beyond the

privileged agent of the proletariat (Laclau, 1990, 129-130).

<u>*Incompatibility with Reification*</u>

Laclau's position on reification builds on the tension between particular and universal: "the kind of articulation between the universal and the particular that my approach to the question of popular identities presupposes is radically incompatible with notions such as reification and ideological distortion. We are not dealing with a false consciousness opposed to a true one—which would be waiting for us as a teleologically programmed destiny— but with the contingent construction of a consciousness *tout court*" (Laclau, 2006, 651). He deepens this point, "As we see, the reification/distortion/false consciousness model is radically incompatible with the hegemony/*objet a* one; while the former presupposes the achievement of fullness through the reversion of the process of reification, the latter conceives of fullness (the Thing) as unachievable because it is devoid of any content; and while the former sees incarnation in the concrete as a distorted reification, the latter sees radical investment in an object as the only way in which a certain fullness is achievable" (Laclau, 2006, 651). We see here the influence of Jacques Lacan with terms such as *objet a* and the Thing. We delve more deeply into unachievable fullness and radical investment in Chapter 4.

Complexity

Marx had predicted a simplified social structure within capitalism that would accentuate the role of the proletariat. The increased complexity of modernity under capitalism calls for the different analysis which for Laclau moves into greater contingency. "The Marxist view of the destiny of capitalist society was based on a postulate: the simplification of social structure under capitalism. The peasantry and the middle classes would disappear and, in the end, the bulk of the population would be a vast proletarian mass, so the last antagonistic confrontation of history

would be a showdown between the bourgeoisie and the working class. Very quickly, however, it was seen that this strategic model showed all kinds of inconsistencies, both at the theoretical level and as a reading of what was going on in society. The labor theory of value was shown to be plagued by theoretical inconsistencies; the internal differentiations between sectors of the economy could not be intellectually grasped by any kind of unified law of tendency; social structure, far from being more homogeneous, became more complex and diversified; even within the working class, the splits between economic and political struggle became less and less politically manageable" (Laclau, 2006, 661-662). For Laclau, the increased complexity calls for greater theoretical complexity.

Deconstructing Emancipation → Promise of democracy to come

Laclau also deconstructs the possibility of emancipation (Laclau, 1996, 75-77). He draws on Jacques Derrida's discussion of Marx in <u>Spectres of Marx</u> to emphasize the decentering effects of Marxism (Laclau, 1996, 66). Laclau questions Derrida's continued use of "the classical notion of emancipation," which Laclau calls eschatological messianism (Laclau, 1996, 75) Laclau claims that the contents are linked to teleological eschatology and in commitment to the principle of indeterminacy, he sees no necessary or logical link between the promise that he affirms in Derrida and an emancipatory project (Laclau, 1996, 76-77). Laclau seeks to hold on to the promise of emancipation and democracy, but not the content. "To summarize: the messianism we are speaking about is the one without eschatology, without a pre-given promised land, without determinate content. It is simply the structure of promise which is inherent in all experience and whose lack of content – resulting from the radical opening to the event, to the other – is the very possibility of justice and gives its meaning only to the democracy to come. Singularity as the terrain of justice involves the radical undecidability which makes the decision

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possible" (Laclau, 1996, 74). The promise of Derrida's "democracy to come" opens the possibility, but not the necessity of democracy for Laclau.

Hegemonic democracy

"Hegemony exists when that which would have been a rational succession of stages is interrupted by *contingency* that cannot be subsumed under the logical categories of Marxist theory…" (Laclau, 1990, 95). Laclau's conception of hegemony draws on Antonio Gramsci's use of the term. Gramsci uses the term within Marxism. Laclau will take hegemony beyond Gramsci into post-Marxism and what he calls hegemonic democracy.   Laclau and Mouffe resonate with Gramsci's understanding of the contingent character of the working class and that it needed "to transform its own identity by articulating it to a plurality of struggles and democratic demands" (Laclau and Mouffe, 70). They also feel that Gramsci's thought is still too tied to determination by the economic base.[6] Indeterminism marks their thought as the revolutionary struggle whose future cannot be assured cannot depend on economic determinism nor the place of the one revolutionary subject. The struggle confronts indeterminacy and this struggle is carried out in the realm of discourse, which Laclau centers on Derrida's '*différance*.' These terms mark their identity shift from Marxist to Post-Marxist. Laclau's relation to Marxism and the relevance of his analysis of social political reality based on the interplay of language will be issues for our analysis. Does Laclau's emphasis on the articulation of demands continue to present any focus on progress toward liberation in the midst of indeterminacy? Do the categories of hegemonic formation which occur in language allow a helpful analysis of social political reality?

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[6] To be discussed further in Chapter 4

Conclusion

Historical changes since the time of Marx motivate Laclau's theoretical project and lead him to deconstruct Marx's theory in his own times and on Marx's own terms. Indeterminacy and contingency serve Laclau to dislocate domination. He begins with Marx's specific dislocation of capitalism, but finding contingency at the heart of any theory, Laclau brings in contingency to dislocate Marx's theory as well. No emancipatory project is assured, for no teleology is logically necessary, but space can be opened up for the promise of emancipation or radical democracy. Laclau rejects class struggle because he does not see it as a logical contradiction. He also rejects the concept of the proletariat as the universal class because no particular can fully fulfill a universal.

As we examined Habermas's appropriation of Marx in terms of economics, politics and culture, we can do the same for Laclau. He rejects what he considers the excessively important role given to the economy that he finds in Marx. Laclau dislocates that to open space for politics and culture in indecidability in the sphere of discourse. We will see later that discourse covers language and action such that all of the issues of economics, politics and culture are the arena for discourse and the hegemonic struggle for democracy. The three spheres are all areas for discursive contestation. "For me the political has a primary structuring role because social relations are ultimately contingent, and any prevailing articulation results from an antagonistic confrontation whose outcome is not decided beforehand" (Laclau, 2006, 664). Laclau claims that his approach to Marx, which he calls "rethinking politics in a deconstructive fashion" produces three types of effect. The first is to recast the Sorel and Gramsci tendency in Marxism in terms of *différance*. The second is to reinscribe the Marxist model in a more complex modern reality. The third is "reinscribing Marxism itself and each of its discursive components as a

partial moment in the wider history of emancipatory discourses" (Laclau, 1996, 82). We can see

Laclau's response to changes since Marx primarily in the way that the division of classes did not

simplify into the bourgeoisie against the proletariat, which reaffirms Laclau's belief in

contingency. Laclau moves into post-Marxism by deconstructing Marx in order to extend social

conflictivity, to dislocate domination and open up discourse to a variety of possibilities. One of

the possibilities is radical democracy.

Conclusion to Engagement with Marx

Whereas Habermas separates the spheres for proper uses of reason, Laclau ends up with

no such separation. He opposes what he claims is Habermas's relaunch of the project of

modernity in order to defend reason against nihilism. Instead, Laclau claims that the crisis of

reason opens unprecedented opportunities for radical critique of all forms of domination (Laclau,

1990, 3-4). Habermas builds his theory of communicative action on the fetishism of

commodities. He extends it beyond economics to the distortion of all communication in

capitalist modernity. Laclau rejects the place of reification and therefore rejects the usefulness of

the fetishism of commodities. Discourse involves a free-for-all of contestation that has no

teleology. Habermas sees the road to emancipation through undistorted communication. In

Habermas's view contestation will best serve emancipation if guided by reason so as to allow the

best argument to prevail. We will be examining their approaches to democratic contestation in

more depth later. For now, let us compare them on how they draw on Marx to serve the goals of

their democratic theories.

We have seen above that the fetishism of commodities places a central role in the

development of Habermas's theory of communicative action. Unlike Marx, he sees a positive

role for the market to function as a steering medium to relieve communication of some functions

within the economic sphere, but not to overstep its role in the economy to interfere with politics and culture. The fetishism of commodities continues to play a role in Habermas's theory through concern for distorted communication. Laclau rejects the possibility of any limit on what must be decided by contestation. There are no grounds from which to label something as distorted or having a sense of false consciousness. The issue of reification will be something to explore further in each philosopher's theory. Can it be defended or is it unsustainable?

Each gives up on the term class struggle. Modernity has moved past its limits. For Laclau there can be no privileged actor, but rather a multiplicity of struggles. Habermas sees distorted communication as a more general problem than class struggle. For Habermas class struggle has moved into the general level of democratic contestation. Marx depended on the class struggle as the political engine in the move toward socialism. How do Laclau and Habermas's projects fare without this engine?

Neither accepts determinism, in the sense that the economy determines what will happen in politics and culture. They approach deterministic issues in Marx differently. Indeterminacy plays a central role in Laclau's theory and he rejects the 'economistic stagism' he sees in Marx. Indeterminacy is central in his hegemonic democracy of open-ended contestation. Habermas accepts the sense in which the social structure limits the direction of political possibilities. He accepts some sense of the base – superstructure distinction, but in a weaker version than Marx projects.

I have argued that Habermas retains the sense of emancipation in his theory of communicative action. He had articulated the emancipatory cognitive interest among the three cognitive interests in the program he presented in <u>Knowledge and Human Interests</u>. In this way he openly shares Marx's goal of emancipation and later sees the goal forwarded by the criticism

from the point of view of the ideal speech situation. Laclau rejects any sense of teleology and therefore rejects the concept of emancipation. He deconstructs it of content such that the promise remains which for Laclau becomes the promise of democracy.

Both articulate language more centrally than Marx did. For Habermas, language is another factor alongside of labor. Reason is not merely instrumental reason, but includes communicative reason. The instrumental functioning of the economy must be guided by the communicative reason expressed in democracy. For Laclau language is part of discourse which includes action. Societies are shaped by contestation among the various groups in the struggle of hegemonic democracy. The following section lays out some of the linguistic terms with which to engage each of the philosophers.

<div align="center">Engagement with Language for Democratic Contestation</div>

Both Habermas and Laclau move beyond Marx because important aspects of Marxist theory did not work successfully in history. Both turn to language to overcome the limitations they find in Marxist theory and practice.

Habermas extends the fetishism of commodities into communicative action. We have seen this quite clearly in the centrality that distorted communication plays in his theory. Distorted communication is a society-wide issue that moves beyond class struggle to a struggle to make democratic participation equally open to all. There is no prescribed outcome but rather a confidence that fair discussion is the best possibility for an emancipatory result. Language is the sphere for human beings to work out societal issues. This calls for attention to communicative reason that is a necessary complement to instrumental reason. Democracy operates through language and discussion so that people give expression to the values that will shape their own lives as part of the society they live in. Progress in human history involves the

cultivation of the skills and practices that enhance communication for the directing of society.

Laclau's turn to language involves a rejection of fetishism. Contestation in discourse is the political for Laclau. There is no privileged actor, which means no special role for the proletariat other than what emerges in discourse. Laclau's emphasis on indeterminacy precludes presenting any goal and so emancipation is not a goal. His Saussurean approach to language as relations of difference leads into a view that discourse is a continual struggle among these relations.

In what follows we will present four terms that will serve as common terms by which to analyze Habermas and Laclau. At this point, we will briefly examine the relation of these terms to Marx. Both Habermas and Laclau give more attention to agency and consent as they are related to power than Marx did. Habermas presents much greater detail of the communication necessary for democratic participation. The correlative terms symmetry/asymmetry give specific attention to more general trends in Marx. Symmetry can be seen in the uniting of the proletariat in class consciousness. Asymmetry plays out in terms of class struggle for Marx. Habermas and Laclau will pursue these details of symmetry/asymmetry further in language theory and how language gets performed in action. The symmetries and asymmetries found in language are played out in society in the symmetry of agreed-to validity and the asymmetry of power struggles. Marx assumed the viewpoint from which his critique of capitalism arose along with his vision of the association of free producers as normative. Any position of normativity can no longer stand without justification, thus Habermas and Laclau will be examined on the place of values and their vision of the Good Society in their theories.

For Laclau language is part of discourse and for Habermas it is part of communicative action. Language is thus connected with action in both and this includes the action of democratic

politics. For Laclau the articulation of demands is the key function of democratic practice and for Habermas it is democratic will-formation from generalizable interests. Language therefore is essential to both formulations of this key element in democratic politics. How well do the articulation of demands or democratic will-formation function to produce more participation in democratic politics? Do they describe what is really going on in democracy and do they point the way toward more active participation? The answer will involve both language theory and language practice in the play of the various issues that face democracy.

Power

Power is always mediated by language. No matter how absolute the rule by force, no government can stand on violence alone, there has to be some sense of non-coerced consent. No government can rule by sheer violence; it must appear legitimate to a significant number of people who have access to power. There is some level of consent even within the tradition that links power and government to violence and sees the relationship of the governing and governed as command-obedience. Obedience is the corollary of power and when obedience of the people is withheld, the power of a government is lost and violence cannot restore it (Arendt, 1970, 49). Hannah Arendt looks to the Greek city-states and the Roman *civitas*, where she finds support for the position that power and law rest on the power of the people or the consent of the citizenry. The revolutions of the 18th Century drew support from this republican tradition (Arendt, 1970, 40).

Power is mediated through language, so it will help us to look at different approaches to power. Michel Foucault's analysis of power has made a major impact on contemporary theorists. A major aspect is his view of the multi-directional sense of power. It is not just domination imposed from the top down, but power has many different avenues. Foucault

understands the interplay of language and power in the way that power constitutes a field of knowledge (Foucault, 1977, 27). Language is not free of power, because power plays a role in establishing the way topics are discussed from the beginning. Power and communication are two parts of a three-part interrelationship with objective capacities as the third part. There is not uniform or constant coordination between these three (Foucault, 2000, 338). "Power is not evil. Power is games of strategy" (Foucault, 1997, 298). This statement from Foucault presents a challenge that democracy must meet. Democracy can be seen as the management of power. This statement arises in comments on Habermas, in which Foucault calls "utopian" any attempt to reach a state of communication with constraints on coercion. Foucault does not speak much to democracy, but the following comment leaves room for it. "The problem, then, is not to try to dissolve them [power relations] in the utopia of completely transparent communication but to acquire rules of law, the management of techniques, and also the morality, the *ēthos*, the practice of the self, that will allow us to play these games of power with as little domination as possible" (Foucault, 1997, 298). This presents a means of comparison between the approaches of Laclau and Habermas. Which theory of language provides a better means by which to manage power relations, so that democracy can produce "as little domination as possible?" What is the best way to challenge domination and lead to liberation? What form will contestation take in democratic theory and what role will language play in this contestation? Another view of power alongside of this one can help us get a fuller picture of its place in democratic discussion.

Thomas Wartenberg's approach to power brings in the role of language. Wartenberg distinguishes power-over from power-to and thus gives a picture like Foucault of the dynamic nature of power. He affirms Foucault's presentation of power as offering different points of resistance or different axes of power (Wartenberg, 1990, 168). His view is distinguished from

Foucault's as Wartenberg presents three articulations of power-over on a spectrum from non-discursive to discursive. Force is on the non-discursive end of the spectrum and influence is on the discursive end with coercion as the middle term (Wartenberg, 1990, 91-92). Threat is the discursive aspect of coercive power, which threatens the use of force. Influence uses language to persuade, which can involve reason, expertise or less-defined personal effect. This is still a more strategic rather than communicative use of language because it is part of a description of power-over not power-to. The possibility or even probability of manipulation raises concerns for the morality of this aspect of power (Wartenberg, 1990, 93-110). Wartenberg refers to Gramsci earlier and then describes the working of social power in a way that sounds like Gramsci's hegemony. Wartenberg's term is "counter alignments" which function to allow subordinated agents to organize to overcome a dominant agent (Wartenberg, 1990, 173-175). This opens the way to democratic actions, which seem to require movement beyond power-over to power-to and even more appropriately power-with. Wartenberg brings in transformative power. This will provide another place to analyze Laclau and Habermas in their attention through language to these views of power and the way in which power and validity are contested.

A central question for analysis is the extent to which language is intertwined with force. Laclau and Habermas both criticize and are suspicious of tradition. All languages emerge from a cultural tradition. These traditions are riddled with the influence of force and the impact of elites, thus language is not pure of force. Language can also be shaped by its users who bring in innovation and change. Habermas differentiated his critical theory from Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutical approach precisely on Gadamer's over reliance on tradition. Laclau might approach Habermas as one who has an over reliance on the reason that has emerged in the tradition of the Enlightenment. For either thinker the challenge remains for the best way of

determining whose narrative prevails in political struggles. Is it merely a power struggle such that one must use any tools at one's disposal? Is there a chance of reaching understandings? Is the goal merely winning elections?   Language has role to play whichever question takes the lead.

Participation

A key area of analysis forms around the issue of participation. One of my goals is to promote increased participation of average citizens and even to promote the participation of the masses. How do Laclau and Habermas help us get beyond the elites to the inclusion of everyone? Language plays an essential role in this effort. Currently, politicians in the United States tend to need large amounts of money to run for or stay in office. They depend on the elites for funding, either as individuals or in corporate contributions. Language plays a role of helping to legitimize the political order. Sound bites and political campaigns seek to convince the people that they are expressing their democratic power as they vote and do not need to concern themselves with increased participation. Political speech rarely gets into true discussion even in legislative debates as positions are staked out and defended according to their effect on political power. How do people who currently have little or no voice enter the political discussion? Often the less educated are also less articulate such that they lose in the language game of politics. Even if they are articulate they face the challenge to be listened to or even to get heard through the mass media. The theories of Laclau and Habermas need to be tested on their contributions to increasing participation in the democratic process. Notions of the public sphere come into play here. Has the public sphere included everyone or just the elites? This also will be examined in terms of symmetry and asymmetry. What kind of balance between the two can be attained?

Performativity: Symmetry/Asymmetry

Mark Devenney brings in the terms symmetry and asymmetry to differentiate the "conceptions of communication, discourse and language" (Devenney, 2004, 2) of Critical Theory (represented by Habermas) and Post-Marxism (represented by Laclau). "Symmetrical" describes Habermas' assumption that communication involves subjects trying to reach an understanding in reciprocal dialogue. Symmetrical relations connect or reach agreement. They are stable and cooperative. "Asymmetrical" describes the Post-Marxist understanding "that any perceived symmetry relies on hidden asymmetries, and the unacknowledged exercise of force which can never finally be justified" (Devenney, 2004, 2). Asymmetry plays a key role in post-structuralist language theory derived from Saussure's emphasis on difference. Asymmetrical relations disconnect and do not reach agreement. They are not stable and conflictual. We see these terms in action in relation to another linguistic term – "performativity."

Performativity here originates with the language philosophy of J.L. Austin.[7] In it Habermas finds the stability of "illocutionary performativity" in the symmetry of subjects trying to reach an understanding. Poststructuralists Judith Butler and Laclau find instability in performativity, especially in the various ways speakers do not control their communication. Devenney sets appropriate parameters for our discussion of performativity, when he states, "communicative rationality cannot presuppose perfect symmetry nor absolute asymmetry" (Devenney, 2004, 3). Each theory will need to account for the place of imperfections in communication and interferences to reaching an understanding, while also recognizing that some communication is successful. We can see this in terms of democracy. "A defence of democracy has to account both for the asymmetries of power, and for those symmetrical relations that bind

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[7] Habermas' use of Austin's theory will be discussed more fully in Chapter 3.

participants to a community" (Devenney, 2004, 70). Contestation happens with this space. There can be no hegemony without some binding of participants together. The distortion of communication by power must not only be recognized, but the many ways asymmetry is disguised within consensus must be rooted out. Honneth proposes "the thesis that a critical analysis of society must see as its task today the identification of moral conflicts connected to the social class structure which are hidden behind late capitalism's façade of integration" (Honneth, 2007, 90-91). "The question for a democratic society is not simply how to make power and democracy compatible, but to demonstrate that because they go together validity and power need to be balanced in a manner which mutually undermines the ability of each to suffocate the other" (Devenney, 2004, 74). This balance will be one of the criteria on which Habermas and Laclau's theories will be evaluated. This question can also be posed as to the manner in which symmetry and asymmetry are balanced as these two language theories are applied to democratic practice and the role of power.

Grounds for Criticism: Conception of the Good Society and Normativity

Language is necessary for criticism of the *status quo*. Along with actions to improve democracy, a vision of something different must be cast and language is needed to project other possibilities. Both thinkers hold on to the importance of criticism. Which one offers the best view of criticism to lead to improvement? Habermas seeks to move from violence toward purer decision-making, which Laclau considers impossible. With his resistance to normative theory, on what grounds does Laclau offer criticism and what better future can his theory point to? Habermas must defend the grounds from which he offers criticism. Language must play a role in efforts to oppose the *status quo*, do Laclau or Habermas make a strong enough case that their approach can best serve such opposition? Maeve Cooke presents this challenge to the *status quo*

in terms of one's "conception of the good society." Though any conception cannot be fully achieved, such conceptions still guide liberatory projects. The conceptions themselves are open to further criticism and of course the means to carry out the conceptions will be ever contested.

Cooke examines these issues in terms of one's conception of the good society. She moves Honneth's question from normality to the conception of the good society that guides, "critical diagnoses and emancipatory projections" (Cooke, 2006, 4). For Cooke, the parameters for justifying validity claims involve a tension between the anti-authoritarian impulse and context-transcending validity claims (Cooke, 2006, 4). Both Laclau and Habermas recognize the historicity and partiality that call for an anti-authoritarian approach and the danger that context-transcending validity claims can lead to the repressive imposition of power. At the same time a critical social theory seeks to get beyond "the contingent preferences of the inhabitants of historically specific sociocultural contexts" (Cooke, 2006, 4). Laclau and Habermas will be evaluated on how well they hold these two poles in tension.   The core thesis of Cooke's book states this in terms that relate to both Laclau and Habermas, "we should conceive of the good society as *re-presented* in particular representations that are constitutively inadequate to it" (Cooke, 2006, 5). Re-presentation involves language. That these representations are inadequate, points directly to Laclau's language theory. His discussions of hegemony speak to these terms used by Cooke: "the hegemonic identity becomes something of the order of an empty signifier, its own particularity embodying an unachievable fullness," (Laclau, 2005, 71) and "investment of fullness in a partial object" (Laclau, 2005, 116). Habermas's ideal speech situation also speaks to these terms. It has the role of the ideal from which to criticize any particular attempt of democratic process and does it in terms of language with the goal of open participation.   Cooke calls for "maintaining the gap that enables a context-transcending, critical perspective without

violating the demands of situated rationality" (Cooke, 2006, 98) Habermas and Laclau face the task of meeting this challenge of the way in which language is intertwined with democratic possibilities.

Claiming that value neutrality was not an option, Horkheimer sought to find a way to bring values to bear on criticism of society without falling into normative dogmatism (Horkheimer, 1989, 265). This is precisely the problem faced by Laclau and Habermas. The way presented by Horkheimer was immanent critique, which evaluates a social institution in terms of its own established values and standards. In this way one can find the discrepancies between the actual practices and stated values. One does not necessarily also accept these aims or values as valid or evident. The challenge remains of how one determines which values are the ones to follow. Like Horkheimer (and Habermas), Laclau is not a positivist who claims that values are neutral, but instead destabilizes any claim for objectivity (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, 122) and seeks no justification for actions. Though he disavows the relevance of normativity, Laclau does refer to values and favors specific terms for his analysis. He favorably quotes Mouffe, who in challenging deliberative democracy's privileging of rationality, affirms "the crucial role played by passions and affects in securing allegiance to democratic values…" (Laclau, 2005, 168). Laclau also retains the "egalitarian dimension" from "the usual notion of democracy" (Laclau, 2005, 125). In objecting to Habermas' separation of substantive and procedural values, Laclau makes the following affirmation of values, "in order to accept some procedures as legitimate, I have to share some substantive values with other people" (Laclau, 2005, 199). He also sees a role for humanist values. "And we know well that they [humanist values] are always threatened: racism, sexism, class discrimination, always limit the emergence and full validity of humanism. To deny to the 'human' the status of an essence is to draw attention to the historical conditions

that have led to its emergence and to make possible, therefore, a wider degree of realism in the fight for the full realization of those values" (Laclau, 1990, 125). He holds to the value of opposing oppression, but couches this in the fundamental terms of his analysis, such that democracy does not seek the elimination of oppression, but rather "can only exist *in the movement* toward the elimination of oppression" (Laclau, 1990, 173). This points to the importance of "The incomplete character of every totality," (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, 111) which serves as a consistent term of analysis/criticism for Laclau as derived from Saussure's conception of language.[8] This is interrelated with undecidability (Laclau, 1996, 78). Difference and equivalence move in a similar orbit as the logics that guide Laclau's approach to democracy. These terms support the central place of antagonism and within that the role of articulation to establish a relation among the elements in discourse (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, xiv and 105). The category of dislocation is another frequent term of analysis (Laclau, 1990, 39). Affirmation of terms like equality and liberty are also found (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, 184). Laclau will not claim that there can be justification for values or terms of analysis, but he depends on values and terms in order to make analysis and carry out his work. Thus Laclau as well as Habermas responds to the challenge presented in the work of the Frankfurt School by turning to the structure and function of language in order to criticize society and conceptualize democratic contestation and change.

The linguistic turn in philosophy led Continental philosophers away from the isolated subject. Neither Descartes' "I that thinks" nor Kant's "transcendental ego" constitute reason on their own, because the self is already constituted by language. Situated within language the subject is no longer seen as isolated but already functioning in an intersubjective community. No

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[8] To be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

longer can the unity of reason be assured as different languages present different worldviews (Lafont, 1999, 16). The foundation of reason and other apparent foundations have crumbled leaving human beings to construct their world within the structure of language. Habermas and Laclau both face this situation that challenges the normative grounds for criticism as they seek to build their political theories from their language theories. Habermas will have to argue for a normative rationality that emerges from communicative reason, because it is not a given. Laclau has followed the linguistic path taken by poststructuralism, which leads him to drop normativity. He leaves political results to hegemonic contestation. The challenge he faces is how he can hope for this to lead to greater democracy, because a populist movement could move in the opposite direction.

People find themselves thrown into a world where they are shaped by social relationships that they did not create. They enter language and culture that have long histories that precede their entry. Cristina Lafont presents this in relation to von Humboldt's position that there is dialectic between intersubjectivity already produced (constitutive, linguistic fore-understanding) and intersubjectivity that has to be produced in understanding between subjects (knowledge) (Lafont, 1999, 53). People are not isolated but shaped by these social and cultural forces and participate in a shared language. The knowing subject is no longer the central figure, so the concept of agency is brought into question. Both theorists face the challenge of presenting the agent who participates in democracy or the nature of political subjectivity. Both face the challenge that Foucault's notion of subject positions within a discourse presents for political subjectivity. The linguistic turn has moved knowledge from the scientific subject-object relation to the world to subject-subject relations where the main struggle is for recognition and the logic of question and answer which is "not at the disposal of the conversants" (Lafont, 1999, 98,

Gadamer, 1989 359). Poststructuralism challenges whether these connections can be made and gives greater emphasis to difference and otherness. Honneth proposes that a decentered autonomy can appropriately respond to this challenge. He sees the critique of the classical concept of the human subject in terms of two intellectual currents. The psychological critique of the subject claims that the human being's unconscious drives override individual autonomy. The linguistic critique which we have already touched on claims that autonomy is lost because of dependence on a pre-given system of language (Honneth, 2007, 181). These critiques may undermine autonomy of the subject within the theory of consciousness, however Honneth claims that for the subject within the theory of intersubjectivity "the uncontrollable powers of language and the unconscious" are not "limitations for the acquisition of personal autonomy, but as its enabling condition" (Honneth, 2007, 186). The analysis of role of subjects in democracy will follow in this vein and is very much connected to language theory.

We have seen that contemporary critical social theory requires analysis in linguistic terms. From this foundation in social theory any democratic theory also requires this type of analysis in linguistic terms. We proceed now to examine the democratic theories first of Jürgen Habermas and then of Ernesto Laclau.

Chapter Three

First Model: Habermas (Conception of Language and Deliberative Democracy)

When the first generation of Frankfurt School confronted the crisis of Reason it was also a crisis of democracy. It seemed as if historical events had brought both to a dead end. The emancipatory project of the Hegelian-Marxist legacy teetered.   Habermas came through that crucible with a new approach to reclaim both reason and democracy. Habermas found the direction to overcome this, not in the lofty realm of Reason unfolding in history but in the giving of reasons in ordinary language. In this way he also responds to the challenge to Reason posed by postmodernism's critique of foundationalism. Habermas informs his theory of democracy with an account of everyday reason giving, which includes an intersubjective reconstruction of the human concern with truth. Drawing on this philosophical conception, Habermas can expand Marx's critique of the fetishism of commodities to an account of structural violence or of the distortion of communication. With his linguistically conceived approach to rationality, he can approach the distortions that prevent democracy from fully involving people to intersubjectively shape their own lives and societies.

A basic building block of Habermas' language theory is the idea of "reaching an understanding" in a process of reciprocity between or among communicators. He develops a notion of communicative relations that are potentially symmetrical and stands in contrast to Laclau's emphasis on difference which involves asymmetrical relations. Habermas' theory of contestation therefore stands in contrast to Laclau's theory of contestation. Habermas needs to show that his focus on symmetry (reciprocity) can meet the challenge of asymmetries of distorted communication. Laclau needs to show that his focus on asymmetry (difference) does not ignore the symmetries that do occur in communication. In this chapter, I present the

connections between Habermas' language theory and deliberative democracy, in order to show the way his democratic theory engages political contestation.

We will examine the idea of reaching an understanding first in terms of speech act theory. The next section focuses on validity claims which link communication to democratic will-formation. The raising of validity claims allows persons to bring their own interests into argumentation in order to make the types of decisions that are necessary in a democracy. Interests can then be brought out of the purely personal realm and into public discussion that is oriented to the common good, which Habermas calls democratic will-formation. In the next section the communicative practice necessary for democracy is cultivated in the lifeworld. People routinely reach understandings to coordinate action and this human direction must not be lost in relation to the system. The system allows for non-communicative functioning to handle the complexity of modern society. The lifeworld and system boundary is an essential place of contestation. The last section on language steps into moral norms and argumentation to complete our discussion of how language leads into democracy for Habermas.

The other main section of this chapter will connect discourse ethics and deliberative democracy in two ways. First we will follow Habermas' discussion of deliberative politics in Inclusion of the Other and, second, we will look at the discussion of law and democracy in Between Facts and Norms. The conclusion of this section will draw together the way that Habermas' language theory conceptualizes the role of reason in contestation, and how this bears on his approach to democracy.

The third and final section of this chapter will apply the four terms of analysis from chapter Two with which we will examine both Habermas and Laclau. Thus we examine his theory of language and democracy in terms of power, participation, performativity and the

grounds for social criticism.

<u>Conception of Language</u>

Reaching an Understanding

Building on the idea of reaching an understanding Habermas' language theory reaches its most developed form in <u>The Theory of Communicative Action</u> and is applied and developed in subsequent writings. Habermas formal-pragmatic approach to language uses the idea of speech acts as developed by J.L. Austin and goes beyond it to make the case that the goal of reaching an understanding is a basic presupposition of communication. Mutual understanding is a symmetrical relationship between communicators that overcomes the asymmetries that interfere with reaching an understanding. Validity claims are implicit aspects of everyday communication, as communicators seek to reach an understanding. Briefly stated, for Habermas, validity claims imply the possibility of giving reasons to justify assertions that one is implicitly or explicitly making by an utterance.[9] As aspects of rational interaction, the dimension of validity claims in ordinary language is a key precondition of deliberative democracy. For Habermas the linguistic turn opens the way to a new philosophical way to conceptualize and pursue democracy.

Habermas calls the shift introduced by Austin's speech act theory a paradigm change in philosophy of language. Habermas continues to draw on the Continental philosophical tradition, but also develops themes from the Anglo-American analytic tradition. In communicative action, he draws on Austin's performative idea of a speech act, that we "do things with words," and sets it within his own account of the rational making and assessment of validity claims.   His synthesis allows for a move beyond the representational function of language to all the functions

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[9] Validity claims will be discussed thoroughly in the next section.

of language (Habermas, 1984, 95). These functions are not independent of reason, but can be understood as being possible through the making and assessing of corresponding validity claims in the coordination of action. Habermas' approach to language is rooted in his earlier critique of Hegel. In Theory and Practice (1973) before the full development of his theory of communicative action, he drew on Hegel's Jena Realphilosophie to point out Hegel's use of "interaction on the basis of reciprocity" (Habermas, 1973, 142). His account of interaction focuses on the performativity of language, that "we do things with words."   The shift of focus to the interaction of speakers and hearers or performativity, allows Habermas to avoid an account that treats the subject as focused on egoistically desired ends in favor of an account of the intersubjective sphere of reaching mutual understanding. In this way language can be seen to include the symmetry of reaching an understanding.

Habermas proceeds to use Austin's approach to go beyond Austin to make the case that reaching an understanding is an original mode of language on which the strategic use of language to achieve one's own ends is parasitic.   Austin distinguishes three communicative acts. The first are locutionary acts which apply to the content of propositional sentences. This is simply saying something about the world.   "It is a sunny day." The next step will become central for Habermas. These are illocutionary acts that convey meaning from the speaker to the hearer. This is where understanding is clarified. The third are perlocutionary acts that produce an effect on the hearer. Thus the three acts join together such that "a speaker always performs with communicative intent" (Habermas, 1984, 289). In this fashion, performativity is important to Habermas. A speaker performs a speech act so that the hearer may understand. Habermas moves beyond Austin to separate the illocutionary stage from the perlocutionary stage in such a way that he can claim illocution as originary. We can demonstrate this with two related

sentences. "I warn you that there is ice on the road." This is an illocutionary act. It becomes

perlocutionary with the following addition. "I warned you about the ice on the road, so that you

would stay home." Thus, the second sentence builds on the reaching an understanding of the first

sentence to produce an effect on your action. The second sentence would be even more clearly

an example of strategic action, if I had wanted you to stay at home, whether the road was icy or

not.

Illocution remains central for Habermas because in perlocution, speech acts can be used

for acts oriented toward success. For Habermas this step beyond the simple act of seeking

understanding in locution can now become part of action oriented to one's success. In this sense

success may involve reaching an understanding but it may seek to use that assumption on the

hearer's part to the speaker's advantage. This brings in various ways that people distort

communication to support their own interests and not the interest of truth or reaching an

understanding. Thus Habermas' insight is not that he believes a purity of language will be

attained, but he provides a way to critique its distortions from the perspective that the goal of

language is to 'reach an understanding.' As a critical theorist he maintains the position that

communication is often distorted and produces asymmetries. The theory of language provides

support for Habermas' criticism of capitalism. Within capitalism the non-communicative

influence of society's steering media of administrative power and money systematically can

distort communication. This emphasis on the illocutionary element in communication forms the

center of Habermas' theoretical project, which he calls communicative action – "the type of

interaction in which *all* participants harmonize their individual plans of action with one another

and thus pursue their illocutionary aims *without reservation*" (Habermas, 1984, 294). This sense

that reaching an understanding is fundamental to language is also fundamental to Habermas'

well-known use of validity claims.

Illocutionary success establishes a relationship between the speaker and hearer that coordinates their action. The action is based on the hearer's agreement or disagreement with the speaker's communication. This agreement or disagreement involves validity claims. Agreement comes when a validity claim is accepted (Habermas, 1984, 302). If I tell a friend it is raining outside. They have accepted the validity of what I have said, when they pick up their umbrella to go outside. If I joke with them in misleading ways, they might challenge me to prove it or look outside first, before picking up their umbrella. In these ways they would test the validity claim that I put before them. It is as if the speaker promises to give reasons that would convince the hearer if asked for them. Much of our communication does not reach the giving reasons stage, but it is the grounding for communicative interaction. Habermas calls these criticizable validity claims, because it is essential that they be open to questioning. This opens the way for examining validity claims and the possibility for them to be warranted.

Validity Claims and Democratic Will-Formation

Habermas starts off with four main validity claims: intelligibility, truth, rightness (Richtigkeit) and truthfulness. The first one is that speaker and hearer "understand a linguistic expression in the same way." This validity-claim of intelligibility becomes seen as a condition for communication. Unlike the other validity-claims, that if problematized can be made good, intelligibility has already been made good, if the other person's language uses words and sentences that we understand. It is therefore not redeemed discursively later, because in the process of communication it is already made good. Following this reasoning, Habermas generally drops this validity claim from discussion and discusses three validity claims.

The three validity claims are distinguished in terms of the domain of reality they relate to and how they are redeemed. The three domains are: "The" World of External Nature, "Our" World of Society and "My" World of Internal Nature. In the first domain, speech represents facts or objective states of affairs and the corresponding validity claim is about truth. "It is sunny today." Do the speaker and hearer agree on what the facts are; do they both consider the statement made by the speaker to be true? In the social domain speech relates to establishing legitimate interpersonal relations and the validity claim is about rightness. "The teacher said that even though it was a sunny day, the students still should go to class." Is what is being said appropriate to the situation? Does the speaker have the right to say this statement to the hearer? In the internal (personal) domain speech relates to disclosure of the speaker's subjectivity and the validity claim is about truthfulness. "I feel happy on sunny days."   Is what the speaker is saying truthful (Habermas, 1979, 68: Diagram)? This is not necessarily redeemed by more talk, but by experience. In this case does the person seem happier on sunny days? Does the person make statements that seem to reflect their actual perspective? Lies are discovered as events unfold and not in the telling. The validity claims of the three domains are intersubjectively testable, though in the domain of internal nature the validity claim of truthfulness is just not primarily discursively redeemed, because it is redeemed in experience. Truth and rightness are discursively redeemed. The approach to truth becomes linked to the "unforced force of the better argument." Habermas later makes a key step for the truth claims of social science in relation to natural science, when he points out the similarity of right norms to true statements. [10]

The theory of language centered on reaching an understanding is developed through the account of the redemption of validity claims in a potential reaching of a rational consensus. The

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[10] Chapter entitled "Rightness versus Truth: On the Sense of Normative Validity in Moral Judgments and Norms." pages 237-276 in Truth and Justification, 2003.

asymmetry of unique individuals is brought into play to move toward symmetrical relations characteristic of the common exchanging of validity claims. The potential for rational consensus is potential for democratic agreement that Habermas seeks in deliberative democracy. Communicative action operates out of the background of the lifeworld which undergirds the communicative practice of everyday life. It is interwoven with learning. Habermas approach is often described as reconstruction in that his theory reconstructs the communication and decision-making of human beings. Validity claims reconstruct the way we interact with each other in the shared world and are the components for building deliberative democracy.

Part of communication involves the communicating of one's own particular interests. Habermas accounts for the way that particular subjective interests enter rational discussion to become generalized interests, which is a step in his account of democratic will-formation. In such an interaction "the participants exercise mutual control over their contributions to the interaction" (Habermas, 1990, 147). These contributions are interests, so he calls this interaction "interest-governed reciprocity" (Habermas, 1990, 147).

Interests are generalizable when they can be affirmed by others, thus an interest moves from being the particular interest of one subject to being the general interest of more subjects. It can also be called a common interest (McCarthy, 1978, 314). When there is wide spread acceptance, a generalized interest can be seen as a norm. We can see the flow from particular interests to generalizable interests, "Thus although interests and values can be merely subjective (as particular desires or private gratifications), they can also be generalizable (as shared desires or common gratifications). In the latter case, the normative or evaluative judgments that give expression to 'reciprocally expected intentions' can claim a kind of objectivity; it is precisely this claim that is embedded in socially binding norms and standards. Given the nature of the claim, it

can be made good only by unforced agreement on the part of those whose desires and gratifications are at stake" (McCarthy, 1978, 315). We can see that this process does not rely on a rational pre-agreement on what interests count, rather it is in discussion or discourse that one finds which particular interests become generalized (McCarthy, 1978, 327).

Habermas elaborates a theory of argumentation that relies on his emphasis on validity claims. Argumentation here takes the form of presenting one's own interests and opening them to criticism from others (Habermas, 1990, 67). "Interests and needs are not 'givens' within the procedure but are open to criticism, interpretation and revision. Part of what discourse is about is judging what is in my/our best interests" (Chambers, 1996, 102). This helps him conceptualize processes inherent in deliberative democracy. He specifically draws on Stephen Toulmin's theory of argumentation, a dimension that draws on everyday communication rather than schemes of formal reasoning. "We try to support a claim with good grounds or reasons; the quality of the reasons and their relevance can be called into question by the other side; we meet objections and are in some cases forced to modify our original positions" (Habermas, 1984, 31). Toulmin is seeking a way between absolutism and relativism. A warrant, which is a reasoned/well founded justification and its backing are the keys to a valid or possible argument (Habermas, 1973, 24). For Habermas, this shows how argument can contribute to reaching shared understanding, which is rationally motivated or warranted (Habermas, 1973, 24). He stresses the connections between sentences in a shared language system. The bridging principles that have "the consensus-producing power from the justification for going from B [backing] to W [warrant]" are induction and generalization (Habermas, 1973, 26). Induction is the move from singular statements to a universal statement and generalization is the move from descriptive references to a rule (Habermas, 1973, 26). Induction and generalization are key components of

the scientific method as seen in John Dewey's use of inference in inquiry. Inquiry is the type of process needed in democracy. It does not yield absolute knowledge, but rather plausible support that - is open to contestation.

In order to avoid just confirming the "common knowledge" of the traditional viewpoint, Habermas makes clear that the power of argument to produce consensus is based on cognitive development (following Piaget) as a learning process and not on the appropriate connection between a linguistic system and reality, as in a correspondence theory of truth. The view of reality must be open to argumentation (Habermas, 1973, 28). There needs to be a process for testing and revising for this process to be really alive and one that people can have confidence in. We see some indications of the recognition of a shared reality. This process reflects actual conversation. "An argumentatively achieved consensus may be viewed as a criterion for truth if and only if the structural possibility exists of inquiring behind, modifying or replacing the warranting language in which experiences at any given time are interpreted" (Habermas, 1973, 29). For this process to be helpful it must enable persons "a truthful interpretation both of their own particular needs and more importantly of their common needs capable of consensus" (Habermas, 1973, 29). The power of consensus leads to the power of universalization. Universalization in terms of the norms of practical discourse would involve "a consensus among all participants and everyone potentially affected by the decision" (Habermas, 1973, 29). He does not fully maintain a 'consensus theory of truth' but does use "cooperative search for truth" in The Theory of Communicative Action (Habermas, 1984 25). This approach is later shaped into the universalization principle (U) and discourse principle (D).[11] Habermas reconstructs a process by which individuals bring their subjective approach to reality and norms into interaction

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[11] This will be discussed in greater detail in the next section.

with others (all others) in order to learn together and more nearly approach truth and appropriateness.

The questioning of validity claims and exchanging of validity claims in argumentation leave room for critical theory such that participants can change the level of the discourse or question a traditional need interpretation and free themselves "to say what they desire under present and in reference to future possible circumstances and what they ought to desire if there were a universal consensus" (Habermas, 1973, 30). This leaves room for human agency. The adequate criteria for a consensus achieved through argument are "the properties of an ideal speech situation" (Habermas, 1973, 31). In the ideal speech situation there are no impediments to the force of the unforced or better argument. There can be no external interference. A key element necessary in communication is symmetry or the equal opportunity to participate with speech acts (Habermas, 1973, 32). An anticipation or prefiguration of an ideal speech situation is the rational basis for an actually achieved consensus and the critical standard for deciding whether a consensus is warranted (Habermas, 1973, 33-34).[12] This process involving the exchange of reasons as validity claims is the type of argumentation that fits the contestation of deliberative democracy. Exchanging reasons is found in the everyday practice of communication, Habermas seeks to preserve it as a place to develop reasoning, which is an essential practice of deliberative democracy.

Lifeworld and System

Habermas' concept of the lifeworld builds on the concept articulated by Edmund Husserl and further developed by Alfred Schutz (Outhwaite, 2009, 73-74). His shaping of lifeworld

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[12] This earlier article concludes that with a discussion of the 'ideal speech situation,' a term that will find a place in Habermas' mature theory. This article presents the kind of contestation that Habermas seeks in deliberative democracy.

builds on American Pragmatist George Herbert Mead's views on language and communicative action to develop his view of it and its interaction with the system. The lifeworld is needed to develop the democratic means to direct the system and avoid the colonization of the lifeworld by the system. This is a site of contestation. Mead's theory is built on the development of linguistic symbols within intersubjective interaction. Because reaching an understanding is part of the structure of language it has implications for all human interaction and "is built into the reproduction of social life" (Habermas, 1987a, 96). This also speaks to Habermas' political theory of democracy in that normative validity claims confirmed through communicatively achieved consensus are the principles of democratic will-formation (Habermas, 1987a, 96). The reproduction of social life is based in the lifeworld. Social life is reproduced through transmission of culturally stored knowledge, social integration and socialization of individuals.

For both Habermas and Mead language is an essential part of all of these processes. The lifeworld is generally experienced as the background for all that human beings do. It is the life we experience as ordinary. The lifeworld is meaning and values that shape our viewpoints on life. It becomes an issue when there are disagreements or dysfunctions. Habermas connects the reproduction of the three areas of the lifeworld with the validity claims domains. Culture is related to truth in reaching an understanding in the transmission of cultural knowledge. Societal reproduction is related to rightness in coordinating action in the fulfilling of norms to integrate persons into society and also to reaching an understanding for arriving at those norms. Personality is related to truthfulness in the forming of personality structures for the socialization of individuals (Habermas, 1987a, 138). Thus reaching an understanding and validity claims have roles in structuring society through the areas of culture, social integration and personality.

Habermas also applies the work of Emile Durkheim on religion to development in

societal authority. In the linguistification of sacred the authority of the holy is replaced by the authority of achieved consensus (Habermas, 1987a, 77). One hears echoes of Marx' criticism of religion and the process of modernity in which human beings take responsibility for their own lives and how they organize them together. This also points to one of the roles for discursive will-formation, which is to break down the quasi-naturalness of traditionally legitimated domination. Modernity has broken with tradition but maintains its own quasi-natural legitimation of domination (Habermas, 1987a, 147). Weber's view of the iron cage of reason expresses how the instrumental reason of modern bureaucratization interferes with communicative reason. Habermas sees in this the continuation of class domination and the interference of the commodity form (Habermas, 1987a, 328 and 334). The fetishism of commodities which mystifies social relations is the epitome of the distortion of communication as it serves to legitimize capitalism.

In his turn to the paradigm of intersubjective communication, which is based on reaching an understanding, as a goal and in terms of actual daily practice, Habermas has distinguished communicative reason from instrumental reason, which had become confused by positivistically oriented thought with the whole of reason (as discussed in Chapter 2.) In this manner he preserves a conception of reason that serves the critical aims that can give direction to contestation. Habermas sees communicative reason as essential in the process of radical democracy and therefore as the hope to achieve the Marxist goal of liberation.

The system's interference in the lifeworld produces distortion of the communication that coordinates human interaction through the lifeworld. System and lifeworld are necessary correlate components of modern human society. "Modern societies are integrated not only socially through values, norms and mutual understanding, but also systemically through markets and administrative use of power" (Habermas, 1996, 39). Habermas recognizes an essential role for the

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system to steer society through institutions that do not require argumentative defense for their functioning. We agree to rules or laws, so we do not have to take time to discuss in order to coordinate action. The lifeworld nurturing of societal life provides the justification for institutions. "Both media of systemic integration, money and power, are anchored via legal institutionalization in orders of the lifeworld, which is in turn socially integrated through communicative action" (Habermas, 1996, 40).

When the non-communicative functions of the institutions cross over into the boundary of the lifeworld it causes a distortion in the communicative shaping role of the lifeworld. This distortion underlies many of the dysfunctions of society. Managing the interaction of the system and the lifeworld, such that each maintains it proper place supports the functioning of society. In sociological terms the system is society's steering capacity. The major distortion of communication and colonization of the lifeworld comes through the ways that the steering media of administrative power and money replace language in societal decision-making (Habermas, 1987a, 183 and 280-81).

The language theory developed by Habermas serves the goal of enabling the society to function in democratic ways. He also moves through these system dynamics to the normative level. "The point is to protect areas of life that are functionally dependent on social integration through values, norms, and consensus formation, to preserve them from falling prey to the systemic imperatives of economic and administrative subsystems growing with dynamics of their own…" (Habermas, 1987a, 372). That protection will be served by communicative action. Habermas claims Mead has shown that language leads to universalistic morality, by "an unfettering of the rationality potential inherent in communicative action" (Habermas, 1987a, 92). Mead has given direction to Habermas' political project with the replacement of Kant's Categorical Imperative with a procedure of discursive will-formation (Habermas, 1987a, 94).

The Categorical Imperative involves an individual deciding that a norm can be a general rule for anyone. Habermas considers this inadequate, because it is done by individual deciding on this principle isolated from social interaction. Ultimately, this calls for dialogue among people to express their actual opinions. The approach to generalizable interests supports this dialogue as people are able to take "an idealizing *enlargement* of their interpretive perspectives" (Habermas, 1998, 57). Mead's "ideal role taking" is a way to see generalizable interests, as people come to take the perspective of others and test whether particular interests can fit at the general of society. This public use of reason "does not bracket the pluralism of convictions and worldviews from the outset" (Habermas, 1998, 59).

An ethical principle is valid if it has been justified through rational discourse. Moral or ethical discourse can be described as people deliberating to agree to a norm, such that they are both the author of such a norm and addressed by it as subjects. The ideal speech situation here serves not as a utopian goal but as a way to criticize the limitations on communication from various ways that "the force of the unforced agreement" gets interfered with and distorted. Habermas seeks to make the political struggle a discursive one such that the best argument is democratically agreed to by all involved. This approach to contestation emerges from the central role of language and communication's original orientation to seek to reach an understanding.

Moral Norms and Actual Argumentation

The purpose of this section is to complete the discussion of language issues before moving on more explicitly to democratic theory. Moral norms derive their moral authority because they attain a level of general validity. The morality of our personal interactions is guided by "normative expectations" that come from an impersonal or general level of social expectation (Habermas, 1990, 48-49). Habermas is looking for a bridging principle between

these two levels of personal and general. It is comparable to theoretical discourse in science needs an inductive principle to move from particular observations to general hypotheses (Habermas, 1990, 63) as was presented above in the theory of argumentation. Habermas moves toward the universalization principle (U) from Kant's categorical imperative. We know the categorical imperative from its various formulations, but Habermas is concerned for the underlying idea of the imperative because he wants to "take into account the impersonal or general character of valid universal commands" (Habermas, 1990, 63). It is this principle that makes consensus possible and makes norms reflect the general will. One person cannot test whether a norm is valid, rather "valid norms must deserve the recognition of all concerned" (Habermas, 1990, 65). He turns to Mead to make this point.

From Mead he finds an important mechanism in this process. What Mead terms "ideal role taking," Habermas calls "the universal exchange of roles" (Habermas, 1990, 65). This is a perfect fit for the issue at hand. Mead uncovers the development of this in childhood. An infant comes into contact with others from the beginning of their life. When a child starts to play, one form of play is taking the role of the other. This is done in pretend and is not very rule bound. When a child moves from play to a game, they have to move from seeing the role of the other to the role of any other, which Mead names the generalized other. In this manner the norms of society and morality are learned (Mead, 1934, 149-163). From this impetus, Habermas lays out the universalizing principle (U) that every valid norm has to fulfill. (U) is a principle of argumentation for more than one participant in a real life argumentation that includes all affected as participants (Habermas, 1990, 66). This expands the categorical imperative by moving from ascribing a maxim as valid to all others and instead submitting the maxim to all others to be discursively tested (Habermas, 1990, 67). This fits as a principle of argumentation in two ways.

First, if one is participating in the argument, one can make their own case for their own interests and not depend on the interpretation of another, which can go wrong. Second, participating in the argument puts one's own interests in front of others for criticism (Habermas, 1990, 67). This illustrates the give and take that moves an argument forward, as the participants are open to revision from different directions.

Habermas claims that these are not just conventions that fit an ideal situation, but are inescapable presuppositions for real life argumentation. To this end, Habermas says that the conditions of the presuppositions need to be institutionalized to as adequately as possible set up conditions in which participants can freely enter argumentation (Habermas, 1990, 92). The universalization principle (U) is required for a norm to meet with consent. Habermas states this in a fashion similar to the (U) principle with the added terms in italics. "Unless all affected can *freely* accept the consequences and the side effects that the *general* observance of a controversial norm can be expected to have for the satisfaction of the interests of *each individual*" (Habermas, 1990, 93). The universalization principle (U) is a moral principle. It is only a rule of argumentation and in itself it has no other content. It is not the concrete rules, contents or presuppositions of arguments. (U) is a part of the logic of practical discourses and such paves the way for the principle of discourse ethics (D), which is: "Only those norms can claim to be valid that meet (or could meet) with the approval of all affected in their capacity as participants in a practical discourse" (Habermas, 1990, 93). Thus Habermas makes his "contribution to a discourse among citizens" (Habermas, 1990, 94).

James Finlayson states that (U) includes foreseeable consequences and side effects. In this way a consequentialist aspect is brought into a deontological principle (Finlayson, 82). This makes the principle less Kantian. Moving from abstraction toward concrete application is a

positive move.   In a world where the majority of poor people suffer, while "civilized" people maintain principles, foreseeing consequences seems like a moral responsibility. The discourse principle (D) offers important adjustments to Kantian ethics. One mark of deontological theories is on the positive side a stability of principles that does not get derailed by changes in majority opinion. On the negative side there may be rigidity and abstractness from the real interests of people. Discourse ethics offers some improvements. Kantian deontological ethics abstracts from actual interests to remove that taint of self-interest from the formation of principles. Habermas seeks to move beyond a monological consideration of maxims that one would see as universal. With the discourse principle, he is able to push for real dialogue among real people to place a maxim under scrutiny from as many interests as possible to see how it holds up. A criticism of Kantian deontological ethics is the problem of conflict of principles. The discourse principle overcomes this problem by setting in motion a process to resolve such conflicts. Discourse ethics surpasses Kantian ethics because it has a stable principle to help discourses establish maxims, but the give and take of argumentation keeps it from becoming rigid or removed from real life in the real world.   The truth of discourse ethics is found in its application in the world and its goal of moving beyond interpretation to change.

<center>Discourse Ethics and Deliberative Democracy</center>

The bridge between communicative action and a political theory of democracy is discourse ethics. Habermas specifically develops his political theory of democracy in two works: The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory and Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy. The three validity claims lead specifically into discourse ethics for Habermas as these validity claims are expressed in terms of the discourse principle (D) and the universalization principle (U). "(D) Only those norms can

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claim validity that could meet with the acceptance of all concerned in practical discourse. (Habermas, 1998, 41). Under (D), norms claim validity when all the people affected by the norms could accept them if they would be able to participate in a discussion under the conditions that the best argument would win out. Under (U), this is expanded to serve the interests (emerging from their worldviews) of each individual that could be agreed to by all concerned without being distorted by power relations or distortion in communication (Habermas, 1998, 41-46). "(U) A norm is valid when the foreseeable consequences and side effects of its general observance for the interests and value-orientations of each individual could be jointly accepted by all concerned without coercion" (Habermas, 1998, 42).[13] We are ready now to take communicative action in an ethical direction into discourse ethics in the realm of deliberative democracy.

Deliberative Politics

From these principles, Habermas develops an approach to the democratic process. The universalizing discourse of communicative action takes the form of deliberative politics when he discusses democracy in the modern state (Habermas, 1998, 239-252). In The Inclusion of the Other Habermas takes aspects of liberalism and republicanism (Habermas, 1998, 240-244) and shapes them into a stronger approach that combines aspects of both. Liberalism takes the private interests and rights of citizens as its point of departure. On this view, in the democratic process private citizens promote their own interests in competition with others and reach compromises in the governing of a society that protects private rights as long as harm is not brought to others. The state administers political power as private citizens interact following the direction of the market system.

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[13] (D) and (U) are first formulated by Habermas in Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action – (U) p 65 & 120 and (D) p 66 & 121 and also stated in Between Facts and Norms – (U) p 566 and (D) p 107.

Republicanism emphasizes participation in the political sphere. All citizens are seen as participants in the political process who communicate together to shape not only the laws that will govern their society but all socialization. Social solidarity that leads to an ethical community is the goal of republicanism. The danger here according to Habermas, is that the positive nature of republicanism depends too exclusively on the virtue of the citizens. He seems to fear that communication under the direction of discourse theory could be overrun by power politics and the mystification of the market's commodity fetish. He looks to add some of the political give and take of liberalism to republicanism to make a stronger position which is especially important in a pluralistic society.

Habermas calls this third approach deliberative politics. This brings aspects of the two approaches together (Habermas, 1998, 249-252). Negotiations which follow political procedures established with the framework of a constitution are brought in from liberalism. This is joined with the discourse based community formation of republicanism not to determine all aspects of society but to operate within the informal networks of the public sphere free from the power structures of the state and the strictures of the market system. Law and statute guide the democratic decision making of the state and democratic thinking works to support and legitimate this administration of political power.

The strength of the discourse ethic is its holistic nature that brings normative validity and democracy together. It also has an almost empirical aspect in addition to its quasi-transcendental aspect. The quasi-transcendental aspect is the universality that Habermas attaches to reaching an understanding. He cannot claim nor does he seek to claim this as an a priori foundation, but he needs it to function that way until proven otherwise. The transcendental aspect offers resistance to relativism and irrationality (Aboulafia, 2002, 4-5). The empirical aspect arises out of ordinary

communication in everyday life where we function fairly smoothly together to coordinate action, which gives concrete reality to what could be considered an idealistic principle. The communicative problem solving of everyday life is training people to participate in the democratic governing process by the way we communicate to coordinate action. The success of managing daily life can give hope to democratic political interaction. It also takes power issues into consideration by incorporating constitutional parliamentary procedure. Such procedure establishes rules that all can follow and provides greater transparency to give greater hope that rational discussion will prevail over back room deals and the influence of money. The way political power and the logic of the market both encroach on political process and the public sphere to threaten the principle of "the force of the unforced argument" is a significant challenge for discourse ethics. Power and money interfere with fair application of democratic procedures. Power and money also interfere with the ability of people to make decisions to shape their lives by their own values. This is the place for contestation in the attempt to make contestation fairer.

We can see the move from the agreements and solutions to problems of everyday life as the interaction on an interpersonal level moves toward wider social issues. "Discourse ethics, views the moral point of view as embodied in an intersubjective praxis of argumentation which enjoins those involved to an idealizing enlargement of their interpretative perspectives" (Habermas, 1998, 57). There is a need for a "public forum" which must take place in the primary stage to intersubjectively shape the principles and norms in order to justify them. Habermas is then placing discourse ethics directly in the dialogue with the "other" and their perspectives. "I have in mind the more open procedure of an argumentative praxis that proceeds under the demanding presuppositions of the 'public use of reason' and does not bracket the pluralism of convictions and worldviews from the outset" (Habermas, 1998, 59). Habermas

makes this even clearer as he returns to the issue of autonomy. "Citizens are politically autonomous only if they can view themselves as the joint authors of the laws to which they are subject as individual addressees" (Habermas, 1998, 71). Reconciliation is needed at the public/private boundary. The public side involves the right to participate in the political process, which Habermas labels "democratic self-legislation." The private or nonpublic side is the domain shaped by one's "individual conception of the good." This is the location of pre-political liberties (Habermas, 1998, 70). Habermas is bringing in republican values of "popular sovereignty and human rights" (Habermas, 1998, 71). He reconciles the republican tradition of "collective democratic lawmaking by citizens" with the liberal tradition of personal liberty or rights (Habermas, 1998, 72). "By contrast, I propose that philosophy limit itself to the clarification of the moral point of view and the procedure of democratic legitimation, to the analysis of the conditions of rational discourses and negotiations" (Habermas, 1998, 72). These are the parameters for engaging the conflict that is ever present in society. Contestation for Habermas can best proceed through deliberative politics in a manner that brings individuals together to participate in a process that has the hope of acknowledging the interests of each to serve the common good.

Law and Democracy

Habermas presents a similar argument in Chapter 3 of <u>Between Facts and Norms</u>. He discusses the two poles of the continuum in terms of the opposing poles of private liberties (liberalism) and civic autonomy (republicanism,) which is also seen in terms of human rights and popular sovereignty. He seeks to reconcile this problem through the discourse concept of law (Habermas, 1996, 84). I will explore this dialectical approach in terms of law and politics, to understand Habermas' approach to carrying out discourse ethics.

Habermas looks at the legal side of the need for both individual rights and an orientation to the common good (Habermas, 1996, 82-84). We see Habermas doing the work of reconstruction of modern law in terms of its inclusion of both positive law and postconventional morality (Habermas, 1996, 82, 84)   These are both the facts of the legal functioning and the normative claims of constitutional democracies (Habermas, 1996, 84). This approach puts rights on a different footing than the isolated atomism of liberal theory. The discourse concept of law conceives the rights of the legal order as based on the presupposition of collaboration and reciprocity (Habermas, 1996, 88). Thus we see the mutual recognition of Habermas' communicative action take shape in discourse ethics in a manner that applies to the political reality of the legal order.

Habermas calls this basic building block "communicative freedom," which emerges in intersubjective relationships (Habermas, 1996, 119). The discourse principle (D) comes into this as the process by which participants claim their role as authors of law and as those who give it legitimacy (Habermas, 1996, 126-127). Here participants move ahead as the holders of rights to enter into a process to order their society. Habermas describes the role of discourse: "The principle of discourse can assume the shape of a principle of democracy through the medium of law only insofar as the discourse principle and the legal medium interpenetrate and develop into a system of rights that brings private and public autonomy into a relation of mutual presupposition" (Habermas, 1996, 128). Both law and politics require their foundation in a public sphere that nourishes the principle of "the force of the unforced argument."

It is necessary for law and democracy to be grounded in the discursive principle of practical rationality/ethics. It is the way to shape people to affirm the discourse concept of the law and to participate in a deliberative democratic process. It has the potential to help people

develop the solidarity to resist the current domination by political power and money. In law and in politics, the poles of private liberties /civic autonomy (also public/private autonomy), human rights/popular sovereignty, liberal/republican are reconciled in law by discourse concept of law and in politics by deliberative politics or participatory democracy.

Rational Direction for Contestation

Habermas seeks to put rational limits on the contestation within democracy. By seeking rational limits, he offers normative direction by which to see progress in terms of democratic process. This also gives priority to nonviolent methods for carrying out democracy. His language theory builds on reaching an understanding to see consensus as the goal for democracy. This stands in contrast to Laclau's language theory which builds on difference to see ongoing contestation as the only possibility for democracy. Laclau challenges the view that there can be consensus in daily life by his emphasis on difference. Along with the consensus of daily life in which we reach understanding to negotiate daily life, Habermas also retains the essential need to be able to question societal legitimation. We will assess these differences and see what the result is for democratic contestation in the fifth chapter.

Terms of Analysis for Engaging Language for Democratic Contestation

Before moving on to Laclau it is important to take a preliminary look at Habermas' theory in relation to the terms of analysis developed at the end of Chapter 2. The four categories from chapter 2 present significant issues for Habermas. The goal of his theory is for human beings to share **power** through communicative action and overcome the dominating tendency of strategic action. **Participation** in the quest for mutual understanding is an essential orientation. **Performativity** is part of communication in its connection with action. Habermas struggles to hold on the original goal of the Frankfurt School to find appropriate grounds on which to

criticize society.

In terms of **power**, Habermas needs to meet the challenge presented by Foucault. "The problem, then, is not to try to dissolve them [power relations] in the utopia of completely transparent communication but to acquire rules of law, the management of techniques, and also the morality, the *ēthos*, the practice of the self, that will allow us to play these games of power with as little domination as possible" (Foucault, 1997, 298). For Habermas, democracy is not the utopia Foucault criticizes, described as "completely transparent communication." The ideal speech situation is not an expected goal, but is used as a means of criticism and as a practical management of power that offers a standard that challenges political domination. This management is carried out by criticizing the distortions of communication that interfere with rational discussion. Habermas is not seeking a utopia and not pure communication, but an awareness that leads to the establishment of rules that allow a greater diversity of voices to participate in the discussion. Until now such rules are in the political consciousness of persons in political democracies, but not so clearly directing practice. This is the seed of democracy in the bourgeois public sphere that never reached fruition. In some organizations open discussion has a more dominant role, but in most levels of politics, power has the upper hand. In western democracies there is an element of communication in debates and influencing the public. The concern is that it is only be the tip of the iceberg and the real direction for democracy comes from those who wield political and financial power rather than public debate. The need to appear democratic and attain the consent of the people is nevertheless still important. This will be point of comparison for Habermas and Laclau.

This flows into discussion of increasing **participation**. Habermas' position contributes to support those seeking to involve more of ordinary people and especially those who currently

have little or no voice in the political discussion. Habermas recognizes problems with the public

sphere.   The bourgeois public sphere held promise for democracy but has become more of show

that elites use to justify their governance. The challenge to be examined in relation to Laclau is

whether his theory does actually provide the means for participation across the full spectrum of

citizenry to increase.

This also will be examined in terms of symmetry and asymmetry, which are key elements

in **performativity**. The asymmetry of distorted communication is major focus of Habermas'

critique in his theory of communicative action. He recognizes the current asymmetry of class

and power relations and also the asymmetry in relationships. The challenge then is does the

symmetry in communication that his theory promotes face the challenge of the asymmetry that

interferes with communication. This is played out in the performance of communication and the

redemption of validity claims. How each theorist balances the roles of symmetry (reciprocity)

and asymmetry (difference) in political discourse will be a key element of evaluation.

Recognizing the postmetaphysical situation of modernity and in some ways accepting

the postmodern position on the absence of foundations, Habermas has work to do to find a place

from which to **criticize** society. This is similar to the challenge the Frankfurt School faced as it

moved beyond traditional philosophy. Habermas bases his stance of criticism on reaching an

understanding as a necessary element of language. It provides the context-transcending element

necessary for criticism of society (Cooke, 2006, 4). This is context-transcending in the sense that

all validity claims are criticizable, that they are open to argumentation that leads to revision thus

leaving room for the anti-authoritarian questioning of norms. To think that human beings have

some sense that when they communicate with others they are trying to reach an understanding,

especially in seeking to reach a common goal can provide a position from which to criticize

societal goals without being too locked in. This is verified in the many ways communication is successful. The ultimate determination is not whether the goal can be reached, but is whether it can give a sense of what movement forward could be. Laclau focus on the dislocating part of such analysis (Laclau, 1990, 39). Habermas' criticism seeks to dislocate the distortions of communication that prevent all citizens from participating in political democracy. Human beings find their agency within the parameters of language and culture passed down to them, which they begin to shape in their own particular use of language in interaction with others.

<u>Conclusion</u>

In this chapter we have examined the relationship of Habermas' language theory and democracy. We have seen how deliberative democracy emerges from language built on reaching an understanding. Reaching an understanding leads into the exchange and testing of validity claims that provides the process for contestation in deliberative democracy.

The encounter with Laclau and the more appropriate way to engage in contestation will be guided by four terms of analysis from Chapter 2: power, participation, performativity and stance for criticism. We have made a preliminary examination of Habermas through these terms that will be more fully explored in engagement with Laclau in Chapter 5. Now we proceed onto Laclau's language theory and hegemonic democracy.

Chapter Four

Second Model (Conception of Language and Hegemonic Democracy)

Ernesto Laclau experienced the crisis in Marxism as a socialist activist. Agreeing with other theorists, for example, the Frankfurt School thinkers, Laclau argues that the working class has not become an agent for revolutionary change. This undermines the promise of key features of Marx's thought for Laclau. He believes that this disrupts the coherence of Marx's theory; therefore, he calls himself a post-Marxist. In a similar way he claims that Enlightenment Reason's coherence as a system has also been disrupted. Neither Marx's theory nor Enlightenment Reason hold together as systems for Laclau, therefore he identifies with post-structuralism that emerges from the disruption of the foundation of Enlightenment Reason. Laclau turns in particular to the role of difference in poststructuralist language theory and deconstruction. This enables Laclau to move in a theoretical direction beyond Marxism to engage with "various emancipatory directions" (Laclau and Mouffe, 3). His political theory seeks to engage with the conflicts present in human societies and his language theory serves this engagement.

In Chapter 2, we examined Laclau's response to Marx and his move beyond Marx into "Post-Marxism." That move is developed in the terms of Laclau's conception of language. Laclau and Mouffe's approach has been described as "a turn to poststructuralist theory within Marxism, one that took the problem of language to be essential to the formulation of an anti-totalitarian, radical democratic project" (Butler, et al, 2000, 1). In this chapter, we will examine how the terms of Laclau's language theory become elements in his political theory of democracy. The tension of the undecidability between a variety of positions plays a central role in Laclau's use of the idea of hegemony. Laclau's use of hegemony rules out a universal class

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that can abandon its particularity (Laclau, 1996, 13). For Laclau, the possibility that a particular struggle is elevated into the "universal equivalent" of all struggles is not a predetermined fact, but itself the result of the contingent political struggle for hegemony. Consciousness is also contingently constructed and in terms of his language theory fullness is unachievable (Laclau, 2006, 651).

Indeterminacy and contingency serve Laclau to dislocate both domination and the determinism of Marx's theory. Space can be opened up for the promise of emancipation or radical democracy. The struggle confronts indeterminacy and this struggle is carried out in the realm of discourse. Laclau sees his theory opening space for politics and culture through undecidability in the sphere of discourse. "For me the political has a primary structuring role because social relations are ultimately contingent, and any prevailing articulation results from an antagonistic confrontation whose outcome is not decided beforehand" (Laclau, 2006, 664).

Laclau sees greater indeterminism in Gramsci's approach than in Marx but still finds Gramsci's thought to be too determined by the economic base. Gramsci gave the term hegemony a key place in his application of Marxist theory to the Italian context. One aspect of hegemony is the contingency involved in the making of political alliances that would be crucial for the working class to take the lead in the power of the political state. Laclau takes hegemony beyond Gramsci, who accepted the leading role of the working class, into what he calls hegemonic democracy. Indeterminism marks Laclau's conception of a revolutionary struggle whose future is not determined by economic processes alone nor by the activity of a single revolutionary subject. The struggle for hegemony is the contingent struggle necessary in a democracy. The hegemonic struggle carries out a kind of deconstructive move by working "within the system in order to breach it" (Culler, 1982, 86). In that way it challenges established

hierarchies that continue to support oppression. Laclau will take the terms contingency and indeterminism and shape them in terms of his language theory organized around the empty signifier and floating signifier.

Laclau's theory of language with the centrality of empty signifiers and floating signifiers gives a particular thrust to his vision of democracy. Democracy will never be a settled set of principles or procedures, but will always open to contestation. Antagonism describes this contestation, which involves "negation of a given order" (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, 126). I will trace the role of language as he develops it in <u>On Populist Reason</u> and other writings. Contested terms such as empty signifier and floating signifier reflect fluidity and the dislocation of totalities in Laclau's understanding of language and thus give shape to contestation in his political theory. Our path to hegemonic democracy will lead us to first follow the path from Ferdinand Saussure through structuralism and post-structuralism to Laclau's appropriation of this history. This will prepare for a detailed analysis of Laclau's use of empty signifier and floating signifier in his theory of hegemonic political contestation.

<div align="center">Conception of Language</div>

Laclau's understanding of language begins with Saussure whose linguistic theory influenced the rise of structuralist thought and serves as a background for subsequent post-structuralist uses of language theory. In this section we will follow the move from Saussure to Laclau in detail after a quick overview. Structuralism focuses on the structures underlying the various elements of human cultures and societies that lessen the role of the subject. We will see this begin in the work of Saussure. The terms empty signifier and floating signifier emerge in the work of structuralists who build on Saussure's conceptualization of language as a system and challenge it as well. Claude Lévi-Strauss first coined the term "floating signifier" and Roland

Barthes first coined the term "empty signifier." Saussure did not conceive of either the empty signifier or floating signifier, but nevertheless provides the structure for their emergence. Then these terms are shaped through Jacques Lacan's interpretation of psychoanalysis and Jacques Derrida's deconstruction. These theorists draw on Saussure who emphasized the structural nature of the system to move beyond him and to challenge some of his positions. This is a poststructuralist step beyond structuralism. "When the linguistic model was introduced into the general field of human sciences, it was this effect of systematicity that predominated, so that structuralism became a new form of essentialism: a search for the underlying structures constituting the inherent law of any variation. The critique of structuralism involved a break with this view of fully constituted structural space; …" (Laclau and Mouffe, 113).

Saussure: Differential Relations

Saussure's influence on the structuralists and poststructuralists revolves around his conception of the connection of the signifier and signified. Signifier and signified exist only as components of the sign. This link is inseparable for Saussure and also arbitrary. The arbitrary nature of the sign means that there is "no natural or inevitable link between the signifier and signified" (Culler, 1986, 29). There is generally no reason that an alternative word could have been connected with a concept; language could have been applied differently. Exceptions like onomatopoeia or combinations of existing words point to the usual arbitrary original connection of signifier and signified (Culler, 1986, 29-30). This arbitrariness causes signifier and signified to be purely relational, which means they are differentiated by their relations to other members of the system (Culler, 1986, 33-34). Here it is vital to recognize the importance for Saussure that language is a system. The arbitrary relation between signifier and signified is not applied to the world, rather an arbitrary system is set up and within the system the relations occur. Jonathan

Culler points to different languages to clarify this. Different languages like French and English not only have different words for different concepts, but they also set up different relations between signifieds. In a similar way one must understand the relation between colors before one can understand what a particular color is (Culler, 1986, 35). The arbitrary and relational nature of signifier and signified; led Saussure to conclude that the linguistic unit is form rather than physical manifestation, such as sound (Culler, 1986, 39). This paves the way for another major contribution of Saussure's thought which is the distinction between *langue* and *parole*. *Langue* is the system and *parole* is the actual "speech acts that are made possible by the language" (Culler, 1986, 40). Saussure presents a major shift in the study of language because he makes the system the primary concern. The contingent nature of the relation of signifier and signified brings contingency into the whole system. This means that language will be continually changing in the course of history without any ongoing essence; therefore, Saussure does not place importance on the historical evolution of language (diachronic), but rather on the current state of relations (synchronic). This gives central importance to the system itself in its current state of relations. The synchronic establishes the framework for analysis and the diachronic analysis derives from synchronic (Culler, 1986, 49). Change originates in linguistic performance, in *parole* and not in the system, *langue*. Change in the relations among elements in the system brings consequences to the system, but it is not as if the system changes with some kind of purpose. Saussure's opposition to teleology in linguistics will play very well in post-structuralist theory (Culler, 1986, 52) and in Laclau's application of language theory to politics.

Saussure's relational conception of language draws on just two major types of relationship. There are oppositions (differences) and combinations that form sequences. Oppositions are called paradigmatic because the elements can replace one another and

combinations are called syntagmatic (Culler, 1986, 59-60). Syntagmatic relationships establish which relationships are possible. "Saussure claims that the entire linguistic system can be reduced to and explained in terms of a theory of syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations, and that in this sense all synchronic facts are fundamentally identical" (Culler, 1986, 61). We will confront these terms again in Laclau's discussion of difference, identity and equivalents in his hegemonic theory. The contingency stressed by Laclau builds on Saussure's view that the relational nature of language means that nothing is given in advance and that all is based on conventions without substantially defined elements (Culler, 1986, 62-63).

Saussure's approach builds on the arbitrary relational nature of the signifier – signified connection; therefore, the concepts or signifieds of language are purely differential and are not "autonomous entities" (Culler, 1986, 34). The concepts do not have positive content, because they have no content independent of the relations of the system (Culler, 1986, 36). This position of Saussure's will become very important for the poststructuralists who will center their approaches on difference and especially for Laclau who will build his concept of hegemony around difference within a system. The poststructuralists will share a key difference from Saussure which originates with Lévi-Strauss's breaking of the connection between signifier and signified in what he calls a floating signifier. This break will open up new directions in the work of Lacan, Derrida and Laclau. Saussure's structural approach will be radically adjusted in poststructuralism. Let us examine the ways poststructuralism builds on Saussure and breaks away.

Floating Signifiers and Empty Signifiers:
Through Structuralism to Poststructuralism

The beginning of structuralism can be seen when anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss applies Saussurre's structured view of language to kinship relations. Lévi-Strauss will continue

this direction in his approach to anthropology and others will emphasize the underlying

structures in other areas of humanities and social sciences (Protevi, 2006, 559-560). Such

structures are very much a part of Laclau's analysis.

Lévi-Strauss in trying to come to grips with a native term '*mana*' draws on Saussure's

work on signs to bring in the term floating signifier. *Mana* is a magical, mystical term used by

Polynesian cultures. Lévi-Strauss sees a connection to the nature of language itself (Mehlman,

1984, 22) and links *mana* to terms in other languages that function similarly, such as the

American term "*oomph* (designating desirability)" (Mehlman, 1984, 23). Lévi-Strauss sees

mana as empty like an algebraic symbol or a floating sign. It can take on a number of meanings.

"It is 'a symbol in the pure state' thus apt to be charged with any symbolic content" (Mehlman,

1984, 23). Lévi-Strauss brings in the Saussurean distinction between synchronic and diachronic.

It presents a paradox "that whereas the linguistic totality (of meaning) must have come into

existence (as structure) all at once, that which we know [signified] has been acquired

progressively" (Mehlman, 1984, 23). There is a gap between this totality of what can be meant

and what can actually be known, which is described as "'an overabundance of signifier

(*signifiant*) in relation to the *signifiés* [signified] to which it might apply.' And this is the

floating signifier, this 'semantic function whose role is to allow symbolic thought to operate

despite the contradiction inherent in it.'" (Mehlman, 1984, 23). Mehlman describes Lévi-Strauss

as subverting or displacing the opposition of the Saussurean terms of signifier / signified into the

langue / parole opposition. The Freudian sense of the unconscious is added so that *langue*

becomes not just the system but an unconscious one which provides the ground for particular

conscious actions of the *parole*. There is always something more meant from the unconscious

than can expressed in a conscious speech act. *Mana*, the floating signifier, carries out this

function. "*Mana* thus represents the arbitrary (and differential) basis of Saussure's language (*langue*) irrupting into speech (*parole*)" (Mehlman, 1984, 24). Lévi-Strauss brings in the unconscious with the floating signifier, Lacan will move further into the unconscious, but first let us look at Roland Barthes who introduces the term empty signifier.

Daniel Chandler credits Barthes, noted French interdisciplinary literary critic, with being the first to use the term empty signifier (Chandler, 79). It is in Barthes' article "Myth Today" that Chandler sees Barthes use "empty signifier as one with no definite signified" (Chandler, 79). "Myth Today" is the concluding essay and theoretical explanation of a number of essays gathered together in the book entitled Mythologies (Barthes, 2012). In this text, Barthes seeks to reflect "on some myths of French daily life" (Barthes, 2012, xi). He sought to "demystify the everyday mythological 'languages' of wrestling, advertising, astrology, food and other cultural phenomena (Mythologies, 1957)" (Protevi, 560-561). This shares a similar impulse with Laclau's efforts to challenge the *status quo*. Barthes felt an "impatience with the 'naturalness' which common sense, the press, and the arts continually invoke to dress up a reality which though the one we live in, is nonetheless quite historical: in a word, I resented seeing Nature and History repeatedly confused in the description of reality" (Barthes, 2012 xi). In 1970, Barthes described one of the goals of this work written in 1957 as "an ideological critique of the language of so-called mass culture" (Barthes, 2012, ix). He also saw himself dismantling that language. In the years between 1957 and 1970, Barthes claimed that semiological analysis had developed such that it could be "the theoretical locus in which a certain liberation of the signifier can be enacted" (Barthes, 2012, ix). This liberation of the signifier is used by Laclau to serve the cause of political liberation through hegemonic democracy.

The separation of the signifier from the signified that Barthes shares with Lévi-Strauss,

breaks the inseparable connection Saussure established between the two elements of a sign. This will have ramifications not only for structuralism, but especially for poststructuralism. Related concepts in linguistics are Roman Jakobsen's "zero-sign," or "empty category" and Louis Hjelmslev's *figurae* or non-signifying sign elements (Chandler, 79). Barthes shows the relatedness of empty signifiers and floating signifiers when he refers to the openness of non-linguistic signs such that they become "a floating chain of signified" (Chandler, 79). Lacan sees no anchoring of the signifier to a signified and calls this "the incessant sliding of the signified under the signifier (Chandler, 80 and Lacan, 1977, 154). He calls this change from Saussure "the primacy of the signifier" (Chandler, 79). Derrida refers to "the 'play' or 'freeplay' of signifiers: they are not fixed to their signifieds but point beyond themselves to other signifiers in an 'indefinite referral of signifier to signified'" (Chandler, 80 and Derrida, 1978, 25). This connects with the deferring aspect of 'différance,' which will be discussed more later.

Lacan links Saussure with Freud by making the claim that the unconscious is structured like language. Mehlman's "Introductory Note" to Lacan's "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'" states that Lacan's purpose is to use literature "to open up a new kind of textual problem" and "to complicate" matters" (Mehlman, 1984, 38). These purposes present a challenge for understanding Lacan. Here my focus is on Lacan's approach to the empty signifier that is drawn on by Laclau. The following is based on an entry on the "Signifier" written by Julia Kristeva for the International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis (Mijolla, 2005). Signifiers give the subject its place and three notions are involved in "the definition of the signifier as a component in a signifying chain."

Vacillation describes how meaning comes about only by a signifier "ceding its place to another signifier with which it is linked in the chain of signifiers." This is "the incessant sliding

of the signified under the signifier" mentioned above and similar to Derrida's indefinite referral.

The second notion is the subject, "a signifier is what represents a subject to another signifier"

(Lacan, 1977). This is also connected to a lack, "the subject receives its place from the signifier,

yet can occupy its own place only as a function of the *lack* whose place a signifier fills;…"

(Lacan, 1977). The lack points to an impossibility that will become important for Laclau's

hegemony. The third notion is the object. The discourse of the signifying chain is directed at the

object. The "object is also always lacking, for the subject is never finished with the work of

signifying that desire entails." This presents the contingency that cannot be overcome which

plays a central role in Laclau's hegemony. Kristeva describes this: "To say that the unconscious

is a 'signifying chain' is the same thing as saying that the 'symbolic function' is what

superimposes the rule of culture (Oedipus) on the rule of nature" (*Signifier* in Mijolla, 2005).

Lacan discusses some of this in the opening of the "Seminar on Purloined Letter."

Psychoanalysis deals with the unconscious and the terms imaginary and "symbolic" play an

important role in Lacan's theory. These imaginary incidences of our experience take on meaning

when bound to the symbolic or signifying chain which orients them (Mehlman, 1984, 39). Lacan

calls these points of partial fixation, "*points de capiton*" or "nodal points" – "privileged signifiers

that fix the meaning of a signifying chain" (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, 112). This points toward

the role the empty signifier will play in uniting a chain of equivalences in Laclau's theory of

hegemony. The nodal point as the 'master signifier' points to the "particular element assuming a

'universal' structuring function…" (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, xi).

Derrida: Absence and Différance

The final piece in my presentation of Laclau's theory that begins with Saussure is his use

of Derrida's deconstruction.   We gain a clearer view of Derrida's attention to absence in terms

of signs. The 'metaphysics of presence' is identified as longing "for a truth behind every sign" (Culler, 1975, 19). This would in Derrida's opinion too tightly link signifier and signified. Derrida claims that writing breaks that connection which produces meaning. "Poetry offers the best example of a series of signifiers whose signified is an empty but circumscribed space that can be filled in various ways; but the same is true for ordinary language, though this may be obscured by the fact that the sign itself serves as a name for the *signifié* [signified]" (Culler, 1975, 19). Meaning can take different turns. Charles Sanders Peirce also attributed a fundamental incompleteness to the sign that requires an "interpretant." Derrida articulates this as différance or the differing that defers meaning to a series of signifiers. We see this in terms of writing. "Writing presents language as a series of physical marks that operate in the absence of the speaker" (Culler, 1982, 91).

To understand Laclau, it will help to go a deeper into the role that this sense of absence plays in Derrida's key term différance. Presence – "that which *is*, or that which appears" (Reynolds, 2010) has generally been an assumed given in the history of philosophy and perhaps seems evident to common sense. Derrida's challenge to its priority depends on making "presence" into a complex rather than a "pure autonomous given." He sees the present as derived from the combination of other elements. Acts of signification depend on differences. Derrida sees that in language "every event is itself already determined and made possible by prior structures" (Culler, 1982, 95). Culler uses the example that signifying about food includes the contrast with nonfood. The absence, nonfood, is present in food. The presence of an absence is a trace. Difference and deferral are already in presence. "The arbitrary nature of the sign and the system with no positive terms give us the paradoxical notion of an 'instituted trace,' a structure of infinite referral in which there are only traces – prior to any entity of which they

might be the trace" (Culler, 1982, 99).

Two more points from Derrida will lead us into Laclau's reception of deconstruction and the application of it to politics. A key point is the distinction of deconstruction from common understandings of destruction. "Derrida thus shows how Saussure's discourse deconstructs itself, but he also argues, … that, far from invalidating the *Cours*, this self-deconstructive moment is essential to its power and pertinence" (Culler, 1982, 98). Far from being dead, Saussure's conception of language comes alive with the possibilities it opens up for critique. Thus "the practitioner of deconstruction works within the system in order to breach it" (Culler, 1982, 86). In this fashion, Laclau will follow Derrida to reverse hierarchies and displace oppression present in political systems.

This history of signification begun with Saussure from which empty signifiers and floating signifiers have arisen and its passage into deconstruction is rife with leaps from one theorist use of terms to another's. Daniel Chandler points out that "the phrase 'the empty (or free-floating) signifier' has become something of an academic 'sound-bite' the term itself is ironically in danger of becoming an empty signifier" (Chandler, 80). In Laclau, we see evidence of this history and the freedom he takes to develop the terms for his own use. His use of empty signifier bears a closer resemblance to its history, though applied in specific way to the political arena, while the floating signifier takes on a new political meaning as a companion concept to the empty signifier.

<u>Laclau's Language Theory and Hegemonic Democracy</u>

Unresolvable Tension and Failed Totality → the Empty Signifier

Laclau develops the term empty signifier in such a way that it becomes central to his political theory and such that he equates it with hegemony, though it may be more appropriate to

say the empty signifier is the contingency that makes space for movement in hegemony. For Laclau the floating signifier shares a process with the empty signifier. Whereas for Lévi-Strauss, floating signifier is similar to others' use of empty signifier; for Laclau the floating signifier is further step in the process that it shares with the empty signifier.

Saussure's understanding of system (*langue*) and particular acts (*parole*) gives the overarching structure to Laclau's theory that holds wholes and particulars in tension. Laclau also emphasizes the place of difference. Just as the words of a language only make sense within the whole of the language for Saussure, relations which are purely differential must be constituted within a whole. Differences then are relational because they are within a system (Laclau, 2005, 68). To Laclau the signification of any individual act grasps the limit of this totality and that it is differentiated from something other than itself (Laclau, 2005, 69). Because differentiation is operating throughout, it comes into conceiving of the totality. Adding tension to this is the point that "all differences are equivalent to each other" (Laclau, 2005, 70). Differences are involved with relations. "But equivalence is precisely what subverts difference, so that all identity is constructed within this tension between the differential and the equivalent logics" (Laclau, 2005, 70). This tension plays a key role in hegemonic relations within a political system. Laclau calls this a "failed totality" because the tension between identity and difference never allows it to be completed. This is at the heart of the challenge for politics. The tension between identity and difference must remain a tension that neither pole overcomes. The failure of the totality means that the goal for politics cannot be consensus or reconciliation. We see here the close intertwining of language theory and political theory for Laclau.

For Laclau, difference marks the nature of a larger framework than language, which is the relational complex that he calls discourse. Discourse consists of relations of difference; this

takes signifying beyond language to any relations which the same as language relations consist of differences (Laclau, 2005, 68). Just as the words of a language only make sense within the whole of the language, relations which are purely differential must be constituted within a whole.

One must question here what kind of totality, Laclau is referring to. In terms of language there are different languages that could be seen as differing totalities. He does not seem to mean the totality of everything, which would go far beyond the limitations of his finite viewpoint. Laclau like other poststructuralists is resistant to the Hegelian notion of totality as the absolute. Lukács describes Hegel's view, "The category of totality, the all-pervasive supremacy of the whole over the parts is the essence of the method that Marx took from Hegel …" (Lukács, 1971, 27). Laclau's next step leaves room for an outside to the totality, because he now refers to the internal difference as an excluded element that the totality expelled. It seems that he must here be talking about social institutions. As in language all the differences are equivalent to each other, and in this case they find identity by their equivalence in relation to the excluded element.

Laclau sees the totality as an object and the challenge is to gain a conceptual grasp of the object because representation has only particular differences. In this interaction of differences, how can a particular represent the whole? Laclau sees this in a particularity that takes on universal signification. He labels this hegemony. The dominant understanding of hegemony follows Antonio Gramsci to identify it in terms of power and consent. For Laclau we see that hegemony arises in relation to language and discourse. Laclau calls hegemony an empty signifier (Laclau 2005, 71). This is the place of contestation. It becomes fundamental to Laclau's theory as "a particularity embodying an unachievable fullness." This points to a future possibility; it is a horizon that calls for radical investment.

The Part Representing the Whole: The Empty Signifier in Democratic Practice

Laclau's understands failed totality to mean democracy cannot become a goal that can be fulfilled, but exists as a possibility and can motivate a process. This is similar to what Derrida has called "democracy to come." Building with these elements, Laclau constructs his view of populism and democracy that gives centrality to the difference/equivalence tension that arises from his view of language. Laclau brings in a term from rhetoric – "catechresis." The unifying role that the empty signifier comes to play is very paradoxical, so he calls it catachresical, which refers to a paradoxical use of speech. This stretching of language reflects the way Laclau is trying to find the way to express the sense of an emptiness that can be filled, but only temporarily. The tension of identity and difference is difficult to stabilize. The empty signifier must be named for democracy to function because the empty signifier is the part representing the whole. The part representing the whole is also a rhetorical term – "synecdoche." Beyond its use in rhetoric he sees it as an ontological category. Not surprisingly, Laclau's use of language reflects his understanding of being. In this way he applies his language theory to social political reality.

Laclau uses the term "articulation" to distinguish how a request from a group of people for something they want or need becomes a social demand (or claim) which will lead to a democratic or populist demand. The unit will be the social demand in the totality the 'people,' much as words are the units in language, this parallels Saussure's *langue* / *parole* distinction. A request that emerges to become a demand is at first an isolated demand which Laclau calls a democratic demand. When various demands are brought together to cohere in some fashion, these are termed populist demands. These demands arise from persons outside of the power of the society. The uniting of demands together is what forms groups of persons into a 'people' in

opposition to those in power. Laclau labels the linking together of the demands as an equivalental chain. The point being that the demands are not initially prioritized, but rather exist as more or less equally important demands. The key point for becoming a 'people' is that after the establishing of a chain one demand is put ahead of the others (it becomes an anchor) such that it unites the demands together as it constitutes the persons as a 'people' (Laclau, 2005, 77). Laclau's view of language comes through clearly in his description of the formation of social identity in the meeting point of difference and equivalence. He brings in Saussurean terms to strengthen his position, "just as linguistic identities are the seat of both syntagmatic relations of combination and paradigmatic relations of substitution" (Laclau, 2005, 80). The empty signifier is filled in when a particular demand becomes the demand that unites the people or represents the totality. The empty signifier is a particular demand in the series or chain of demands that has some quality that turns it into a common denominator that embodies the totality of the series (Laclau, 2005, 95). The particular points to a more general concept, that each of the particular demands has a part in what Laclau calls a wider universality (Laclau, 2005, 95). "The semantic role of these terms is not to express *any* positive content but, as we have seen, to function as the names of a fullness which is constitutively absent." The signifier is empty because it "names an undifferentiated fullness" (Laclau, 2005, 96).

Filling in the Empty Signifier: The Example of Solidarność

In this contest, those in power will seek to incorporate the social demands into their own discourse, in order to prevent the populist split between the "people" and themselves in power. This disrupts the formation of a chain of demands. Without an empty signifier, the differences between the particular demands take precedence and no equivalental chain would form to unite the people' The demands are within the "one" community. In the case of a populist formation a

split must be named within the community that causes a divide between two sides. Those that gather around the empty signifier that unites the equivalental chain form themselves as one section of the community (the popular camp) and claim to be the legitimate community – "a partiality wants to function as the totality of the community" (Laclau, 2005, 81). Laclau aptly calls the line of division a frontier. Frontier connotes space that can be entered into, so it is an appropriate image for this movable line between the two sides and an appropriate place for a floating signifier. This recognition of the changing boundaries between hegemonic sides is relevant to the changing nature of reality that does not fit static models. Frontier gives a sense of space to move in and out of with changeable boundaries. Laclau calls the frontier a broken space and later a "no-man's-land" (Laclau, 2005, 85 & 87). There is a lack (Lacanian influence), which fits under the term used earlier, failed totality, the fullness of the community is missing. In the hegemonic struggle the people will try to name this absent fullness. The chain of unfulfilled social demands points toward this fullness. Language is involved as signifiers that separate the hegemonic camps – the regime, the people, the nation, the silent majority. The groups constitute themselves by such naming and the popular acceptance of a term is part of forming and maintaining the named identity. Laclau makes the performative nature of this constituting clear by distinguishing it from "a conceptual operation of *finding* an abstract common feature" (Laclau, 2005, 97). It is more organic and is not a purely rational process.

Laclau references to *Solidarność* a couple of times in On Populist Reason. There we see that the people had a number of demands and the trade unions took the lead in the movement. When concessions were being made by the Polish government, the negotiators came to the point that the one demand *Solidarność* would not back down on was free trade unions, this was the empty signifier. In the dynamic of the struggle its importance emerged and it provided the space

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to continue the movement toward greater democracy. Other demands were part of the chain, such as: the right to strike, pay raises, other economic needs, free press, no reprisals and greater democracy.[14] The right to organize free trade unions brought a way to continue to work on all of the issues. Laclau also realizes that this is more than a rational progression. Signifiers can be images and most likely draw on people's emotions. The particular demand that becomes the empty signifier performs the task of constituting the 'people' when it "acquires at some point an unexpected centrality, and becomes the name of something exceeding it, of something it cannot control by itself but which, however, becomes a 'destiny' from which it cannot escape" (Laclau, 2005, 120). None of this is permanent, because the struggle is never over.

Gramsci recognized the hegemonic representation comes out of contingent struggle. Laclau brings in his discursive viewpoint to express this with the term floating signifier. This brings us back to the notion of frontier between rival hegemonic projects. In a model the line between the two could be seen as static, but in political reality the contours of this space change with changes in political pressure. The empty signifier can be filled in by different demands and the symbolic power it attains can influence people to support the hegemonic project it represents. It floats between the articulations of opposing groups. Meaning and importance can fill it in quite differently. Terms and events can be spun in quite different directions.

Claiming the Floating Signifier:
The Examples of Solidarność and Ordinary People in the USA

It will give a fuller picture to also see the role of the floating signifier. in formation and success of *Solidarność*. Even in a totalitarian state, consent from the people was a necessity, which was the case in Poland. The fall of the Berlin Wall and Iron Curtain demonstrate that.

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[14] For information on *Solidarność*, I draw on the discussion of this Polish social movement in <u>A Force More Powerful</u> (Ackerman and Duval, 2000, 113-174).

The movement of change is also related to the changes in the Soviet Union initiated by Mikhail Gorbachev in reaction to similar problems of consent there. The perspective of Soviet style Communist Parties was that they represented "the people." In the context in Poland, the contest can be stated in terms of who would claim the term the people. The people functions here as the floating signifier. Opposition that was individualistic would perhaps have fared less well against the Polish establishment. The common good of the Polish people was an aspect of the motivation and goals of *Solidarność*, a key in the victory of the trade union was the alliance it had built with other sectors of society. Their commitment to democracy and solidarity was the floating signifier that they put before the Polish people. The government also claimed to put forth such a floating signifier. In this hegemonic struggle, *Solidarność* prevailed in 1980 in gaining the support of the population for their version of 'the people.' They took a risk in their stand, because they entered a contingent struggle. They had been defeated in a major campaign ten years previously when they left the ship yards to march on the Communist Party headquarters. They set fire to it, but were then routed by the military. They learned some lessons and since victory was not assured this time either, they followed a different strategy by taking over the shipyards and remaining in a place of greater strength. Some members of *Solidarność* participated as those claiming to be true socialists against the distortions of the leaders of Poland. For them socialism functioned as the floating signifier that was in contention. They saw their struggle as the struggle for true socialism against its usurpers.

We can reinforce our understanding of the floating signifier by looking at Laclau's use of an example from the political history of the United States to demonstrate it. He points to the work of Kevin Phillips who helped the Republican Party win the hegemonic struggle to claim "the ordinary people" away from the Democratic Party. The Democratic Party led by Franklin

Delano Roosevelt had won over the ordinary people in the New Deal to make a new majority of

the electorate and defeat the traditional establishment. Beginning with the Presidential campaign

of George Wallace, the New Right sought to take on the mantle of opposition to the

establishment[15] (Laclau, 2005, 133-138). This reversal has built on opposition to advances by

racial minorities and women by labeling them as special interests. The hegemonic struggle to

gain the majority of U.S. voters continues today.

Antagonistic Contestation:
An Undecidable Game Between Empty and Floating Signifiers

For Laclau this is about the "discursive-strategic" construction of a 'people,' which he

calls an undecidable game between the empty and the floating' signifiers. The 'people' construct

their identity in terms of an empty signifier unifying the chain of demands, but this is an unstable

process such that the signifier floats in terms of maintaining that identity especially against the

challenge of another hegemonic project. Of the three variables that Laclau sees constructing the

'people,' two are the linguistic terms we have been discussing: empty and floating signifiers.

For Laclau the political is synonymous with populism and we have seen that language is

essential to this work. Democracy is a series of hegemonic struggles that are "contingent and

particular forms of articulating demands" (Laclau, 2005, 250) as "different groups compete

between themselves to temporarily give to their particularisms a function of universal

representation" (Laclau, 1996, 35). This chapter has demonstrated that Laclau's theory of

language with the centrality of empty signifiers and floating signifiers gives a particular thrust to

his vision of democracy. We have seen that his theory of language with the central role that

undecidability plays will not view democracy as a settled set of principles or procedures, but will

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[15] Kevin Phillips has continued to analyze American Politics from the populist viewpoint and challenged the perspective of the conservative establishment in books and National Public Radio commentaries.

always open to contestation. Antagonism describes this contestation, which involves "negation of a given order" (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, 126). Democratic discourse articulates resistance to subordination (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, 154).

The empty signifier is part of the contestation that forms a group or "a people." The floating signifier is part of the contestation between groups. These companion elements express the process that Laclau calls hegemony. Within hegemony, needs are articulated into demands in this struggle of the signifiers. Laclau is carrying out deconstruction in the political arena. Derrida's absence present in any presence disrupts any system and brings "self-division or self-opposition" as "structural property of discourse" (Culler, 1982, 89). This produces a dynamic dialectic of both system and challenge to the system that upsets accepted beliefs and practices to open them up to critique and the possibility of radical democracy. The hegemonic struggle carries out the deconstructive move by working "within the system in order to breach it" (Culler, 1982, 86) and in that way challenge established hierarchies that continue to support oppression. The possibility for democracy is contingent and not assured; therefore, it calls for investment from those who would contend for it.

In discussing the important shifts initiated by Hegemony and Socialist Strategy in the Introduction to Laclau: A Critical Reader, Simon Critchley and Oliver Marchart attribute to it a political turn for poststructuralism, that was further developed by Laclau (Critchley and Marchart, eds., 2004, 5). Laclau makes a place for deconstruction in the discussion of democracy and thus becomes an important source for those concerned with the philosophical approach to democracy. Critchley and Marchart spell this out: "This strategy would lead Laclau in his later works to the deconstruction of many classical notions of political and social thought: power, representation, universality/particularity, community, ideology, emancipation, and of

course, the very categories of politics, the political, society, and the social. Yet, as Laclau made clear, deconstruction is in need of being complemented by a theory of hegemony. If the deconstructive operation consists in laying open the moment of ultimate undecidability inherent to any structure, hegemony provides us with a theory of the *decision* taken in such undecidable terrain" (Critchley and Marchart, eds., 2004, 5).

Laclau's theory is a constructive application of poststructuralist theory to politics, which causes his hegemonic democracy to stand out as the proper dialogue partner for Habermas' deliberative democratic theory. Habermas has been in dialogue with a variety of poststructuralists. The political nature of both approaches makes them more appropriate dialogue partners. Their views of contestation can benefit from the exchange. What is the best way to deal with the conflictual nature of the contestation? Before we put their theories face to face for analysis, let us move on to the terms of analysis we will use in this task.

<u>Terms of Analysis for Engaging Language for Democratic Contestation</u>

Before analyzing the theories of Laclau and Habermas in direct relation to each other, we need to analyze Laclau's theory in terms of the four categories for analysis from chapter 2. **Power** is very much in contention throughout hegemonic democracy and the language theory that leads to it. **Participation** moves in terms of the tension between differences and equivalences. **Performativity** is being carried out throughout the conflictual process that has few stable resting places. Laclau uses dislocation to **criticize** society.

In terms of **power**, Laclau needs to meet the challenge presented by Foucault in a different way than Habermas did. "The problem, then, is not to try to dissolve them [power relations] in the utopia of completely transparent communication but to acquire rules of law, the management of techniques, and also the morality, the *ēthos*, the practice of the self, that will

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allow us to play these games of power with as little domination as possible" (Foucault, 1997, 298). For Laclau the rules, management and practices of the self are engaged through the tension between whole and particular that arises from a language theory based on difference. Power is attained in hegemony through a term becoming the organizing principle of a people. It is the filling in of the empty signifier that floats between rival projects. The only guidance offered is playing the language game so that one's position takes precedence. There is no power spectrum from cooperation to coercion to refer to. Power is attained through the best articulation of a position that is not separated out from the use of force. There seems to be some bias in favor of attaining consent, but since the use of force is not separated out, it is not clear how democracy is favored. Populism also can go to the right or the left, because the direction is not pre-determined.

Hegemonic democracy is carried out through contestation; therefore, **participation** would involve entering into contestation. For Laclau there are no rules, so anyone can enter the contestation. Laclau seeks to dislocate hierarchies therefore would favor oppressed and other left out persons to enter into contestation. The challenge to be examined in relation to Laclau is whether his theory does actually provide the means for participation across the full spectrum of citizenry to increase. Would not the current power differential favor the hierarchical elites in such a way that non-elites would be severely restricted in their ability to contest for power? The mechanics of how people participate in the hegemonic process to fill in the empty signifier is not very clear. It would seem to involve the putting forward of interests to see if others share the interest such that it becomes a demand. Then in interactions among persons one demand emerges to fill in the empty signifier. This describes a form of participation but does not necessarily provide a mechanism for increased participation from non- elites.

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Symmetry and asymmetry are the key elements in **performativity** that come into play in our comparison of Laclau and Habermas. Laclau finds instability in performativity, especially in the various ways speakers do not control their communication (Devenney, 3). The claim of instability fits with key place of asymmetry in Laclau's theory seen in the prominent role of difference and lack. Relations and equivalences bring symmetry into play as well. The connections are harder to account for in Laclau's theory. Hegemony occurs when one equivalent demand fills in the empty signifier and connects a group of people together. Laclau seems to downplay the connectivity of communication and does not give an account of the ordinary day-to-day ways that individuals make agreements and coordinate actions (Norval, 2007, 54). There are innumerable ways that the symmetry of agreement happens. Laclau calls the formation of an equivalential chain a performative operation (Laclau, 2005, 97). This would also seem to be symmetrical. How each theorist balances the roles of symmetry (reciprocity) and asymmetry (difference) in political discourse will be a key element of evaluation.

Laclau emphasizes dislocation in an approach full of contestation and instability. Are all dislocations equal? The only legitimizing of **criticism** for Laclau seems to be success in contestation. As explored in Chapter 2, Cooke sees the parameters for justifying validity claims in a tension between the anti-authoritarian impulse and context-transcending validity claims (Cooke, 2006, 4). Laclau clearly holds to the anti-authoritarian impulse through his stress on dislocation, but does not present much sense of being able to transcend a particular context. Being able to transcend context is no easy matter for any theorist, as Cooke also affirms. She states "we should conceive of the good society as *re-presented* in particular representations that are constitutively inadequate to it" (Cooke, 2006, 5). Such inadequacy is a central point for Laclau's theory in hegemonic democracy's formation around the empty signifier. He states, "the

hegemonic identity becomes something of the order of an empty signifier, its own particularity embodying an unachievable fullness" (Laclau, 2005, 71). The standpoint from which to **criticize society** is an issue for both theorists.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

In this chapter we have examined the relationship of Laclau's language theory and democracy. We have seen the history of the poststructuralist use of Saussure's language theory that led into the claiming and adapting of the terms: empty signifier and floating signifier. From this history, Laclau develops his own unique use of these two terms. We have seen how hegemonic democracy emerges from the interaction of the empty signifier and the floating signifier of Laclau's language theory. One demand emerges from a chain of equivalental demands to fill in the empty signifier. We saw in the case of *Solidarność* in Poland that "free trade unions" was the empty signifier. It seems fair to say that the floating signifier is a temporarily filled in empty signifier as it floats between two sides in what Laclau has named the "frontier" in political contestation. The demand for free trade unions floated on the frontier between *Solidarność* and the Polish government and prevailed in this political contestation to unite the people to overcome the government. This supports the work of dislocation that marks the antagonistic contestation of hegemonic democracy.

The encounter with Habermas and the more appropriate way to engage in contestation will be guided by the four terms of analysis from Chapter 2: power, participation, performativity and standpoint for criticism. We have made a preliminary examination of Laclau through these terms that will be more fully explored in engagement with Habermas as we proceed to Chapter 5.

Chapter Five

Assessment of the Contrast: 2 Approaches to Democratic Contestation
Difference and Reaching an Understanding

Habermas and Laclau share dissatisfaction with the practice of democracy today. Both see democracy as more than choosing on election day, but to how people practice democracy and participate in the decisions that affect their lives. They both see the problem of elite domination. For Habermas it is about democratic will-formation. This is arrived at beginning with the basic building block of Habermas' language theory - reaching an understanding that leads through contestation among validity claims into generalizable interests from which democratic will-formation is shaped. For Laclau democracy is about the contest to win the struggle for hegemony. This is arrived at beginning with an empty signifier being temporality filled in from a chain of demands that wins the struggle as the floating signifier to prevail over an opposing empty signifier. We see that each philosopher presents a path emerging from the specifics of their language theory. We also see a greater emphasis on conflict in Laclau's path, this is not to say that conflict is not present in Habermas' path, but there is more of a tendency to see agreement as possible.

Their common roots in Marx, point to shared aspects of their dissatisfaction with democratic practice and their quests for overcoming the deficiencies. One aspect of this is to enlarge the scope of democracy to be more inclusive of the range of life issues and the range of human beings. Another aspect is the incorporation of economic democracy (socialism) along with political democracy. The power of wealth in shaping democratic outcomes in a period of vast economic inequality (the 99% in the US) distorts the expression of the will of the people in political democracy.

Both Habermas and Laclau enhance and build on the democratic tendencies within

Marxist thought. In Chapter Two, we showed the tendencies toward democracy in Marx's approach. Our question for assessment is which one carries on this tradition in a more helpful way?

Both move beyond Marx with their language theories, which carries on into their social and political analysis. Habermas reconstructs and thus considers himself to still be a Marxist, while Laclau deconstructs and thus considers himself a post-Marxist. Habermas reconstructs Marx's labor paradigm with the addition of social communication. Laclau takes the terms of Marx's analysis and re-inscribes them to use them in his own analysis. In our discussion of contestable democratic norms, we will see that Habermas retains an orientation toward normative rationality with the goal of emancipation as Marx did, though for Habermas such normative rationality cannot be assumed, but must be contested for. Laclau drops the Marxist orientation to normative rationality as he rejects any teleology that could have emancipation as a goal and relies on dislocation of current political relations in the struggle.

The paradoxical nature of the empty signifier orients Laclau toward a failed totality which is an impossible possibility, because difference disrupts any totality. The heterogeneity of a present which is absent does not lead toward reconciliation and consensus. Habermas does not expect the reaching of a total consensus, but his theory is oriented to work toward consensus. As a critical theorist the distortion of communication is quite apparent in relationships but especially as a result of various interplays of society. Habermas expects contestation; and thus validity claims become the contested elements of argumentation. The greater part of his theory is how to contest rationally and democratically. His beginning point that communication is structured toward reaching an understanding does give this contestation a greater expectation for coming to agreements in various groupings of people. Habermas sees commonality among persons in our

shared communication, whereas Laclau sees the difference. Laclau sees a tension with identity, but it is an ever present tension that makes agreement an ongoing challenge. Habermas has been challenged by poststructuralists and feminists especially over the years to clarify the room for difference in his theory so we have seen him stretch his theory toward more radical democracy. Everyone needs their place at the table for their particular voice to be heard. He can come closer to Laclau, but they will never be in full agreement on the nature of the tension between difference and identity. Both see the future of democracy as a possibility. For Laclau, contingency is present from the beginning of his theory with the role of the empty signifier.

Laclau sees contingency in all of the workings of communication. Habermas does not prioritize the issue of contingency because he sees language based on reaching an understanding and not on difference. This is carried out in the general flow of our lives as we coordinate action with others throughout a regular day. We share a lifeworld that is generally a functioning background not a contested ground. There still is contingency and possibility in communicative action, because this has to be accomplished pragmatically. There are many ways that communication is distorted, especially by the systemic blockages. Democracy is not locked in place for Habermas but remains a possibility to be worked out by the actors involved. In this respect he shares a sense of possibility with Laclau. The possibility of democracy is wide open for Laclau as it lies in the hegemonic struggle that depends on the linkage of equivalental demands in an empty signifier that floats among the contending parties.

In Chapters Three and Four we have presented the interaction of language theory and democratic politics for Habermas and Laclau. The key issue for our assessment is how well each supports contestation in service of participatory democratic politics. We developed our four terms of analysis in Chapter Two and in the next two chapters discussed each philosopher in

relation to the four terms. In this concluding chapter we will contrast them in relation to these four terms. The first three terms**: power**, **performativity** and **participation** will be discussed and then **the ground for criticism** will be discussed in relation to contestation as it emerges from the similarity and difference of Habermas' generalizable interests and Laclau's hegemonization of demands.

<p align="center">Power, Performativity and Participation</p>

An aspect of my analysis of contestation in democratic practice has been guided by Foucault's claim that the goal for **power** is to manage relations for as little domination as possible[16] (Foucault, 1997, 298). That power is always mediated by language correlates with the emphasis both Laclau and Habermas place on language. Which theory of language provides a better means by which to manage power relations, so that democracy can produce "as little domination as possible"? Power relations can be multi-directional, which democracy seeks to let flow and not for some to dominate others in such a way as to constrict the possibilities for power to flow. Laclau sees contestation at its best as dislocating power. It is to articulate one's position the best one can in order to gain hegemony through filling in the empty signifier. This is through discourse that Laclau sees as more than language. His theory gives little direction for how power will be managed in a way that leads to democracy. It depends entirely on dislocation, which gives no direction to the struggle and affirms Laclau's rejection of normative direction. He would see power as the main determiner of contestation.

Habermas seeks to manage **power** through the use of reason. He sees a positive role for power. He supports Arendt's conception of power as an authorizing force that is distinguished from violence (Habermas, 1996, 149). He also sees power operating in the form of strategic

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[16] The full quotation is discussed on pages 52, 85-86 (in relation to Habermas,) and 110 (in relation to Laclau.)

relations, where instrumental reason dominates. Thus power needs to be guided by communicative reason, such that intersubjective agreement can determine action. We can also see power in terms of the distortion of communication that is so prevalent in life. Using the ideal speech situation allows criticism of uses of power that are not guided by reason. The goal of reaching an understanding through the articulation of generalized interests seeks to include all of the persons affected by a decision. Habermas' view of managing power is to include as many people as possible in the discussion; with the goal of including all are who are affected by it. Habermas is not seeking a utopia or a pure communication, but he seeks an awareness that leads to the establishment of rules that allow a greater diversity of voices to participate in the discussion. The goal of lessening violence is one aspect of his conception. Since, for Habermas, Laclau does not sufficiently object to violence, it would always be an impediment to the role of consent, while Habermas seeks to strengthen the role of consent. In its very definition democracy asserts the importance of non-violent consent. The goal is not an unrealistic absence of violence, but to make the struggle more reasonable. Habermas recognizes that strategic action will still be taken, but seeks more normative direction through communicative reason. Violence and power are real, but so is the reasoned lessening of the level of violence.

Wattenberg uses different terminology than Habermas in his conception of power which affirms Habermas' conception of power. Wattenberg articulates a spectrum of power that moves from non-discursive to more discursive. We also see that power-over of this spectrum is not the only form of power. Power-to is more cooperative and power-with corresponds more fully with Habermas' reaching an understanding in Habermas view of communicative power. This is the type of power that can transform and not just work within the current relations of power. The goal of reaching an understanding can guide attempts to lessen violence as an appropriate way to

manage power relations to produce as little domination as possible.

In their practical conceptions of how power is played out, both thinkers see power involved in connecting a political position or narrative with others. For Laclau it would entail using whatever means one could for one's position to prevail. Habermas sees the goal of connecting positions as reasoning together, of testing validity claims which inclines toward nonviolence. We recognize that language is intertwined with force. Laclau accepts this and works with it. Habermas understands this but does not accept it as the only way and seeks to use language to manage power in a way that manages interactions for as little domination as possible.

One of the goals of this dissertation is to understand better how to think about the promotion of increased **participation** by ordinary people in the political process of modern democratic states. We know that elites and their money now dominate the political process, such that the majority of people have little say and the poor especially have little influence in the democratic process. Political discourse is used to legitimate the current political order and give people the sense that just voting is political involvement. Habermas's focus on reaching an understanding under the critical perspective of the ideal speech situation seeks to involve more voices in the discussion and decision-making. He offers a process for incorporating communicative reason in the formation of law to guide the political process (Habermas, 1996, 149-150). Laclau's approach to participation would involve dislocating current political order dominated by the elites. This dislocation would favor the oppressed and others left out of the process to participate, but it does not offer a clear idea of a process by which they could take this step. Today, using Laclau's terminology, the contest to fill in the empty signifier is heavily weighted toward those with money to dominate the discourse. It is difficult to see what

mechanism would shift this power differential other than encouraging people to enter the contestation. Habermas clearly serves the cause of involving everyone in the decisions that affect their lives. In his early work, Habermas developed an analysis of the public sphere, which for him has always involved criticism of the limitations on whose voices and concerns were included in the bourgeois public sphere.

Performativity involves the functioning of communication. Habermas' language theory projects the idea of reaching an understanding that involves a symmetry of relations among those involved or cooperation. Laclau's language theory's focus on difference suggests the unavoidability of asymmetry or conflict.[17] Devenney sets appropriate parameters for our discussion of performativity, when he states, "communicative rationality cannot presuppose perfect symmetry nor absolute asymmetry" (Devenney, 3). Each theorist must give a plausible account for each of the correlative terms: symmetry and asymmetry, so each has to account for their less emphasized term. Habermas deepest expression of asymmetry is distorted communication. Laclau's main expression of symmetry is in the formation of equivalential chains. We can examine symmetry and asymmetry in terms of democracy. "A defence of democracy has to account both for the asymmetries of power, and for those symmetrical relations that bind participants to a community" (Devenney, 70). Contestation happens within this space. Habermas builds on the actual symmetry of understandings reached in ordinary daily life to coordinate human activity. This reality confronts the reality of the asymmetry of power differentials, such that the effort to expand the situations where symmetry overcomes asymmetry can be undertaken. One of the criticisms of Laclau's emphasis on difference is that it does not account for the everyday agreements people reach to coordinate activity. While appropriately

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[17] See pages 55-56 for a fuller discussion of symmetry / asymmetry.

seeing the power differentials, it does not provide a way toward symmetry of agreement or coordination of action other than the contestation of power. Whereas Habermas can apply symmetry to challenge asymmetry; Laclau has no way to apply asymmetry to build symmetry. Habermas can produce greater balance of the two elements.

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The Benefits of Contestation
Between Generalizable Interests and Hegemonization of Demands

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The Similar Tasks of Generalizable Interests and Hegemonization of Demands

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Contestation and Consensus

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The way hegemony is formed from particular demands serves a similar function for Laclau as generalizable interests does for Habermas (Norval, 2007, 48-55). Aletta Norval asks, "Are they universal claims based upon generalizable norms, agreed on through reason, or are they universal claims forged through a process of hegemonic articulation" (Norval, 2007, 14)? Democracy requires some sort of mechanism for people to be able to act together or resolve problems. For Laclau, it is the emergence of an empty signifier that unites a series of demands in such a way that it forms a people that can act as a political movement. For Habermas, people bring a variety of interests into a dialogue from which may emerge generalizable interests that lead to democratic will-formation. For Laclau the key factor in language is difference, while for Habermas it is reaching an understanding. Therefore, it is surprising to see that a convergence is possible between the two approaches that are organized in starkly different language theories. Let us explore the details and the significance of this for democratic contestation.

Norval refers to William Connolly who argues for a "tension or productive ambiguity" in democratic politics. "Keeping this tension alive means overcoming the false dichotomy between consensus and contestation at the level of actual democratic practice and in our conception of democracy. Only then will it be possible to construct a democratic theory that combines a

critique of consent and consensus when they are absent with a critical engagement of both when they are present" (Norval, 2007, 55). Social reality contains both elements: difference and agreement, consensus and contestation. Starting from difference Laclau downgrades the role of consent. Stressing the goal of agreement Habermas points toward consent but also engages with criticism and disagreement as necessary to consent; for him critical engagement is present in order for consent to be considered legitimate.

In terms of democratic discourse, for Habermas the emphasis on is "the reaching of agreement" and for Laclau it is based on "the maintenance of the possibility of disagreement" (Norval, 2007, 19). We see both agreement and disagreement in reality. It is hardly strange to say that agreements are not eternal and can end in disagreement. Agreement and disagreement may be opposites; they do not eliminate each other, rather they exist in an ongoing tension. Habermas prominently recognizes the reality of disagreement in the sense that the ideal speech situation criticizes the distortion of communication that distorts democratic discourse. Norval looks at both approaches in terms of universalization. Norval states that for Habermas it is based on "the generalization of interests" and for Laclau it is based on the "hegemonization of demands." Norval speaks of universalization in terms of hegemony. For Gramsci, the working class becomes hegemonic when it combines the interests of other social classes with its own interests. In this fashion, the universalization of particular demands is necessary for hegemony to be able to take place and not be merely the imposition of the desires of the more powerful on the less powerful (Norval, 2007, 49). Laclau conceives of universality as "an empty place," "that is filled by a succession of particular (failed) representations of universality" (Cooke, 2006, 86). Hegemonic universalization seems closely related to the hegemonization of particular demands and thus fits with Norval's earlier effort to recast generalizable interests "in terms of as the

hegemonization of particular demands & the construction of empty signifiers" (Norval, 48).

<p style="text-align:center;">*Shaping Democracy*</p>

Both hegemonic democracy and deliberative democracy differ from aggregative modes, in that both explore the shaping of opinion and do not just rely on the end result of voting as an expression of opinion. The formation of generalizable interests is this process for Habermas and involves the exchanging of reasons in the form of validity claims (Norval, 2007, 21). We saw in our discussion of generalizable interests in Chapter Three that particular subjective interests can become generalized through discursive activity. Particular subjective interests are presented and opened to criticism from others (Habermas, 1990, 67). From the standpoint of hegemonic democracy, Norval sees generalizable interests "recast in terms of a hegemonization of particular demands and the construction of empty signifiers" (Norval, 2007, 48). She sees that "the universalization of demands arising from the struggle for hegemony must transcend the specific demands and interests of a particular group" (Norval, 2007, 48). Norval sees these as intrasocietal, without being able to be specified outside of their context unlike Habermas' ideal speech situation (Norval, 2007, 48). Both give importance to equality. Deliberative democracy seeks to establish processes that allow for equal participation (Norval, 2007, 65).

Following Jacques Rancière, Norval thinks that the space for the construction of generalizable interests must itself be constructed. What needs to be constructed is "the common space in which an argument may be made and heard and disagreement expressed" (Norval, 2007, 44). We can see connections here to Habermas' perspective on the public sphere and the need for appropriate conditions of openness. For Norval this space is always contingent. Contingency is aspect of reality for Laclau's approach. One could contend that the construction of generalizable interests is also contingent for Habermas; that is, they are not determined, but

<p style="text-align:center;">124</p>

formed in contestation. Habermas might foreground reaching an understanding but it is never assumed to exist, rather it is seen as a goal and one that is not always shared in the same way by participating parties. Laclau and Mouffe see power as an empty place, "that cannot be occupied," (Norval 2007, 45) but only able to be filled in temporarily. This is the place of the empty signifier.

Laclau's understanding of hegemony follows Gramsci but drops the priority Gramsci gives to class. We saw this in our discussion of Laclau's post-Marxism. Thus, "the unity of a political force is constituted through a process of articulation of elements with no necessary class belonging." (Norval, 2007, 46). There is a unifying that goes on but with no outcome preordained by economic structure. This "contingent articulation" (Norval, 2007, 46) is the way interests arise and how they become generalized for Laclau. Laclau seems to propose a narrow reading of Marx and Gramsci's position for they would see the emergence of the working class more as contingent in history and not something determined, but something to be struggled for.

Contingency

For Laclau, contingency is part of any attempt to reach a universal, such that the universal is "a symbol of missing fullness, while the particular emerges as the always-failed attempt to embody the universal" (Norval, 47). There is always a tension between the particular and the universal, Norval describes it as "mutual imbrication and fundamental interconnectedness" (Norval, 47). Hegemonic politics is then, "the struggle over the occupation of the position of the universal." Different groups contend "to temporarily give to their particularisms a function of universal representation" (Norval, 47, Laclau, 1996, 35). This was seen in our discussion of filling in the empty signifier. Norval uses a term common to poststructuralism "contamination" to describe the relation of parts that do not wholly cohere or

break apart but influence each other. "The theorization of the mutual contamination between universality and particularity, between context transcending and contextual dimensions of interests and identities undermines the strict separation of these poles without collapsing them into one another" (Norval, 2007, 50). Habermas' proceduralism gives room for such a struggle in the relation of the particular and universal. This involves both "a contextual and context-transcending dimension." The direction toward the universal is similar to the direction toward normativity. In our post-foundational age neither is given and both must be worked toward. Universals and normativity will be questioned, but the direction toward them is needed to unite people together politically.

Norval discusses the essential role of ontological contingency in Laclau's approach (Norval, 2007, 52) in relation to his view that there is not "an internal relation between hegemonic universalization and democratic agreement" (Norval, 2007, 51). This is presented as a disagreement with Habermas who sees the goal of democratic agreement as a proper goal. If democratic agreement is more of an empirical question rather than an ontological question, then this difference is less a disagreement than a difference of emphasis. I recognize that difference is essential to the poststructuralist approach to language, but Habermas also sees difference at play. For him, democratic agreement is also not assumed but contested for. Such ontological questions cannot be proven so we are left with the possibilities that contestation can lead to what would seem to include both democratic agreement and disagreement, not either/or. Norval goes on to add that problems arise in the poststructural account of democratic practice due to "a carrying over of the emphasis on disagreement from an ontological level to an ontic level" (Norval, 2007, 54). Here Norval is using ontological as something that is a fundamental part of reality and ontic as the concrete day to day functioning in life, so that in daily life we encounter

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both agreements and disagreements. In this discussion she alludes to the increased attention to

"difference and pluralism in deliberative democracy" (Norval, 2007, 54). Norval refers to Seyla

Benhabib here and we see similar development in Habermas. For Habermas 'reaching an

understanding' also operates more on an ontic level, because it arises from reconstruction of

what goes on in language, that people do reach understandings and coordinate actions. This

leaves the ontological level open in the sense that absolute positions are difficult to defend and as

Laclau would claim there is no final closure. The criticism that Habermas is not sufficiently

open to the role of difference does not hold.

Contestable Normativity

Re-presenting the Good Society: Not Yet

Maeve Cooke looks at normativity in terms of re-presenting the good society in ways that

speak to the challenges that Laclau and Habermas face. Normativity for her can be seen as the

guiding idea of a good society that provides an ethical basis necessary for critical thinking

(Cooke, 2006, 3). "[W]e should conceive of the good society as *re-presented* in particular

representations that are constitutively inadequate to it: such particular re-presentations seek to

present the transcendent object ("the good society") powerfully; however, they always fail to

capture it completely" (Cooke, 2006, 5). She specifically refers to the ideal speech situation as

such a re-presentation, but her use of the phrase "constitutively inadequate" is the type of phrase

that is used often by Laclau to refer to the lack of closure. There is not closure here,

"representations of the good society in which there is permanent contestation, rearticulation and

reenactment of normative ideas" (Cooke, 2006, 188). Both deliberative democracy and

hegemonic democracy share a key tension that Cooke describes as "between anti-authoritarian

impulse and context-transcending validity" (Cooke, 2006, 4). The tension includes both critical

and normative elements.

Cooke prefers the term "context-transcending" to "universalist." This takes our discussion about the universal and the particular into the area of democratic norms. Context-transcending offers a more dynamic understanding that avoids limits on "the contestability of knowledge and validity" (Cooke, 20). This recognizes as discussed above, "that there is an ineliminable gap between the aspiration of universal validity and all actual claims to instantiate it. The idea of universality in other words is itself construed as context transcending: it is held never to be commensurate with its historically specific articulations" (Cooke, 2006, 20). This has importance for the concern for greater democracy. Expanding democratic possibilities to improve society is an appeal to validity that transcends the current context (Cooke, 2006, 83). We see that this draws on the current operation of democracy, but to seek improvement leads beyond the current historical context (Cooke, 2006, 44). Cooke calls the space between the ideal and its historical actualization "space for critical transcendence of the given" (Cooke, 2006, 79). Habermas's ideal speech situation is positive attempt to move forward in this space. Laclau would see it more as an emptiness that cannot be filled.

Cooke claims that for Judith Butler, "universality is a 'not yet'; it is essentially constituted by what remains unrealized by it" (Cooke, 2006, 81). This unrealization is as true for Habermas as it is for Laclau. Unrealization is not a determined direction, but it opens up a direction away from the present in the sense of leaving room for improvement beyond the present situation. Whether one sees the challenge in terms of the ideal speech situation or an empty signifier there is a gap to be filled in. The gap is between the transcendent object and the imperfect historical articulations of it. Moving closer to the transcendent object presents the possibility of historical progress (Cooke, 2006, 147-8). We assess societal institutions by the

ways ethical hopes and aspirations are actualized (Cooke, 2006, 150). There is not ultimate direction, but it does not mean there cannot be any direction. Democratic will-formation is a direction for this process. Laclau is not able to claim such direction for hegemonic articulation.

<p align="center">*The Validity of Democratic Norms*</p>

Let us examine each theorist as he relates to the norms that help democracy function. At points, Laclau states that he doesn't accept normativity, but he still relates to the concept, but in terms of subversion or rearticulation (Cooke, 2006, 19). Other poststructuralists have a more positive engagement with normativity. As is claimed in poststructuralist language theory, normativity produces its own "outside." This is a relation of difference. Filling in what Cooke calls a gap is actually more of a void for Laclau. Direction is given to ethical agency by seeking to fill in this void. Difference begins with "originary incompleteness" (Cooke, 2006, 76). "Antagonisms establish the limits of identity…" (Cooke, 2006, 84). Out of the void and in relation to antagonism; ethical agency then is the search "for a signifier that can fully express one's identity as an ethical being" (Cooke, 2006, 85). This expression will never be complete, but it gives direction for the subject. Cooke sees this as Laclau's relation to universality as "'an empty place' that is filled in by a succession of particular (failed) representations of universality" (Cooke, 2006, 86). This is the democratic movement of hegemony.

Support for democracy requires a commitment to the norms that help democracy function. Habermas accepts such a commitment. Laclau claims to promote democracy, but also rejects a rationality that helps it function. Simon Critchley sees a normative dimension and thinks Laclau's theory needs it (Critchley and Marchart, 2004, 115). To avoid arbitrariness, he thinks Laclau needs something like "an ethical dimension of infinite responsibility" from Derrida (Critchley and Marchart, 2004, 116, 117). In claiming his theory of hegemony, Laclau has made

a normative claim for its values over other values. If his theory is not normative and only descriptive "then it risks emptying it of any critical function" (Critchley and Marchart, 2004, 117). Critchley also questions Laclau's attempt to distinguish ethical from normative, with the ethical as the more general and normative as the specific moral norm (Critchley and Marchart, 2004, 121). David Howarth sees Laclau presupposing "a normative orientation from his deconstruction of Marxism and blurs the distinction between description and normative evaluation (Critchley and Marchart, 2004, 270). Howarth states there is implicit normativity in Laclau's hegemonic theory (Critchley and Marchart, 2004, 271).

Laclau's resistance to normativity is put in a more critical light as we see other poststructuralists claim normativity's importance. Norval states in the introduction to Aversive Democracy, "I argue that a Cavellian account of perfectionism, as well as Derrida's theorization of 'democracy-to-come', allows us to attend to the normative dimensions of democratic grammar within a post-structuralist approach" (Norval, 2007, 16). Norval sees Stanley Cavell as arguing for the founding of community and does not see community already constituted as she claims that deliberative democracy does (Norval, 2007, 173). Laclau would stay away from normativity, but this distinction fits his emphasis on difference and lack of closure. The claim that deliberative democracy sees community as already constituted is mistaken. Habermas recognizes the distortion of communication and does not presume that community is fulfilled, but merely that the potential for such community lies in the quest for mutual understanding. Cavell sees the key in presenting an alternative to the prevailing order of society, because any society's arrangements come from a partial not a complete point of view (Norval, 2007, 173). This is "*aversive thinking*, that is, aversion to conformism" (Norval, 2007, 175). This would accord with difference for Laclau and critical theory for Habermas. The aversive approach

acknowledges "society's distance from perfect justice" (Norval, 2007, 182). This is the gap that was discussed earlier. Norval points out that unlike Laclau and Mouffe, Cavell and Derrida develop a "relational conception of identity" in a normative direction (Norval, 2007, 184). Derrida's 'democracy to come' and Cavell's 'call of exemplarity' give direction to democracy that "is to be conceived of as an ongoing project of renewal" (Norval, 2007, 185). This sees democracy as "an ethos as the starting-point, not a substantive ideal to be striven for" (Norval, 2007, 186). Norval claims that Cavell's emphasis is shared with Laclau and Mouffe on disagreement and dislocation, but Habermas too shares the absence of a substantive ideal and an emphasis on procedure that has both disagreement and dislocation. We see here an approach to the possibility for normativity to be reached. The direction toward it is democratic contestation. For Habermas, normativity lies in the procedure that best approaches the ideal speech situation not in an end good already defined. Norval sees exemplars 'manifesting another way' that provides not only dislocation, "but also the availability of an alternative imaginary horizon, something transcending the here and now, disclosing at least the possibility of new worlds" (Norval, 2007, 190).

The direction that hegemonic democracy gives is open to question as Cooke observes, "the dangers connected with an invariable gap are decisionism and conventionalism" (Cooke, 2006, 93). These dangers raise the issue of whether hegemonic democracy provides sufficient grounds for a critical perspective. Cooke sees the need to transcend the context that hegemonic democracy may not allow for (Cooke, 2006, 98). Cooke considers Laclau to be caught in a dilemma that "offers no normative grounds for his own preferred option of radical democracy." On the one hand, the void does not offer a "transcendent ethical object." On the other hand, hegemonic democracy cannot be ethically arbitrary if it is to bring about "ethical investment.

(Cooke, 2006, 92). Laclau seeks to avoid "pure decisionism," because he understands that ethical investment must be "collectively accepted." His understanding also recognizes a role for "the sedimented practices constituting a normative framework of a certain society." It can be dislocated and radically changed, but it "never disappears" (Butler, Laclau, Žižek, 2000, 82). Laclau seeks to work within this dilemma not by ignoring existing social norms, but by displacing them rather than being limited by them (Butler, Laclau, Žižek, 2000, 83-85). Laclau's conception of political representation involves particular concrete expressions that seek to fill in the universal (Cooke, 2006, 5). The good society could take shape with great tension as a regulative idea for Laclau. We will examine this notion of a regulative idea in relation to Habermas to see the way the conversation with hegemonic democracy answers its criticisms and strengthens deliberative democracy.

Laclau's dilemma is also faced by Habermas, since he must show how "to maintain an idea of context-transcending validity while taking account of the demands of situated rationality" (Cooke, 2006, 94). In terms of Laclau's approach one can see the "idea of the ideal speech situation as occupying the "empty place" of truth" or as Habermas might say "a stand-in for truth" (Cooke, 2006, 115). Habermas' ideal speech situation can be seen as "a constitutively inadequate articulation of a transcendent object" (Cooke, 2006, 105). The "idealizing presuppositions guiding everyday communication serve to establish an internal connection between context-transcending validity and concrete practices of argumentation" (Cooke, 2006, 106). In this manner "we arrive at truth and justice by way of processes that are subject to influence of history and context" (Cooke, 2006, 106). "Arrive at" can sound rather final. It is the process that Habermas is concerned with and not claiming the final point. The ideal speech situation does not provide a utopian goal, but a position from which to offer criticism of distorted

communication and move toward greater participatory democracy. It is a regulative idea that directs a process (Cooke, 2006, 112).

In the following description Cooke expresses the open-endedness of Habermas' approach that would seem to be open to the non-closure of Laclau's hegemonic democracy. "Thus, his good society is not seen as the natural or inevitable result of the developmental dynamics of modern societies but as a possibility whose realization depends on the activity of autonomous agents in actual, historically specific social orders" (Cooke, 2006, 164). "Laclau is suspicious of the normative ideal of reconciliation guiding Habermasian conceptions of deliberative democracy" (Cooke, 2006, 176). Laclau rejects a final reconciliation or final consensus as a criticism of Habermas, but this is not what Habermas envisions. The final product is not the key but rather the process guided not by a utopian expectation, but the seeking of mutual understanding that emerges from daily conversation. The contestation of validity claims would never come to an end (Cooke, 2006, 182). Habermas seeks the best possible contestation, not the elimination of contestation (Cooke, 2006, 176-77). Harmony and reconciliation are motivating goals that are never completely attainable. They provide the regulative ideas to push the process forward and function in a normative way. The "diagnosis of the pathologies of the present is undertaken in the light of an anticipated future that expresses a potential for emancipation and rationality already implicit in the present" (Cooke, 2006, 179). It is important to stress potential here that is not finality. Habermas recognizes "a 'recalcitrant reality' that exceeds our descriptions and interpretations" (Cooke, 2006, 179). Mark Devenney, poststructuralist student of Laclau, sees Habermas close to leaving room for this concept of uncertainty. Devenney refers to Adam Przeworski's view that there is uncertainty in democracy in the sense that it is not certain that anyone "will win power or hold onto power" (Devenney, 2004, 144). He does not

see this as fully responding to Laclau's view of uncertainty. "Only certain forms of social organization allow for the promise that things may be other; only certain forms of social organization take account of their own contingency. Habermas's account of deliberative democracy comes very close to accounting for such a principle of uncertainty" (Devenney, 2004, 145). I hold that Habermas does leave room for no final closure and uncertainty, because "Discourse ethics does not project the ideal of a dispute-free world, nor does it devalue contestation" (Chambers, 1996, 162).

The Conversation of Democracy

We see the open-endedness of deliberative democracy in the work that Seyla Benhabib does with Habermas' theory. She suggests a helpful shift from consensus to conversation (Cooke, 2006, 179). This emphasizes the interactivity essential to ongoing operation of deliberative democracy (Cooke, 2006, 181). This sees conflict and division as an ongoing part of deliberative democracy, (Cooke, 2006, 181) which shares more of the direction of hegemonic democracy than is often credited to it by Laclau and others. Cooke brings Habermas and Laclau together quite closely on this. "Thus, not only is Laclau's emphasis on social conflict and division readily compatible with the view that social struggles are guided by harmony and reconciliation; his account of political representation commits him to such a view" (Cooke, 2006, 187). Cooke has guided us to see normativity that is contestable and not fixed, which fits her view of practical rationality "in which validity is construed as inherently context transcending, we favor representations of the good society in which there is permanent contestation, rearticulation, and reenactment of normative ideas" (Cooke, 2006, 188). Habermas has openly struggled with normativity, while Laclau has rejected this goal. We cannot secure normativity for others. There is a sense that when we act, we act from our own normative values. In relation

to thinking others might affirm the correctness of our action, we offer our normative value for others to agree to. The normativity would not be just the action, but would include our reasons for the action. We would exchange reasons with others and we see where our interests connect with theirs to become generalizable interests. When we do this we could also be said to be filling in an empty signifier, but with normative direction and not the arbitrary floating of Laclau's hegemonic democracy. Moving beyond Laclau and Habermas, we could say that the normativity we claim for our action is open for contestation, persons could affirm it or dissent with it or it could open up further discussion of what is the proper action in the situation.

Let's examine how others describe the process of contestable normativity. Mark Devenney lifts up normativity in relation to Laclau's ethical approach (Devenney, 2004, 171). "The ethical substance of the community – the moment of its totalisation or univeralisation – represents an object which is simultaneously impossible and necessary. As impossible, it is incommensurable with any normative order, as necessary, it has to have access to the field of representation which is possible only if the ethical substance is invested in some form of normative order" (Laclau, 2000, 84). We see the tension in Laclau's approach that calls for a term like "contestable normativity" to hold this tension in a productive way for ethics.

Simone Chambers describes the open-endedness of contestable normativity, when she states, "Morality is based on reasonable agreement, which is renewed, reformed and reassessed every time we deliberate about moral choices" (Chambers, 1996, 80). Chambers describes how deliberation connects with normativity, when she describes it as "working out interests we share with each other which can furnish a reason for collectively recognizing a norm" (Chambers, 1996, 102). The outcome is not determined in advance but arrived at through the process of discourse, but it does seek "to engender a point of view that has normative content" (Chambers,

1996, 105). "Norms that cannot stand the critical force of pluralism, diversity and difference will pass away. Only those that represent principles that are generalizable within pluralism and despite difference, that is, which can generate the support of all, will survive (Chambers, 1996, 159). Wide-ranging criticism "is our avenue to well-founded general norms." Chambers also recognizes that such criticism may discover that common ground cannot be attained and no norm is agreed to (Chambers, 1996, 162). She argues further, "discourse must become a social process to justify and legitimate a norm. That is, it must mean[s –sic] in turn that the justification of concrete norms must be understood not in absolute but in fallible terms" (Chambers, 1996, 172).

Chambers points out that norms are not reached quickly but are "a cumulative product of many crisscrossing conversations" (Chambers, 1996, 169). Norval affirms this (Norval, 2006, 36) and connects it with "what Cavell calls 'the conversation of justice,'" which is a "'way of life together'" (Norval, 2006, 4. Chambers further describes that, "practical discourse is a long-term consensus-forming process and not a decision procedure" (Chambers, 1996, 171) and as for the functioning of democracy it is about engendering a practice or fostering a political culture. "It is in and through our ordinary engagements that bonds are created and dissolved, that provocations are offered and rejected, taken up, contested. It is here, in this responsiveness that our democratic freedoms and responsibilities are to be found and constituted" (Norval, 2006, 213). Contestable normativity seeks "maximum open-endedness without sacrificing normative content" (Chambers, 1996, 172).

There is truth to this simplistic statement: that Habermas reconstructs and Laclau deconstructs is a way to summarize this dissertation. Laclau works from an abstract theory of language that deconstructs to dislocate, but is unable to locate a direction forward toward more participatory democracy. As noted by some critics, Laclau does not account for the daily

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agreement people reach to coordinate action. The strength of Habermas' approach that seems so intellectually complex to many is its simplicity. The simple recognition that the goal of language, seen in the agreements we reach daily, is to reach an understanding, offers the true possibility of participatory democracy. Not an account of Hegelian Reason unfolding in history as the foundation of reality, but the giving of reasons in ordinary language that flows out of ordinary life offers this possibility. The contestation in the deliberative democracy of Habermas through the reciprocity of offering validity claims to one another is the reciprocity that makes democracy possible. It promotes the possibility of managing power relations in society so there is as little domination as possible. Through the ideal speech situation, it criticizes the ways elites or anyone try to keep others out of the democratic conversation, thus promoting the possibility of greater participation. It promotes space for the democratic contestation among diverse visions of the good society, such that it affirms contextual location of specific viewpoints along with the context-transcending possibility of agreement to democratic norms on the way to a good society for all. This is the ongoing conversation of democratic contestation.

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